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## P.G.A.S. Newsletter #15      1988 Oct 20

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Hello everyone!! Well, things look a little better for us. Read on ...

### **OBSERVATORY NEWS**

Your executive is continuing our efforts in fundraising. It really looks as if we'll be able to participate in the North Nechako Lions Club casino in December (VOLUNTEERS NEEDED) in return for a donation by them to our coffers. That'll get us going.

Another promising source appears to be a local pulp mill where yours truly recently had an interview and made an application - we'll know in a month or so. We'll also apply to other businesses and to city council. An application will soon go off to B.C. Lotteries. If we could just get \$1000-2000 each from a handful of donors, we'd be there.

The current hope is that if we could raise the necessary funds this winter, the power line could go up this May and the observatory reopened. Stay with us!!!

### **RECENT OBSERVING**

Our public observing session in Ft. George Park went well last month (Sept 21/22). Although it was not too clear, Mars was OK at 10:00 and improved dramatically as the night wore on. There was always a line-up of 10-12 people at the Celestron-8 and at Warren's 6" Dobby. We finally packed it in at 1:00; somewhere in excess of 100 people looked through our telescopes. We must do it again sometime!

The phoning 'tree' was activated once, but only one other person showed up.

Continuing on in our public programme, Brian made a presentation to the Beverly Brownie Pack, making the Citizen. Great picture, Brian! And well done.

### **WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE SKY**

Well, although it's past its prime, Mars is still good to look at. If you haven't got out yet, what are you waiting for? (I've finally been able to identify features on the planet - my sketches on nearby nights definitely link up.) We will try to activate the phoning 'tree'; however, if it's a clear night, why not take the initiative and phone myself, or one of the other owners of telescopes? (Brian, Paul, Warren, ...) As regards to site, my preference is for Tabor Mountain; however, with winter coming on, we'll be using Forests for the World (on Cranbrook Hill) again.

Jupiter is getting better and better. On Nov 1, it will transit (cross the south point) at 1:26 (PST); thereafter 4 minutes earlier each night. On the last time out, I was able to observe 4 bands and quite a lot of other detail as well. The moons, of course, you can see with binoculars.

Other objects worth looking at are the great nebula in Orion, the Crab Nebula in Taurus, the many clusters in Auriga, etc.

Another object worth looking for is the asteroid 433 Eros which reaches opposition sometime near the end of October. Although it will only reach magnitude 11, there is a finder chart in Sky and Telescope for October, page 396. We'll have a go at finding it.

### **DID YOU KNOW?** (New feature)

- That there are over 30,000 variable stars in the sky.
- That the most common type is the RR Lyrae (cluster variable) with over 5000 members. These stars were, until recently, thought to be completely regular. Their periods are generally less than one day, and their amplitudes, about 1 magnitude.
- That the basic cause is instability in the outer layers of the star - it pulsates in and out.
- The spectral type of the RR Lyrae is A8 to F7 (bluer, hotter and more massive than our sun).
- That the brightest member of the class, RR Lyr, varies between magnitudes 7.2 and 8.0 and is therefore not quite a naked eye object.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, Oct 26 at 7:30 PM at the College, in room 2-223 (Physics Lab). This month, we'll be electing officers. Our present executive has agreed to carry on, but if you'd like to become involved, why not speak up at the meeting or talk to one of the executive?

May I take this opportunity to mention that your 1988-89 memberships are now due? We'd like very much for you to continue as a member - why not either pay at the meeting or drop it in the mail? It's \$20 (regular), \$10 (students and seniors) or \$5 (juniors).

Featured on Wednesday will be two talks:

- Paul Ingraham on the trip with his family to Arizona last summer when the constellation of Sagittarius figured prominently. Overhead, you say Paul?

- Bob Nelson (your fearless editor) on variable stars. What are these things? Come and find out.

We hope to see you there.

Bob Nelson, President