
NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
La Societe Royale d'Astronomie du Canada

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Vancouver

General Assembly

May 17 to 19, 1991

Hosted by the Vancouver Centre R A S C

Plan to attend!

**Announcement, tentative schedule
and call for papers inside**

NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN

The *Newsletter/Bulletin* is a publication of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada and is distributed together with the Society's *Journal*. Inquiries about the Society should be directed to the National Office at 136 Dupont Street, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1V2.

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Deadline for April issue is March 15.

Seven Months and Counting The RASC 1991 Solar Eclipse Expedition

**by Michael S.F. Watson
Expedition Leader**

Excitement continues to build throughout North America and around the world as we approach July 1991 and the longest duration total solar eclipse remaining in our lifetime. Readers of astronomical magazines and newsletters are receiving news every month of dozens of organizations that are planning expeditions to Hawaii, Baja California and mainland Mexico to observe the eclipse.

Under the coordination of the Solar Eclipse Committee (Randy Attwood, Steve Dodson and the author as Expedition Leader), the planning and organization of the RASC national expedition is proceeding extremely well. The Expedition was established by resolution of the National Council of the Society in January 1989 and is intended to be the first truly national observing project for the Society. In the 20 months since the first article appeared in the *Newsletter* (April 1989), a travel agent (Sunquest Vacations of Toronto) and a charter air carrier (Worldways Airlines) have been engaged, two site preview trips to Baja California have been undertaken, the itinerary for the trip has been firmed up, and as of the date of writing this article, 135 participants have registered and paid deposits.

While the precise details of the itinerary will remain subject to modification until shortly before departure, the general outline of the Expedition is as follows:

Between 200 and 220 participants will leave Toronto by chartered jet aircraft early on Wednesday morning, 10 July 1991 for a five-hour direct flight to Puerto Vallarta on the Mexican mainland. Sufficient space will be available on the aircraft to enable members to bring whatever astronomical observing equipment they wish. We will arrive in Puerto Vallarta in early to mid-afternoon with the balance of the afternoon and early evening at leisure. Sunquest has made reservations at a first-class hotel, at which a comprehensive meeting and seminar will be held on the Wednesday evening. Early on eclipse morning we will have breakfast at the hotel, be transferred to the airport by bus, and leave Puerto Vallarta for the short, one-hour flight across the Gulf of California to the Los Cabos International Airport, to arrive between 6:00 and am. After clearing Mexican customs at Los Cabos, we will board eight reserved air-conditioned buses for the 40 kilometre trip north to our observing site. We have reserved an excellent location at the soccer stadium of the small town of Santiago located approximately five kilometres south of the centre line of the eclipse. From this location, the duration of totality is 6 minutes 53 seconds with the sun at an altitude of 83 degrees! Following the eclipse, the buses will take us back to the airport where we will board our aircraft for the overnight return flight to Toronto arriving early Friday morning.

Because of the special nature of this Expedition, we are able to keep the cost to approximately \$1000 (with a 10% discount for those who registered and paid deposits prior to July 11, 1989). The price includes return air transportation, bus transfers, hotel accommodation, bus transportation on eclipse day, use of the observing site, and certain meals. This price makes our Expedition the lowest cost trip available.

In July 1989, Randy Attwood and I spent several days travelling through Baja California Sur scouting out potential observing sites and making contact with Mexican government officials. I returned to Baja California for several days this past June, held extensive meetings with Mexican officials, and firmed up our plans considerably. We have received assurance of full cooperation from the Mexican government on all matters including permission to land our aircraft on eclipse morning, customs clearance, availability of ground bus transportation, permission to travel on the (probably otherwise closed) highways and use of our observing site of choice. The results of these meetings have been extremely encouraging and we are very optimistic that the Expedition will proceed exactly according to plan. We remain in close contact with the Mexican government and with other organizations such as *Sky & Telescope* which is mounting its own very large expedition.

Participation is open to both members of the Society and the general public. Those who wish to participate but have not yet registered may do so by sending a \$100 deposit payable to the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada to the following address: RASC 1991 Solar Eclipse Expedition, 441 Davisville Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4S 1H7.

The balance of the cost will be payable early in 1991.

We look forward to seeing you in Mexico for this wonderful event!

Awards of the R.A.S.C. 1990-1991

As outlined in the *1989 Annual Report of the Society* (p 28ff) awards may, from time to time, be conferred upon members in recognition of meritorious service or achievement. Recommendations for such awards should, in most cases, be made through the Council of the local Centre. Unattached members may submit recommendations, if they so wish, to the National Council for consideration by the National Council. Centre Councils will, of course, submit recommendations as they see fit to the National Council for final approval.

