BUFFALO ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION INC.
BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE
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the Spectrum

Editor:
Ernst E. Both

MAY 1972

MAY MEETING: Our meeting on May 12, 1972 (8:00 p.m., EDT, Club Room, Buffalo Museum of Science) will feature a lecture by Dr. David D. Meisel entitled: "Molecules in Space: Comets and Clouds;" Dr. Meisel is Assistant Professor of Astronomy at the State University College of Geneseo, N.Y. He received his Ph.D. in astronomy at Ohio State University (1967) and has been associated in various capacities with the observatory at Pan American College, the McMillan Observatory, Perkins Observatory, and the Leander McCormick Observatory. Some years ago Dr. Meisel was also very active at the Comet Recorder of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO). Author of numerous papers, Dr. Meisel is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, a member of the American Astronomical Society and a number of other professional societies. We are looking forward to a very exciting lecture and it is with great pleasure that we welcome DR. MEISEL! * * * * * *

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* DEEP-SKY OBSERVING: MAY AND JUNE * By John Riggs

My favorite time of the year to observe has to be during the months of May and June. After the disappearance of twilight, the galaxy-rich consetllations of Virgo and Coma are well-placed near the meridian, offering many pleasurable hours of nebula hunting before they dip into the west. As these gradually become less suited for observation during the night, the early summer stars are already well above the eastern horizon and they finally divert ones attention from galaxies to globular and galactic star clusters. An entire night could be spent exploring. Has there ever been a better double feature late show than this?

Three well-placed Messier globulars make up an impressive prelude to the rising bounty of the summer Milky Way. The first of these, and the easiest to find, is the often neglected M 53 in Coma Berenices. To locate it, put alpha Comae in the finder field and then move off less than a degree to the north-east. You may want to try this operation with just the telescope and a low powered eyepiece instead of the finder. Either method should allow you to pick up this interesting object. With my 10-inch reflector it is a moderately small, rather bright, hazy ball that rises to a broad, bright nucleus. Even with low power, many faint outliners can be resolved around the edges. Though by no means equal to its neighbor, M 3, this globular is nevertheless a fine sight and much better than many of the Sagittarius globulars.

Not far off from M 53, as just mentioned, midway between Arcturus and alpha Canum Venaticorum lies the beautiful M3. This cluster is one of the more difficult

of the really fine globulars to locate since the distance between the two brightest finder stars is nearly 20 degrees. Under a good sky, M 3 can usually be seen without optical aid, though under poorer conditions binoculars will have to be used. A less frequently used finder star is beta Comae, located about 5 degrees west of M 3. Regardless of which stars are used to find it, in binoculars the cluster will appear as a small fuzzy spot or smudge next to a 7th magnitude star. Once found in the telescope, this globular resolves nicely into a large, bright ball of 12th to 14th magnitude stars. The nucleus is broad and oval in shape and a fine sight at high powers.

The last object that I would like to draw attention to is M 5, in Serpens Caput. Visually, this globular is in many respects almost a twin of M 3. I personally tend to feel that M 5 is the better of the two because of its slightly larger size and richer nucleus. Though not as difficult to find as M 3, it occasionally manages to elude some observers. As with M 3, M 5 can be seen with the naked eye under very good conditions. One of the best ways to find it is to start at the fourth magnitude 109 Virginis. This star is the first in a line of three bright stars, each about 4 degrees from the other, extending due east toward M 5. Get 109 in the field of view of your finder and sweep east to the second star in the chain, 110 Virginis. From 110 sweep east again to the last star, 5 Serpentis. The globular should be visible as a hazy patch just above 5, which is itself a nice double star. Through the telescope, M 5 appears as a large, bright cluster, with a very condensed central nucleus. The outliners can be well resolved at low to medium power and tend to rise abruptly to the nucleus. With my 10-inch at 125 X the cluster takes up nearly 1/4 of the field of view and is truly a splendid sight. Even suburban observers can see much of this cluster. Look for it, along with the other two, next time you are out with your telescope.

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* What's Happening at Newstead * By Tom Dessert

Very few of us seem to be aware of the Newstead facilities. This may seem strange at first, but stop and think. Have you ever really considered that the 12½-inch Newstead telescope is an instrument that you could have use of? To be sure, the accessibility to the grounds is restricted by Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory. You will find, however, that many of the personnel who have access to the grounds to be more than willing to accommodate individuals or groups in their use of the equipment.

