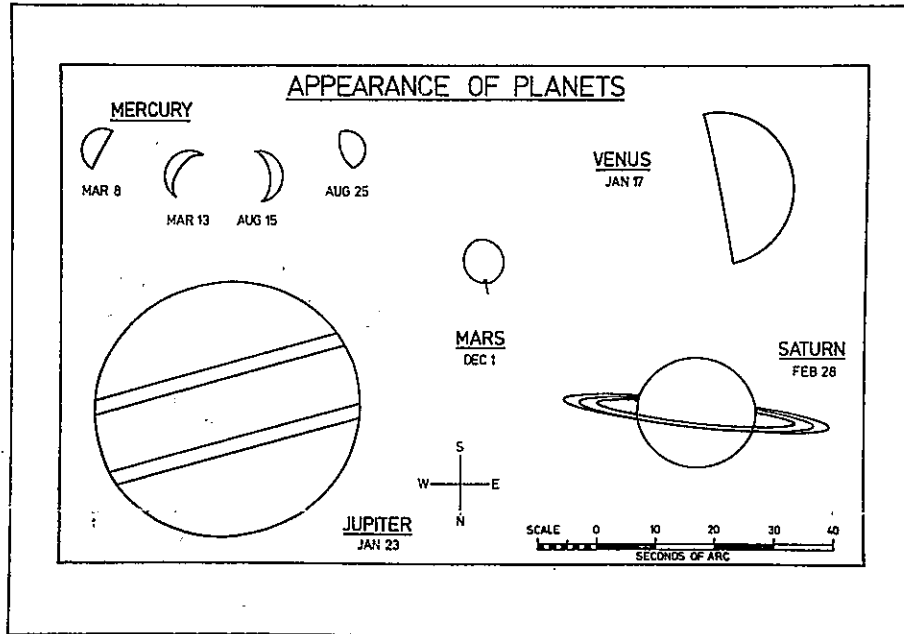


February, 1979



This month's illustration is stolen from the 1979 Handbook of the British Astronomical Association. It depicts the appearance of the planets in 1979. The BAA Handbook is available from the Astronomical League Subscription Service.

Our February meeting will feature Jerry Armstrong. Jerry is an accomplished observer, and this fact alone makes his presentation worth listening to. His subject is his area of expertise: OBSERVING COMETS AND ASTEROIDS. The meeting will be held on Friday, February 16, at 8:00 pm. The location, as usual, will be Bradley Observatory.

At the conclusion of the February meeting, two further attractions will be offered. Mr. Julius Staal will present another of his fascinating planetarium programs. This is a rare opportunity to hear a world-renowned lecturer explain a mystery which should be a mystery to no one: the night sky. At the same time, the Astro-Aid Committee will hold a seminar on the solution of telescope building problems. This discussion will be led by Mark Christensen, our resident optics expert. Bring your telescope problems with you!

This month, the last total eclipse of the sun to be visible from North America in this century will take place. Testing various lenses for use on what will be the last eclipse expedition of my life has been an eye-opening experience. My method of testing is to make the very best photograph possible of the moon with each lens. These images are then enlarged to the same size and printed on 8 X 10 paper. The first candidate was a Spiratone 400 mm lens which cost all of \$39. In order to reduce the expected aberrations in this f/6.3 cheapie it was stopped down to f/11. Image quality was unusually good. Next I borrowed an f/4.5 Nikon lens of 300 mm focal length. In order to be fair, it too was stopped down to f/11. Guess what? Image quality was noticeably poorer than that of the Spiratone!

Ten times the cost, 2/3 stop more speed, and less quality. How the mighty have fallen! I then purchased a Celestron 90, focal length 1000 mm, cost \$320. This unit was poorly constructed. The focusing arrangement was inadequate for photographic use and a generous helping of backlash was thrown in free of charge. Severe vignetting reduced the advertized aperture of 3.5 inches to an effective 2.1 inches (and an effective f/19). The image quality was the poorest yet. In fact it was totally unacceptable. This expensive mistake reinforced my belief that sophistication of optical design does not insure a quality image. In fact it makes it less likely. I believe that the simplest optical system is the best, so I have now ordered a  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inch f/12 achromat from Jaegers and fully expect it to win my mini-sweepstakes. The Tuthill Solar Skreen was found to be very effective and free of any adverse optical problems. I plan to use Kodachrome 25 film, which is noted for its resolution, sharpness and faithful color rendition.

#### TELESCOPE FUND

It is now time to take advantage of Mark Christensen's telescope making expertise. We need \$400 - \$500 with which to order some parts so that development of a large telescope can begin. I'm expecting some of you to join me in giving \$100 or more. All those who have been too busy to take part in construction and clean-up details at the Barber Observatory in 1978 are hereby condemned to making a cash donation as penitence.

Lee Wilson  
Factotum, Fund Raiser, Etc.

The Board of Directors met on January 11, 1979, at the behest of Anna Belle Close, Chairman. The following actions were taken:

1. Transfer of \$150 from the Treasury to the Observatory Fund to cover current debts.
2. Date of the convention of the South East Region of the Astronomical League, to be hosted by our club, was set for June ~~14-16~~ 14-16
3. The printing of additional club stationery was authorized.

Club President David Speering has announced that time slots for new business and announcements must be reserved in advance of the meeting. Every member has a right to speak at our meetings, but those in attendance have the right to have business matters presented in an orderly and brief manner. If you wish to speak, please contact David at 957-9653.