CHANT MEDAL

The Chant Medal of the Society was established in 1940 in appreciation of the great work of the late Professor C. A. Chant in furthering the interests of astronomy in Canada. This medal is awarded, not oftener than once a year, to any amateur astronomer resident in Canada on the basis of the value of the work for which he or she has carried out in astronomy and closely allied fields of investigation. Nominations (including citations) should reach the National Office by December 31.

SERVICE AWARD MEDAL

The Service Award was established in 1959, on the recommendation of a special committee of the National Council. This bronze medal is presented to members who have performed outstanding service to a centre or to the National Society. Nominations should reach the National Office by December 31.

KEN CHILTON PRIZE

The Ken Chilton Prize was established in 1977 by the National Council of the Society in remembrance of the late K. E. Chilton, an active member of the Hamilton Centre. The prize is awarded annually to an amateur astronomer resident in Canada, in recognition of a significant piece of astronomical work carried out or published during the year. Nominations should reach the National Office by December 31.

SIMON NEWCOMB AWARD

The Simon Newcomb Award is named in honour of the famous astronomer Simon Newcomb (1835-1909) who was born in Nova Scotia and later served for twenty years as Superintendent of the American Ephemeris and National Almanac Office at the United States Naval Observatory in Washington. The award was created in 1978 by the National Council on the initiative of the Halifax Centre. The intent of the Simon Newcomb Award is to recognize literary ability among members of the Society who are not professional astronomers. Submitted articles must be original and should not have been previously published in any substantially similar form (although appearances in Centre newsletters is permissible).

Who can enter? Any member of the Society who does their astronomy purely as a hobby.

Format: The article(s) should be no longer than 2,500 words in length, be written in proper grammatical form, and be presented typewritten and double-spaced. Diagrams need not be in a finished form but should be complete and ready for drafting. Photographs may also be submitted and, if possible, original negatives should accompany the submission. The author(s) name(s) should appear only on the title page and reference to Centre affiliation should not appear in the article.

Submission of Entries: Articles must be received by the National Awards Committee between January 1 and March 31. Members of Centres must first submit their entries to their Centre Executive for its approval before submission to the National Awards Committee. Unattached members should make their submissions directly to the Committee, c/o RASC National Office.

Judging: Articles are judged on their scientific accuracy, originality and literary merit.

Presentation: The award is presented at the General Assembly and remains in the hands of the winner's Centre for display until the following April.

For further details on the Simon Newcomb Award, contact the Awards Committee, RASC National Office, 136 Dupont Street, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1V2, or contact your Centre Secretary.

L'astronomie au Canada français

par Marc A Gelinax
Redacteur francophone

Le congrès de l'AGAA:

Du 21 au 23 septembre 1990 eut lieu à Rimouski, le congrès de l'Association des Groupes d'Astronomes Amateurs québécois (AGAA). Plus d'une centaine d'inscriptions et de nombreux visiteurs en firent un franc succès pour le club hôte, le Club de l'UQAR (Université du Québec à Rimouski).

Malgré le temps plutôt nuageux, les congressistes ont pu visiter les observatoires de messieurs Malenfant et Lemay (notre président). A travers les trouées nuageuses ils ont constaté que la banlieue de Rimouski est autrement plus sombre que celle de Montréal ou Québec, les étoiles étaient plus nombreuses dans une trouée que dans tout le ciel d'une grande ville.

Suite au congrès, notons que la revue "*le Québec Astronomique*" a désormais un directeur qui s'occupera de la partie impression-distribution. C'est M. Jean-Pierre Urbain de la S.A.M. qui a accepté, bénévolement, la charge de directeur.

Le trophée Méritas remis durant le congrès, est décerné annuellement à un amateur du Québec qui a fait sa marque, tant comme astronome que comme animateur. En 1990 c'est à Jean Vallières qu'est revenu le prix, soit la belle sphere armillaire créée par Réal Manseau. M. Vallières est membre du club MIRA de Mirabel. Longtemps membre de la SAM, il fut en particulier éditeur agit à titre de président de l'AGAA de 1976 à 1979. Enfin disons que de nombreux amateurs ont joint un club d'astronomie après avoir lu le livre de Jean Vallières: "Devenez astronome amateur". Le trophée Méritas n'est que le dernier en liste des nombreux prix reçus par Jean Vallières au cours des ans.

