



Winnicentrics

The Journal of the Winnipeg Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

My Slow and Amazing Journey to the Stars

by Terra Jentsch

Hi, my name is Terra Jentsch, and I am 13 years of age. Right now, I have been a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (better known as RASC) for 1½ years. I first came to a meeting at St. John's College in November 2002. But I guess I should start at the beginning. For as long as I can remember, my mother was fascinated with astronomy. We would go on camping trips and I would see her pull out a piece of paper with dots all over it. I later learned that that was called a star chart. I never understood the importance of all this dot stuff. I thought it was all connect the dots, but I left her to doing the connecting. After all, it was her game.

It was in grade two that I started getting interested in astronomy. I wanted to be a famous astronaut (who didn't when they were young?) and I imagined all the sights I would see. It turns out that being an astronaut was not really what I was interested in. I actually wanted to see nebulae and other galaxies, because I had grown up watching shows such as Babylon 5 and Star Trek, courtesy of my mom. The thought of just looking down on the earth didn't satisfy me. I had grown used to all the big stuff. Not just planets or the Sun, I thought BIG.

It was in grade five that I found out about astronomers and all the cool stuff they did. That was the beginning of a never-ending era. I had quickly made up my mind. I wanted to be an astronomer. I didn't actually move into it until grade seven, when I started asking my parents silly questions that no twelve year old should be thinking about at my age. I started with the basics; "Do you think I'll be a good astronomer?" Then I got to the really ridiculous stuff like, "What courses do I have to take in high school and university in order to become an astronomer?" I think that, at first, my parents thought I would get over it, and sometimes I do doubt what I promised myself, but every time I see the RASC members talk, I get the feeling this is what I want to do.

Sure

sometimes I get the feeling when I think about being an author but who said I can't do both?

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Deadline for the next issue is August 22, 2004

MEETINGS

(and other fun stuff)

July 9 Friday

Our Annual Barbecue Place: Glenlea Observatory Start Time 6:30 or so

Today is the Centre's annual barbecue and all-night observing session at Glenlea Observatory! Bring along some barbecue-ables (and a barbecue if you can), some drinks, and any food for sharing. Also bring along your spouse or significant other, kids, etc. for a fun family day. (Don't forget the bug spray!) Be sure to pick up your registration form for SSSP and also bring your membership surveys and Gail will send them in all at once.

People usually arrive around 6:30 or so to start eating. The event continues as long as people want to stay. If it's clear, we'll have both the Meade 12" and the 14.5" Dob in use.

August 20 Friday

Beginners Session with Lindsay Price 7:00

Note the date change

Regular Meeting 7:30

Room 118, St. John's College

Because the SSSP will take place on the second Friday of August we are moving our meeting to the third Friday to make sure nobody has to miss either one.

Where is everybody? Are we alone in the universe? by Robin Woods

Astronomers, astrobiologists and writers of science fiction tend to fall into two camps. Either humanity is unique or the universe is teeming with alien forms of intelligent life. But if there are alien civilisations and they are capable of space travel why have we not encountered them? This concern was first expressed by Enrico Fermi in 1942 when he asked "Where is everybody?" There are three solutions to the Fermi Paradox: a) the aliens are here already, (b) the aliens exist but have not yet communicated with us, (c) they do not exist. Robin will present these alternatives and suggest the most probable solution.

Plus: Michael Kinsner will show us some video, Ralph Croning will tell us about Saturn in the "Picture of the Month" and the regular features: "What's New" by Jennifer West, "Explore the Universe" Observing Certificate by Lindsay Price, Light Pollution Education by Fred Wood, and Gail's "Constellation of the Month" looks at Pegasus the Winged Horse.

Public Observing Nights

Saturday July 24

Spruce Woods Provincial Park

The folks at Spruce Woods have asked us to come out with our telescopes to show campers the wonders of the night sky. This will follow a short program by the park interpreters. We will be allowed to camp for free in the Winter Use Area, which is where we have had our astronomy weekends in the past. I am still working on getting provincial park passes for us. If you would like to go, please let Gail know.

Saturday August 21

Big Whiteshell

We did such a good job last year that we have been asked to return to the Big Whiteshell for a public night. We will be given 4 free camping spots, all in a block, each one will hold two tents. We have also been promised free entry into the park, so if you don't have your provincial park pass for the season let Gail know as soon as possible, as they have to be ordered far in advance (this is the government, remember).

Saturday September 18

Birds Hill Park

Plan to come out to Birds Hill Park for a public night you don't have to travel as far to get to. We will likely be in the Folk Festival area, where we were for the Mars observing last year. Contact Gail for more details as the time get closer.



