

ATLANTA ASTRONOMY CLUB NEWSLETTER

MEETING

Don Hall

938-8139

The January 1985 meeting will be held at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, January 18 at the Bradley Observatory of Agnes Scott College.

PROGRAM

Dennis Holmes 926-1142

"COMPUTERS IN ASTRONOMY", a presentation by several AAC members on the ways they have found to apply small personal computers to their astronomical pursuits. Please plan to attend this timely and informative program.

TREASURY NOTES

Herb Teeple

394-5784

There are no new members to report. The treasury report will appear here in the February newsletter.

THE UPPER HALF

George Reight 633-1202

Last month I mentioned that we had a total of 15 members who are active candidates for the prestigious M-Club but was recently contacted by Ken Rockwell, Mark Wilkinson and Bill Snell who wanted to be added to the list. This makes a total of 18 who are after the coveted award(s). If all of them qualify, I'm inclined to believe that our club will set a record for at least the Region. If not a record, it will be mighty close to one. Anyway, please give me a call to keep me apprised on a regular basis of your progress.

The objects near the zenith this month are all bright and quite easy. You will probably be able to catch them all in one night and will still have plenty of time left over to start chasing the ones you missed last month or perhaps catch a few coming up in the east. The January group is as follows:

M38	5h 25m	+35° 48'	Open Cluster	Mag 7
M36	5h 32m	+34° 07'	"	" 6
M37	5h 49m	+32° 33'	"	" 6
M35	6h 05m	+24° 20'	"	" 5
M1	5h 31m	+21° 59'	S'nova remn't	" 8
M78	5h 44m	+00° 02'	Diffuse Neb.	-
M42	5h 33m	-05° 25'	"	-
M43	5h 33m	-05° 18'	"	-
M79	5h 22m	-24° 34'	Glob. Cluster	Mag 8
M41	6h 44m	-20° 42'	Open Cluster	" 5
M93	7h 42m	-23° 45'	"	" 6
M46	7h 39m	-14° 42'	"	" 6
M50	7h 00m	-08° 16'	"	" 6.

When you get to M1 you may spend more time staring at this somewhat unimpressive grey smudge than you planned. You will be looking at one of the most observed and analyzed objects in the sky. This boiling deadly debris resulting from a stupendous explosion of a dying star is expanding at the rate of about 1100 km per second. It would expand from the earth to the moon in about 6 minutes and, of course, completely destroy any form of life on a neighboring planet for many light years outward.

I have always been puzzled about why the Europeans missed this brilliant nova while the Chinese and Japanese noted and kept detailed records of this event. However, according to historians, the Europeans were involved in a religious fanaticism that proclaimed all phenomena miraculous thereby denying any attempt at scientific explanation. Furthermore, the peasants were exhausted at the end of the workday and could have cared less about a new star.

Royalty was busy trying to scheme and plot ways for territorial expansion and looked at the sky only to determine if the weather might interfere with their battle plans.

All of this seems reasonable but there is another factor that probably

is the real answer. If you look at the way men dressed in the middle of the 11th century, you'll find that the fashion called for mini-skirts and pantyhose. Dressed like that, I'm confident men stayed indoors to avoid the giggles of the ladies and to also avoid the cool evening breezes. I dare say I don't blame them. I now consider the subject closed.

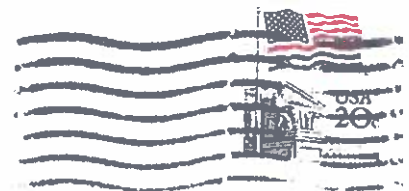
Finally, a rational explanation regarding the appearance and fading of a brilliant new star in 1572 and 1604 came from a series of lectures given in April 1842 by Mr. D. M. Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell was the director of the Cincinnati Observatory at that time. His theory was: "The revolution of these stars in orbits of great eccentricity causing them to appear to us like comets, only in perihelion points of their mighty orbits."

We've come a long way since then baby but lest we become a bit smug about our present knowledge and sophistication, let's remember that the "universe is not only queerer than we imagine but queerer than we can imagine"; as quoted by John Haldane in 1927.

FOR SALE: Celestron 18 mm orthoscopic eyepiece - Don Hall, 938-8139

FOR SALE: "The Brass 5 X 5 - a beautiful custom made 5", f5 refractor with an air-spaced 5" objective, custom 2" focuser, a 32 mm König eyepiece and all mounted in a custom brass tube. A limited number of these fine instruments are available for \$1199 each. Contact Bill Zinkow, 948-0683.

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