On a aussi parlé durant le congrès, de raviver le concours annuel des fabricants de telescope amateur (CAFTA). Il semble y avoir un désir sérieux de voir renaître le CAFTA, que la Société d'Astronomie de Montréal a abandonné depuis deux ans. L'AGAA serait bien placée pour reprendre charge de l'évènement.

Camp Notre-Dame-de-la-Merci:

La fin de semaine du 20 en 21 octobre, le Club des Astronomes Amateurs de Leval organisait son camp d'observation à N-D-de-la-Merci. Une trentaine d'observateurs se sont rendus à ce camp dans les basses Laurentides, et ont bénéficié d'un ciel relativement libre de pollution lumineuse. Les plus gros instruments sur place étaient un 17.5 et un 16 pouces. Gilbert St-Onge avait aussi amener son CCD et son Schmidt-Newton de 8po. L'intérêt d'un camp comme celui là, c'est de pouvoir se loger confortablement à la campagne tout en faisant de l'astronomie en groupe. Pas d'exposition, pas de conférence, seulement de l'observation et de la camaraderie.

Annuaire Astronomique 1991:

Fin septembre, l'*Annuaire Astronomique 1991* sortait des presses. Bien que le contenu en ait été augmenté, son nombre de pages a diminué, grâce à une meilleure gestion de l'espace. Les dessins et graphiques sont plus nombreux et rehaussés. On peut se procurer un annuaire au coût de 11.95 \$ en 1991 et ce auprès de la Société d'Astronomie de Montréal (SAM).

David Malin à Montréal:

Le samedi 20 octobre le Dr David Malin de l'Anglo-Australian Observatory présentait une conférence au Planétarium Dow de Montréal. Il était l'invité du Centre de la R.A.S.C.

de Montréal dans le cadre de sa “Townsend Lecture” présentée annuellement. Le Dr Malin nous a présenté son travail en astrophotographie couleur pour lequel il est célèbre. Le Dr Malin est d’avis qu’il y a encore place pour la photographie en astronomie même si les détecteurs CCD semblent de nos jours préférés par les professionnels. Ce fut une conférence amusante et enrichissante, avec les plus belles astrophotos de ciel profond dont on peut rêver.

Voyage au méridien Zero:

À l’automne 90, votre rédacteur est allé en Angleterre. Il en a profité pour voir de près certains lieux reliés à l’astronomie et à son histoire, voici un résumé:

W. Herschel: A Bath, à environ 200 km de Londres, je suis allé au 19 New King Street là où William Herschel vivait lorsqu’il découvrit Uranus, en mars 1781 (voir JSRAC août 1988). J’ai pu me faire une idée de la vie de W. Herschel à Bath. Il dirigeait alors des concerts au Pump House à 5 minutes de chez lui et pouvait facilement revenir faire de l’observation entre deux représentations. Bath, une très jolie ville, était à l’époque d’Herschel un lieu à la mode, fréquenté par la noblesse et la bourgeoisie en vacance. Le 19 New King St. est un édifice à trois étages, dans une petite rue de maisons semblables, collées les unes sur les autres. Heureusement pour Herschel, la pollution lumineuse était quasi nulle à son époque.

J’ai aussi vu la tombe de W. Herschel à l’abbaye de Westminster, près d’elle il y a celles de son fils Sir John, de Charles Darwin et, non loin, celle de Newton.

Greenwich: Le vieil observatoire de Greenwich porte aujourd’hui le nom de Maison de Flamsteed, en mémoire de John Flamsteed, le premier Astronome Royal qui y entra en 1676. Depuis longtemps, l’observatoire proprement dit a déménagé à Herstmonceux.

On peut mettre un pied dans chaque hémisphère dans la cour de la Maison, car le méridien Zero y est indiqué par une bande de lait sur le sol. À l’intérieur on retrouve de nombreuses pièces historiques, comme le miroir de 48 po. d’Herschel et le télescope de 6.2 po. qui servi à la découverte d’Uranus. De nombreux autres instruments anciens, des horloges, sextants etc. sont aussi exposés. Il y a encore une lunette opérationnelle de 28po., qui sert à l’observation par des groupes invités.

Malheureusement pour moi mes photos à Greenwich ont été manquées, le film n’ayant pas enclenché dans la caméra. Comme quoi la loi de Murphy frappe aussi en voyage.