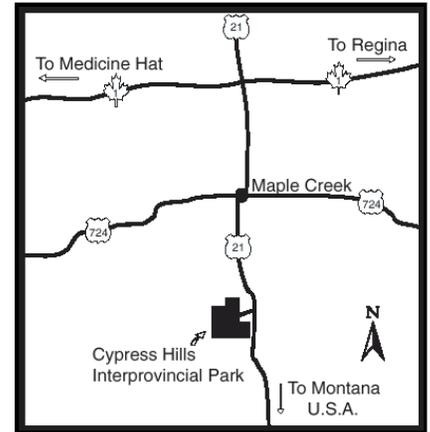
These public nights are always loads of fun, just ask anyone who has been to one. We will need at least 4 telescopes for Spruce Woods and Big Whiteshell, and as many as we can get for Birds Hill Park. Since it's early we don't know yet the exact start times, but Gail will keep you posted.

SSSP 2004

August 12 – 15

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

The Saskatoon and Regina Centres of the RASC invites you to the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party 2004 (SSSP 2004) held at the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park over the weekend of August 12 to 15, 2004. Guest speaker this year at SSSP 2004 is Joshua Roth of Sky and Telescope magazine. Be sure to pick up a registration form at the July barbecue.



Please note that there is an early registration deadline of July 23, 2004 and the charge is an additional \$10.00 per registration form received after that date or for registrations taken at the Star Party. If you are planning to buy a T-shirt or a golf shirt and would like to pick it up at the star party please have your registration with payment in early, as we have to have the shirt count into the suppliers by July 31, 2004. You will be able to order a T-shirt or Golf shirt at the SSSP but there will be a small additional charge for postage and a 2-4 week delivery.

Also note that if you are planning to attend the banquet on Saturday night please send in your registration and payment early as there are limited spaces available and we also have to submit total banquet numbers to the caterers before the start of the star party. The banquet has been in the past a popular and well-attended event of the star party.

Also note that if you plan to attend and camp there is plenty of room in the Meadows for camping. However there is limited number of resort accommodations and recommend booking your resort lodging as early as possible. If you are going to book accommodations at the resort, mention that you are with the SSSP 2004 Star Party as we have arranged for a block of rooms, cabins and condos to be set aside for Star Party participants.

For more information you can contact Bill Hydromako at: 135 Manning Cres. Saskatoon Sask. S7L 6J3 or : phone (306) 384-4781 or: e-mail: wm.hydomako@sasktel.net

Or you can go to the SSSP 2004 web site at:
<http://duke.usask.ca/~ges125/rasc/sssp2004.html>

ELECTIONS 2004!

The October Meeting is our Centre's Annual General Meeting, when we deal with the official parts of running our club and also elect new officers to Council. As usual, there are a number of vacancies we'll be looking to fill, so if you're interested in joining the Council, now's your chance!

The following terms expire at the October meeting:

President – gAIL Wise
1st Vice-President – Robin Woods
2nd Vice-President – Lindsay Price
Treasurer – Stan Runge
Secretary – Jay Anderson

Councillor – 2 positions open.

The position of Councillor is a great way to join the Council. It involves attending the council meetings (6 or 8 a year) and helping make the decisions about what we do for the year: do we spend money on this or that, what speakers do we get for the meetings, what observing activities do we do, etc. It also involves writing 1 article a year for Winnicentrics on a topic of your choice, and co-hosting an observing session or two for the members. Pretty easy, and it lets you get involved in running this club we all get to enjoy.

The office of Treasurer is appointed by Council; all other positions are elected by the general membership at the October meeting. The Nominating Committee consists of Scott Young (Chair), Stan Runge, and Jay Anderson (three past-Presidents of the Centre). Nominations can be sent to scyoung@manitobamuseum.ca, or via mail c/o Scott Young, 190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 0N2, or through a member of the nominating committee.

WATCH FOR THE NOMINATIONS FORM IN THE NEXT WINNICENTRICS



Farewell to Carey Deschamps, who has been posted to St. Albert, Alberta. Carey was the driving force behind the Spruce Woods Astroweekend for all of its years and we appreciate all of his hard work. Many thanks and all the best to you, Carey and we hope to see you at the SSSP!

LPEC Happenings

by Lindsay Price

The Light Pollution Education Committee met at the Southlands Community Church on Sat May 29, 2004. Three people attended and discussed several important points. First among them was the creation of a speakers list of people who would be able and willing to talk to groups and officials about the subject. It would not be difficult to give members information on what to say, and flyers to give away. The group also talked about how to reach the appropriate officials responsible for street lighting, lights in city parks, the proposal committee looking at the redevelopment of Portage and Main, and the Environmental Impact Review Committee for the expansion of the floodway. Then, the committee wondered why only three people came to the meeting. (Hockey??) Fred provided the attendees with the new web site address; <www.members.shaw.ca/fred_wood > and for e-mail to the lpec committee use, < wpglpec@shaw.ca >. It is a good site. Each of us should make a point to take a look at it.

Following that, Lindsay decided to do one of the things to help towards a solution to the problem. A streetlight on his street shines onto the street, all over his front yard and straight into his living room window. So he decided to make the call and see how long it takes to correct the situation. Here is the story. The contact to have a shield placed onto a street light is: Manitoba Hydro 474-4990, but there are several layers of number-pressing to get someone to talk to you. Keep pressing the numbers that will take you to the office for reporting "Street Light Burnt Out". I requested a shield on the light that shines into my living room on June 1st. I shall keep you informed of what is happening and when.