This summer there will be many star parties, with more than just a few, I hope, at Newstead. Summertime is not the only season that Newstead can be used. There have been many observing sessions out there this winter and I am sure that, without exception, everyone who attended appreciated the conveniences of the facility. As an example, on the evening of March 10 there was a star party at Beaver Meadows (snow drifts and all) which lasted nearly two hours before everyone was nearly frozen solid. I have attended many observing sessions at Newstead under similar temperature and wind conditions and was never forced to quit because of the cold. The room adjacent to the observatory, heated as it is, makes all the difference in the world (not to mention Gretchen's coffee!).

Many of you have personal projects such as: observations of the Moon, Sun and planets, variable stars or binary stars, deep sky objects or astrophotography.

These may be much easier to pursue with an instrument the size and mass of the Newstead reflector. The facility offers many advantages to those of us who are willing to travel a few miles to enjoy them. To name just a few: you have a telescope that is readily adaptable to photography, either prime focus or image projection type. The mounting is large and massive enough to do double duty as an accessory equipment platform for cameras and/or guide scopes. Considering its nearness to the city, the sky condition is better than average and the building with its electric dome drive offers more than adequate protection from wind and city glow.

For those of you who would like to use these facilities, please get in touch with me and I will try to make arrangements for you and for your group. I may be reached at the monthly meetings or at home, phone 674-3922. You may be surprised to find that there are others who share your enthusiasm in your particular interest of astronomy.

Ed. Note: Some of the observing sessions Mr. Dessert mentioned above were those conducted by the Observing Section of our BAA. These are under the direction of Mr. John Riggs, who may be reached by phone at 875-7965. If you are interested in attending these sessions (usually on clear week-ends), we suggest you contact Mr. Riggs and tell him of your interest. I am sure you would enjoy these meetings.

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* STRIKE ONE FOR PROGRESS? * By Kurt Erland

Homo sapiens (I continue to wonder about that epithet) is at it again! Apparently not satisfied that he, in his infinite wisdom, has done much to pollute the visual night sky with neon and mercury splendor, he has of late focused his attention on the radio sky - for after all, if the optical astronomer is to be "done in" why not also the radio astronomer? Let us be fair!

It seems that the renowned Radiophysics Observatory of British Columbia will be threatened with extinction due to a planned housing development. This observatory was established in 1959 at a cost to the Canadian Government of something like 2.7 million dollars. It is located in the Okanagen valley somewhere near the town of Penticton, which in turn is about 20 miles north of the border of the state of Washington. Among other things this observatory developed the technique of measuring angular diameters of quasars.

According to its Director, Dr. John Galt, although the observatory controls about 6 square miles, its usefullness will be seriously challenged if a proposed housing development is approved. Originally the observatory was placed in this somewhat isolated region to provide for a minimum of man-made radio interference. Obviously, if the development proceeds, there will be plenty of radio interference and the observatory may then have to close down. At present some 6 to 10 astronomers and between 5 and 6 technicians work there.

While we certainly do not wish to meddle in Canadian problems, we do hope that Canadian amateurs will do everything in their power to try and stop this latest example of "progress." Perhaps it is time (actually it is already too late) that amateurs as well as professional astronomers become militant in their

efforts (both here and across the border) to press for legislation which would curtail further pollution of the night sky, both optical and radio. For if man is to survive on this planet, his spirit needs these windows to the universe just as much as he needs clean water to drink and pure air to breathe. ****** (Some of the information contained in this epistel was culled from a broadcast on February 17, 1972, 7:50 p.m., CBC-Toronto). **********

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* SPY AND TELL * We were overwhelmed with the response to our recent competition to fill in the missing letters in John Riggs' DEEP-SKY OBserving. The total number of entries was ... ONE! The one and only entry and the winner is/was Warren Steinberg. He will be presented with the prize at the May meeting. C'est la vie! *** We hear that Bob Burdick has finished his 10-inch Maksutov Camera, hope to hear about it at the June meeting, Bob! *** The Christy's (Darwin and Orrin) and their observatory were featured in a beautiful two-page spread in the March 1972 issue of NIAGARA MOHAWK NEWS. In addition, Orrin had a front-page picture and a two-page spread in FRONTIER, Tonawanda News, February 26, 1972. Our sincerest congratulations to the CHRISTY's! *** We also received an undated clipping concerning some of the Work done at Bell, showing Les Stoklosa examining an electroformed rocket thrust chamber. *** We are happy to hear that Irv Goetz is well again after a protracted bout with illness. *** We will start a survey of member's telescope equipment at the May meeting. It would be nice to know what kind of instruments our members own and/or use. *** WE NEED MATERIAL FOR THE SPECTRUM **********

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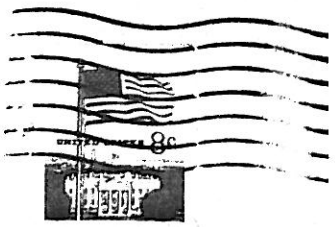

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