Stonehenge: Un arrêt à Stonehenge est toujours de mise. Les archéologues ne peuvent pas dire avec certitude à quoi servait les pierres de Stonehenge, mais des chercheurs ont calculé que l’on pouvait se servir de ces dernières pour repérer la date des solstices au lever du soleil. La pleine Lune se levait également selon des alignements précis, que l’on retrouve grâce à la trace de trous ayant contenus jadis des pieux de bois. L’hypothèse la plus sérieuse veut donc que Stonehenge ait été un observatoire-calendrier.

Le site date de 1500 ans avant J.C. et on trouve la trace d’édifications antérieures jusqu’à 3000 ans avant J.C. Le peuple de cette époque n’avait pas d’écriture ni de mathématique il est normal qu’il ait en besoin de techniques empiriques pour déterminer les saisons. Mais de là à importer, de très loin, des tonnes de pierre (ce qu’ils ont fait), pour servir de calendrier me semble un peu fort ... enfin!, le mystère persiste.

A Londres: A Londres, il y a pour l’astronome amateur de nombreux points d’intérêt. Burlington House près de Piccadilly Circus est la maison de la British Astronomical Association (BAA). D’autres sociétés des arts et des sciences partagent aussi l’espace dans cet imposant édifice centenaire. On peut le visiter, mais je ne l’ai pas fait faute de temps.

Le Science Museum, le British Museum et le Natural History Museum contiennent tous de quoi faire le bonheur des curieux durant des heures. Au Natural History Museum par exemple, la collection de météorites à la section de minéralogie est fort intéressante.

London Planetarium: Une visite au planétarium local s'impose pour l'astronome amateur en voyage. Le London Planetarium vaut le détour. Il est situé dans le même édifice que le fameux musée de cire de Madame Tussaud, et on peut visiter les deux tour à tour. Dans le hall, des mannequins ressemblant Einstein, Halley, Newton et d'autres nous accueillent. Un spectacle enregistré, joue toutes les 40 minutes. Celui que j'ai vu était un classique sur la vie des étoiles, du nuage de poussières et de gaz jusqu'à la supernova. On y utilisait le cinéma d'animation avec efficacité. Le planétaire est un Zeiss qui a été amélioré régulièrement depuis la construction du planétarium en 1958. Le soir le planétarium se transforme en laserium et des spectacles laser-rock y sont donnés.

Ce fut un beau voyage que je vous recommande.

Astronomiquement vôtre, M.A.G.

“You and the Universe” Videotapes Now Available

As part of the Society's Centenary Celebrations in Ottawa this past summer, a one-day symposium was held. The five lectures were taped through the co-operation of Carleton University and four of these can now be borrowed from the Society's National Office. These are:

Planet Earth as a Life Support System by Lydia Dotto

Naturalists of the Night by Terence Dickinson

Astronomy for a Civilized Society by Richard Jarrell

The Solar System: Voyage and Beyond by Joseph Veverka

The text of all five lectures appeared in the October *Journal* along with brief biographical notes on the speakers.

Each tape is in VHS format. The first three are slightly under an hour in length and the last one just over an hour and all include the questions and answers which followed each presentation. Any or all of the tapes can be requested by writing to the Executive Secretary. When you make a request give the following information:

- Your name, mailing address and phone number.
- Which tape(s) you want and the intended audience (eg Centre meeting, classroom use, private viewing, etc).
- The preferred date for showing the tape(s) and an indication of whether or not this date is flexible.
- Include mailing charges of \$4.50 per tape. You are expected to pay the return postage. Tapes will not be sent out of the country because of Customs regulations.

To enable the tapes to be sent out on schedule, please do not keep them for more than one week. The National Office will allow a week for mailing in each direction. In the event of a time conflict, the request received first will be given priority, except that requests from individuals for private viewing will be fitted in when the tapes are not otherwise in demand.

1991 General Assembly

Vancouver, British Columbia

May 17 to 19, 1991

The Vancouver Centre invites you to visit beautiful Vancouver for the 1991 General Assembly. It will be held on the campus of the University of British Columbia over the Victoria Day long weekend, May 17-19.

The U.B.C. campus is situated in the Endowment Lands, an area of towering first growth trees and scenic vista of ocean and mountains. With easy access to all the other features of Canada's third largest city, it will be a wonderful place to stay and experience "Lotus Land". That is, if it doesn't rain!

A tour of TRIUMF (Tri-University Meson Facility) is planned. Located on campus, TRIUMF is the world's largest cyclotron. For those who do not like the idea of standing on top of such a beast, there is the Museum of Anthropology. Also on campus, the Museum has the finest collection of West Coast native artifacts in Canada. Nearby is Nitobe Garden, an exquisite Japanese garden. Of course, the gardens will be in full bloom.