The following members are working toward their:

Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	41
Robin Woods	87
Lindsay Price	21
Murray Rennie	19
Carey Deschamps	64

Explore the Universe:

Terra Jentsch	17
Stan Runge	6
Lindsay Price	73
Timothy Kennedy	32
Judy Starr	22
Ray Starr	21
Sandy Shewchuk	14
Eugene d'Auteuil	12
Murray Rennie	6

Herschel 400's

Stan Runge	93
Sean Ceaser	133
Mike Stephens	82

Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	67
Robin Woods	7
Mike Stephens	59

We have the following new members

Stefan Ozog, Winnipeg
 Jeff Harland, Brandn
 Brian Renaud, Gimli
 Paul Karlowky, Brunkild

Welcome to our club!

If you are interested in using the Warm Room please contact Robin Woods for a key (\$10.00 deposit required). If you would like training on the LX200 Robin will be running training sessions, but not on Members Observing Nights. You can contact him at 586-4173 or robin.woods@uwinnipeg.ca or talk to Robin at a meeting.

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My Slow and Amazing Journey

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Then, one day, my mom came home and said there was something maybe I would like to go to. She explained about RASC and their meetings and such. I agreed to go and, I do admit, most of the time, I spent drawing pictures and stuff with my sister . . . but that's not my fault, I have the attention span of a two year old. Some stuff I listened to, and gradually, I became interested in what was going on. I heard them talk about a Leonid Meteor shower and I knew I wanted to see that. I had to beg my mom because it was, fortunately for me, on a school night. That was where I met a couple of members of the club such as Robin, a kind gentleman who I have taking a liking to.

A month passed, and it was soon Christmas Day. I received a wonderful gift from my parents that day; they had paid for my membership into RASC. That was my favourite gift that day, besides the pool table. Since then there has been a lot of change. I have made friends with most of the people at the meetings, though I may not remember their names. I am trying for my Explore the Universe certificate and I have made two presentations for "Picture of the Month", my first being about the Andromeda galaxy and the second being about Sharpless 140.

Though I may not be as dedicated as all other members, I try to balance it between school, the few friends I have, and any other stuff that peaks my interest. I've grown so much over the time that it surprised me when I chose the Andromeda Galaxy as my speech for Français (I'm in French immersion) but it surprised me even more when a kid in my class asked what a galaxy was.

It may not be a fascinating story to hear but in the end, I encourage other people my age, younger and older, to join. Though it may not sound like an interesting story, I assure you, the journey is well worth it if you are interested.

Between a shaky beginning and an ending that did not happen, was sandwiched a nearly perfect day of astronomical public publicity, information and solar viewing.

Lindsay had much of the organizing done and then was called out of province to work and on very short notice gAIL picked up the pieces and by 09:30 on Saturday April

Astronomy Day - Lots of Sun; The Stars Blew Away *by Lindsay Price*

24, when we set up it ran just by the numbers! (That's Airforce talk. It means "well".) When gAIL and I arrived with a little truck full of astro goodies, the mall had the skirted tables and chairs in place and the doors open, all ready for us. We were arranging, Fred Wood came with the Light Pollution Education material, then Ralph Croning came and we began to assemble a plastic puzzle called the "Blue Background Display". After an interminable amount of time it was discovered that there were instructions on the back. By following the instructions it is amazing how fast and easily it went together. The instructions are now written in considerably more prominent script. Gordon Tulloch and Stephen Smyth arrived with their telescopes and we noticed that the area we had reserved for solar viewing was having a localized hurricane. Windy just does not say it all! However, another location was found and the afternoon proceeded with a large number of people getting their first look at the surface of the sun with three sunspots to provide subject for "Wow! I didn't know that!"

People who committed to shifts arrived, others came and stayed as long as they could and we always had at least two telescopes inside and four or five out under the sun. It seemed the day could not go any better. We talked to scores, possibly hundreds, of people about astronomy, the RASC, light pollution abatement, and even gained a new member. We invited all of them to come to the Forks to see the planets through a variety of telescopes, and they all said "Yes!" At seven o'clock it was raining. At eight o'clock it was raining. Then I quit looking until eleven o'clock and it was a gorgeous clear night. PANIC.

It was agreed that it was a highly successful Astronomy Day. Polo Park Mall was a good locale and we would probably ask to be there next year. Some discussion took place along the lines of saying that it would be good to do the display at one location for a couple of years and then move to another part of the city and meet a different audience. Having done several years at the Forks, then perhaps a few at Polo Park then on to possibly St. Vital Center or Kildonan Place. Also, since spring this far north may not be the best time to interest people in astronomy because people are thinking about getting away on holidays from their regular activities, and the fact that soon it will not get dark until it is time to get light again. Astronomy Day started in California where it is always summer and has nighttime even in July. But in the fall, there is "International Space Day", and that might be a more productive time to do our publicity displays. However, this is not a new topic within the RASC, but it could be an idea for discussion.