The observatory telescopes of the astronomy department will be available for those who wish to use them. Also planned is a visit to the Gordon Southam Observatory near the H.R. MacMillan Planetarium. The GSO has a new 20-inch Cassegrain telescope as well as a new 25-inch Dobsonian. A salmon barbeque (what else?) will be held at the planetarium after we see the planetarium show.

Another highlight will be a tour of MacDonald-Dettwiler. This local company is a world leader in satellite imaging and remote sensing. This visit alone will make it worthwhile to attend the General Assembly.

Start planning your plane flights, or train (Have you ever travelled through the Rockies on a train?) and plan to visit Vancouver in May of 1991. It will be a great time.

Tentative Schedule

The following is a tentative timetable of the planned events:

Friday May 17

Breakfast
 Business Meetings
 Lunch, 11:30–12:30
 National Council Meeting, 12:30–4:30 P.M.
 Dinner, 4:30–6:30
 U.B.C. Observatory Tour
 Tour of MacDonald-Dettweiler facilities, 6:30–10:30
 Return to U.B.C., 11:00-midnight
 Observing at U.B.C. Observatory, from midnight on

Saturday, May 18:

Breakfast, 7:00–9:00 A.M.
 Paper Session, 9:00–11:45 A.M.
 Coffee and Group Photo, 11:45–12:00
 Lunch, 12:00–1:30 P.M.
 Paper Session, 1:30–5:00 P.M.
 Dress for formal banquet 5:00–6:30 P.M.

Start dinner, 6:30–7:30 P.M.

Dinner, 7:30 onwards; includes Ruth Northcott lecture, and awards for displays and papers.

Sunday, May 19:

Annual General Meeting, 9:30–11:30 A.M.

Lunch, 11:30–1:00 P.M.

Tours, 1:00–4:00 P.M.

Planetarium Show at H.R. MacMillan Planetarium 4:00 P.M.

Barbeque at planetarium, 5:00–8:00 P.M.; This includes tours of the planetarium and the Gordon Southam Observatory

Murphy Slide Show and Song Contest, 8:00–9:30 P.M.

Transit back to U.B.C., 10:00 P.M.

Party, 10:00 P.M.

Monday, May 20:

Concluding remarks, tours and departure of guests.

Call for Papers

The organizing committee for the 1991 General Assembly requests submissions of papers for the General Assembly Paper Sessions. Those wishing to give a presentation should submit abstracts to the organizing committee by February 1991. The address is:

Organizing Committee for 1991 GA, Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, c/o 1100 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 3J9. In addition, those who wish to participate in the informal slide show or the song contest should indicate their interest by writing to the same address.

Erratum to Astronomy Day Report

by Steve Dodson
Astronomy Day Coordinator

In the October Newsletter I congratulated the Toronto Centre on their well-deserved winning of the International Astronomy Day Award offered by *Sky & Telescope* magazine. Now I am apologizing to the Centre members who contributed to the success by bringing Centennial Astronomy Week to the public of the Toronto area shopping malls. An erroneous sentence in my Cross-Canada wrap-up article in the August issue should have read: “The energetic army of Toronto Centre presenters used every site imaginable – including malls!”

In fact, as I described during the paper session at the General Assembly in Ottawa, the Toronto Centre kicked off the celebration of Astronomy Week in Canada with a multi-faceted mall exhibit which began an ambitious 10 days of activities. However, by the time I gave the GA paper on Centennial Astronomy Week across Canada, the article containing the undetected error had already been submitted for the early June deadline. Bringing the activities of all the centres into one article is a challenging activity, and opportunities to err are numerous. Motivated by the desire to help the Society as a whole to benefit from the educational activities of each Centre, I will continue to strive for accuracy in reporting on future Astronomy Day activities.

Across the R.A.S.C

Across the R.A.S.C. is a regular feature of the *Newsletter*. Specific contributions are requested from Centres to provide accurate news on current and future activities. If there is not a report from your Centre, probably one was not submitted. Deadline for the February for the April issue is March 1,

CALGARY: Due to the recent theft of two donated computers from the Wilson Coulee Observatory, several measures were taken to improve security at the centre's observatory. These include rekeying the locks, modifying the alarm system and imposing a six month waiting period before new members can obtain a key. Despite this setback, the Centre's new C-14 telescope was dedicated in late September. Some of their "first light" astrophotos are reported to be spectacular.

EDMONTON: An astronomy workshop was organized by the Edmonton Centre and other astronomy groups in Alberta during mid-October. Held over a weekend, the workshop featured seminars for both novice and experienced observers as well as observing sessions. It was held at a youth camp which featured heated cabins, a main lodge for the seminars, meals and socializing, and dark skies! The September issue of *Stardust* featured a humorous article on observing the North Galactic Pole. The article included detailed finder charts and some advice for those attempting it for the first time: Don't expect to see any detail (even if you try photographing it)!

HALIFAX: At the Centre's September meeting, visiting speaker Dr. John Percy, drew a large crowd for his talk "An Astronomer's Encounter with Creationism". As part of its celebration of the Society's Centennial, the Halifax Centre has started a fund to award a prize to the best high school astronomy project that is presented at the annual Provincial Science Fair. Donations made to the fund by centre members are being matched by the centre on a one-to-one basis. Centre members have also donated time to make some major renovations to the Halifax Planetarium. These include rewiring many of the controls and the construction and repair of several special effects projectors. This year's Dorothy Killam Memorial Lecture Series, which is sponsored by Dalhousie University had "Our Universe" as the theme. Three lectures were given: "The Earliest History of the Universe" by Dr. Michael Turner (Fermi Institute, University of Chicago); "The Large-Scale Structure of the Universe" by Dr. Phillip Peebles (Albert Einstein Professor of Science, Princeton University); and "The Physical Basis of Life" by Noble Laureate Dr. Manfred Eigen (Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, Gottingen, Germany). The talks were excellent and were well attended.

KITCHENER-WATERLOO: The Centre's new 10" Dobsonian telescope received its final fine tuning and first light at the Starfest Star Party in August. In late August, many members volunteered their time and skills to do repair work to the Centre's observatory.

LONDON: The London Centre marked the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Hume Cronyn Memorial Observatory at the University of Western Ontario. For the last fifty years, the telescope has been open for public viewing at least one night per week. During the 1940's the observatory's lecture room was used as the regular meeting place of the London Centre. The October issue of *Astronomy London* also reports that on several occasions in the past, university students have painted the dome to look like a giant jack-o'-lantern as a Halloween prank.

NIAGARA: The September issue of *Niagara Whirlpool* reports that member Greg Saxon took his telescope to a local school and showed about 350 pupils what the Sun looks like through a solar filter. Unfortunately, he spent so much time outside showing children the Sun that he got a bad case of sunburn on his neck, arms and legs. As Greg tells it, “. . . it was the first time that I got sunburned stargazing!”

OTTAWA: The Centre hopes to arrange a “last chance” tour of the Shirley’s Bay Solar Observatory which is located just outside of Ottawa. Although it is one of the few solar observatories in the world, budget cutbacks at the National Research Council, which operates the telescope, may force its closure by the end of 1990. In early March, members of the Observer’s Group successfully observed two grazing lunar occultations. An extensive statistical survey of delegates to the 1990 G.A. was printed in the September issue of *AstroNotes*. Delegates were analyzed based on region, sex, distance travelled and centre affiliation.

VANCOUVER: Manning Park Star Party #1 was a great success with people and telescopes everywhere. Manning Star Party #2 was held September 20-21 and was as usual a great success! Although dew posed a problem on the Friday night, the Saturday night was quite mild with dark skies and good seeing. The October meeting featured Dr. Chris Waltham who discussed the new solar neutrino observatory being built in Sudbury, Ontario. In November, a planetarium show was seen as well as viewing of a newly-released video on the Voyager missions. Following the meeting the first “public” light of the new Community Astronomy telescope took place. We were honoured that two members, Lance Olkovich and Gary Wolanski were successful in their bid to build the telescope – a 25-inch Dobsonian type Newtonian reflector. The design requires a minimum set-up time, is ultra-lightweight and can be easily handled by two people.

VICTORIA: On Saturday, July 21 about a dozen members gathered on top of Mount Tolmie for the partial solar eclipse. A local radio station sent a reporter to do live coverage, including “on the spot” interviews. Over 100 people (not counting a bus load of tourists!) showed up to examine the sun through solar filters and observe the eclipse. At maximum occultation about 70% of the sun was covered by the moon. Five members from the Victoria Centre attended the Riverside conference this summer and reported that they had a wonderful time.

WINNIPEG: New CCD’s have been installed and tested at the Glenlea Observatory. Early this summer, Pluto was successfully imaged using a small scope under adverse conditions. Plans are underway to make extensive use of the device during the fall and winter.

Starfest '90

The ninth annual observing convention of the North York Astronomical Association, Starfest, was held the weekend of August 17 to 19 near Mount Forest, Ontario. Attendance was good despite the weekend weather forecast which wasn’t expected to give any clear skies. Most people arrived Friday night to get their accommodations set up, equipment unpacked and to enjoy the informal talks that were held under the tent. Despite the poor skies, some people were able to get some observing in, and Saturn was a magnificent object in the NYAA’s 16-inch telescope.

All of the talks were held on Saturday, and they were, without exception, interesting and

informative. Talks on astrophotography were given by Mike DeVillaer and Andreas Gada, with Mike Watson giving a presentation on using a Schmidt camera. A panel discussion on comet hunting was given by three successful Canadian comet hunters: Rolf Meier, Doug George, and, of course, David Levy. Terence Dickinson gave a very informative talk on telescope performance. Peter Ceravolo, associate editor of *Telescope Making* magazine, conducted an informal optical quality survey, performing actual tests of optical quality on the telescopes of those souls who had brought their scopes with them and were brave enough to find out just how good (or bad) their optics were.

The evening Twilight Talk on Saturday night was given by David Levy on “Comet Hunting: A Personal Perspective”. In his closing remarks he mentioned that he had only one regret – that he could not share his comet hunting success with his father. However, he noted that he could do something much better than that... he could introduce the heavens to children, among whom are the next generation of astronomers and scientists. I’m sure that many in the audience were inspired to try harder to do likewise.

Unfortunately, the weather Saturday night was completely clouded out. Nevertheless, the daytime hours on both Saturday and Sunday provided the opportunity to view a large number of telescopes. In addition, this year there were also several portable observatories, two of which were on wheels! Despite the weather, this year’s event was considered a great success by those who attended.

The 1990 Mount Kobau Star Party

**by Dave Clyburn
Edmonton Centre**

[*Editor:* The seventh annual Mount Kobau Star Party was held August 22 to 26 at Mount Kobau located about 50 km south of Penticton, B.C.]

Can a star party be a success when it is cloudy most of the time? Probably not, but the Edmonton group did enjoy themselves. Adverse conditions led to a sort of black humour. When cloud prevailed at night, we noted how dark the sky was. When it wasn’t cloudy, a strong aurora brightened the sky, prompting Bob Drew to note that the darkest spot on the mountain was the inside of his and Paul Campbell’s trailer with the red lights on. On another rainy night, Vega showed briefly through a hole in the clouds causing Paul to note, “Nobody said it was going to be a star’s party”. When the rocky ground became saturated and a small creek began to flow through my tipi, at least I could take the satisfaction in knowing that my lodging now came complete with fresh running water.

Had the weather been good, this year’s event would have been superb. The organizers deserve congratulations for providing first-rate speakers. Speaking on observing and drawing, Father Lucien Kemble conveyed, in an inspiring way, a sense of the pleasure of keenly observing the beauty of the natural world. Stephen O’Meara, an editor of *Sky & Telescope*, was a real surprise. As Bob Breckenridge mentioned, one might picture a *Sky & Telescope* editor as a bow-tie wearing scientist. O’Meara looked more like a pirate. His talk “Trails and Tribulations of a 19th Century Astronomer in the 20th Century”, a celebration of visual observing in which he discussed his observations of the spokes in Saturn’s rings and his recovery of Comet Halley, was among the most amusing that I have heard. Other speakers included Al Dyer and Jack Newton on astrophotography, Tippy D’Auria, an organizer of the Florida Star Party, and Peter Dewdney of the Dominion Astrophysical

Observatory. Bob and Paul's trailer was a cozy place to socialize on a rainy night. We had plenty of time to talk about new equipment and trends in astronomy with Al Dyer, who was covering the event for *Astronomy* magazine.

Because of the poor weather, when it finally cleared again on Saturday night, the hardcore crowd that Kobau attracts were involved in their own observing programs. As a result, the lineups at John Casino's 36-inch (probably the largest portable amateur telescope in North America) were short, often fewer than six people. Despite some aurora and poor transparency, the dark lane in M31 stood out as dark as coal and the central star of the Ring Nebula was visible. The highlight, though, was Comet Levy, which appeared bright to the naked eye at magnitude 2 or 3.

Barry Arnold worked hard to refigure and silver the 17.5-inch mirror in time for Kobau, and I am happy to report that its performance has been significantly improved. Planets used to appear as featureless, unfocusable blobs; Cassini's division and a brown belt on Saturn are now easy to see. Congratulations as well to Paul Campbell for carrying on what has become an Edmonton tradition of fine telescope making. He won first prize for "Best Dobsonian".

Next year's event runs from August 7 through the 11, a drier time of the month in British Columbia. The top of Mount Kobau is a beautiful place to be. Lets hope for better weather next year.

Reprinted from the Edmonton Centre's *Stardust*

Nova East '90

**by Doug Pitcairn
Halifax Centre**

Once again the observing faithful descended upon Fundy National Park for this year's version of Nova East. The earlier date of August 17 to 19 found a few of us worried about the hazy air, but once again the weather cooperated and the weekend was a success.

Friday night found many people getting settled in. This is not nearly as chaotic as in the past since a high percentage of people have been to Fundy before. The call was put out for volunteers to man telescopes for the public observing in front of park headquarters, and about a dozen members responded. This year, the public viewing was moved to this central, highly visible location because it was agreed that greater exposure was more important than pristine viewing conditions. I suspect that everyone now thinks this was a good idea. We ran over four hundred people through over a dozen objects including Saturn, M13, M27, M57, M31 and the impressive Comet Levy. I think it was the most successful public observing session I have ever attended.

The next day the weather looked less than promising, but we placed our hopes for Sunday in a classic polar front which was approaching from the north-west. Meanwhile, the day's planned activities went without a hitch. After the traditional corn feed, various instruments were assembled on the hill for photographs and public inspection. This year's telescopes were the usual with not so many surprises. Tom Anderson's infamous "King Kong" (a 12" f/9 reflector!) from the Saint John group now sports an equatorial head of truly awesome mass. It works like a dream. Also impressive was the new 13.1" open truss Dobsonian built by Larry Bogan. This was a favorite and would have been a easy winner of the best workmanship award if we had awarded one! There was the usual assortment of high tech toys and low tech marvels, and response to the equipment display was excellent.

The talks for the public that evening were all standing room only. Mary Lou Whitehorne spoke about her solar observing and the sun in general. Larry Bogan did an excellent job of explaining the origin of the earth's moon. Pat Kelly gave a tour of the planets visible that night, and yours truly babbled on about the possibilities of life out in the cosmos. Having our members give these public level talks is greatly appreciated by the Park officials, and is an ideal opportunity to spread some astronomical information.

Afterwards, the weather was uncooperative (spelled RAIN), but members all congregated down at the cookhouse for some slide presentations. The small generator donated by John MacDonald, worked like a charm, and slides in the cookhouse will surely be a regular Nova East event. This gathering broke up about 2:00 AM. The great sky gods smiled upon us on Sunday, the morning sky cleared in a dramatic solid line which passed over, leaving a crystal clear blue sky. This is identical to what happened last year, when a similar blessing was bestowed upon our last day. Members enjoyed the Park's offerings all day, then a few gathered for some additional public viewing that evening. About 150 public saw the same assortment of objects. Then, the volunteers joined others back at the group campsite for a night of excellent observing. The seeing was good, perhaps not as stable as last year, but still above average. The transparency was very good, only slightly diminished by a dim but persistent auroral display which fizzled in the north for most of the night.

The views were superb. Second magnitude Comet Levy put on a real show as it swept through the region south-east of Altair. It was one of the fastest moving comets I have seen, with easily visible morion after a few minutes. Too bad the tail was so diffuse. Then of course, there were the various combinations of filters and eyepieces to test out. It certainly appears that the better quality pollution rejection filters and the OIII filters are here to stay. They do make a difference. I especially enjoyed the vast improvement the OIII filter renders on planetary nebulae. The extra detail and contrast must be the equivalent of at least doubling the aperture and the focal ratio. Now if only you could buy a gizmo to do the same on all those galaxies, sigh! We also had people fill out a registration form, which included a questionnaire about suggested improvements. These will be considered for future events. See you at Nova East next year.

Nominations for 1990 R.A.S.C. Officers

By-Law Number One of the Society provides for a Nominating Committee composed of three Past Presidents of the Society, determined by the Council, whose duty is to prepare a list of candidates for each elected and appointed office for which an election or appointment must be made.

In 1991, appointments (or re-appointments) for two national offices must be made: Recorder and Librarian. In addition, the Society is in a position to elect a new Honorary Member. If any member wishes to make suggestions for nominations for either of these offices or for a candidate for Honorary Membership, they should contact the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Dr. Lloyd Higgs, as soon as possible.

Write to: Dr. L.A. Higgs, Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory, Box 248, Penticton, B.C. V2A 6K3. Suggestions should be received before December 31, 1990, as appointments may be made at the February meeting of the National Council.

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