



# Winnicentrics

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

## A Night of Wonder

by *Bhagwan Thadani*

I have been dabbling in astronomy for more than 40 years, when I got my first book on the heavenly science, *All about Telescopes*, by Sam Brown published by Edmund Scientific Company in 1967. I still have it and remember how it inspired me to try my hand at making my own telescope from scratch, from grinding the mirror to making my own equatorial mount out of pipes and tubes. Needless to say, I soon gave up this task.

Then I bought a 60 mm Tasco refractor and had my first marvelous glimpse of Saturn from my back yard, but as the years passed, the bigger problem was light pollution from the expanding city and the Smart Park which the University of Manitoba had constructed nearby. No matter how hard I tried, I could locate only a few of the Messier objects with difficulty. I could only look with envy at the photos of the deep sky objects published in *SkyNews*, and other magazines. I wondered if I could really see these star clusters and galaxies that Messier had located more than 200 years ago with his primitive telescopes. I will not talk about the many small telescopes that I bought and junked after finding that I was not seeing any of the great balls of fire in the sky that I looked for.

I have been a member of the Winnipeg Center of RASC for years and had often wanted to take part in the Observers Night at Glenlea. However, I was deterred when some moron told me that Glenlea was 100 km from the city, so that getting there and returning would take several hours. Without a car, with arthritis attacking my knees, I let a couple of years slip by. Finally, I picked up courage, rented a car and had someone drive me to the place in daylight. The observatory was a mere 20 km away from where I was, a barely 30 minutes drive, but it was deserted and everything locked up, including the big dome.

*continued on page 5*

---

### *In This Issue:*

A Night of Wonder ----- page 1  
 Meetings ----- page 2  
 MON's, News----- page 3  
 Members Observing Counts ---- page 4

Book Review ----- page 6  
 Astronomy Courses ----- page 7  
 President's Corner ----- page 9  
 Mr Bud ----- page 10

# MEETINGS

Room 118, St. John's College,  
University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus

## Friday January 11

7:00-7:30 Beginner's session: Peter Toth  
7:30-7:40 Welcome and announcements: Ron Berard  
7:40 to 7:50 News  
7:50-8:00 Constellation of the Month- Lepus the Hare: Gail Wise  
8:00-8:10 What's up: Jay Anderson  
8:10-8:30 What's New: Jennifer West  
8:30-8:50 Break  
8:50-9:00 Picture of the Month: Speaker TBA

### 9:00-9:50 **Guest Speaker: Jay Anderson---** "Looking Down"

As astronomers, we are inclined to look outward to the sky. This presentation takes the opposite viewpoint - looking down at the Earth from a variety of satellite platforms. Though we'll discuss how to use satellite images for evaluating tonight's weather prospects, we will also engage in a whimsical exploration of some other artifacts on the blue ball we call Earth.

9:50-10:00 Adjourn and head out for Pizza.

## Friday February 9

7:00-7:30 Beginner's session: Gerry Smerchanski  
7:30-7:40 Welcome and Announcements: Ron Berard  
7:40-7:50 News  
7:50-8:00 Constellation of the Month- Canis Major the Big Dog: Gail Wise  
8:00-8:10 What's up: Jay Anderson  
8:10-8:30 What's New: Jennifer West  
8:30-8:50 Break  
8:50-9:00 Picture of the Month: Speaker TBA

### 9:00-9:50 **Astronomy Wheel Of Fortune!**

Host "Ronny Star" and his lovely co-host Gail will test contestants' astronomy knowledge in an hilarious trivia game. If you think you know a thing or two about astronomy, or just want to have fun and maybe win a prize, put your name in to the hat and, who knows, you may be the next contestant on the ASTRONOMY WHEEL OF FORTUNE!

9:50-10:00 Adjourn and head out for Pizza.

## Members Observing Nights Glenlea Observatory

### Saturday January 12

8 p.m. till whenever

As the new year dawns, we find that the Dragon, Draco, has come between the bear cub, Ursa Minor, and his mother, Ursa Major. Later in the evening the mother bear will climb higher in an unsuccessful attempt to get past the dragon's tail.

January nights are usually clear, but also *cold* so be sure to dress in lots of layers. The warm room will be open for coffee, tea and hot chocolate when it gets too uncomfy outside.

### Saturday February 10

8 p.m. till whenever

On February evenings skywatchers can watch Leo, the celestial lion, leap up above the eastern horizon. The lion is accompanied by his cub, Leo Minor. With their appearance, can spring be far behind?

### ***News in a minute . . .***

Best wishes and congratulations to Jocelyn and Scott Young who welcomed daughter Annabel Katherine on December 17. They are only getting 3 hours of sleep each night, but that means seeing the early morning sky through the nursery window.

Our annual Winter Potluck will be held on January 19 at the home of Lucille Eustache, 55 Parasiuk Place. More details at the January meeting, or call 669-8003 if you need directions or dinner suggestions.

### The Winnipeg Centre Executive Council

President	
Ron Berard	668-6551
<a href="mailto:rcberard@gmail.com">rcberard@gmail.com</a>	
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice-President	
Gail Wise	794-2624
<a href="mailto:wgail@mts.net">wgail@mts.net</a>	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice-President	
Tim Kennedy	269-0183
<a href="mailto:tajab@mts.net">tajab@mts.net</a>	
Past-President	
Lindsay Price	227-4684
<a href="mailto:flprice@mts.net">flprice@mts.net</a>	
Secretary	
Jay Anderson	474-1485
<a href="mailto:jander@cc.umanitoba.ca">jander@cc.umanitoba.ca</a>	
Treasurer	
Mike Stephens	832-0485
<a href="mailto:mikestephens@shaw.ca">mikestephens@shaw.ca</a>	
<b><u>Councilors</u></b>	
Marlene Wallace	999-7423
<a href="mailto:mtllwallace@hotmail.com">mtllwallace@hotmail.com</a>	
Nicole Choptain	255-5682
<a href="mailto:nicolewpg@shaw.ca">nicolewpg@shaw.ca</a>	
Peter Toth	757-9300
<a href="mailto:peter_toth@pcs.mb.ca">peter_toth@pcs.mb.ca</a>	
Kevin Black	224-0182
<a href="mailto:cblack@shaw.ca">cblack@shaw.ca</a>	
Kris Keller	667-5540
<a href="mailto:keller1@mts.net">keller1@mts.net</a>	
<b><u>Appointed Positions</u></b>	
<b><u>Librarian</u></b>	
Fred Wood	774-3238
<a href="mailto:fred_wood@shaw.ca">fred_wood@shaw.ca</a>	
<b><u>Observatory Director</u></b>	
Ray Andrejowich	667-6896
<a href="mailto:saturn3@shaw.ca">saturn3@shaw.ca</a>	
<b><u>Observatory Bookings</u></b>	
Kevin Black	224-0182
<a href="mailto:cblack@shaw.ca">cblack@shaw.ca</a>	
<b><u>Webmaster</u></b>	
Ron Berard	668-6551
<a href="mailto:rcberard@gmail.com">rcberard@gmail.com</a>	
<b><u>Winnicentrics Editor</u></b>	
Gail Wise	794-2624
<a href="mailto:wgail@mts.net">wgail@mts.net</a>	

*Winnicentrics* is published six times each year by the Winnipeg Centre, RASC. *Winnicentrics* is produced by and for the members of the Winnipeg Centre, and any opinions expressed are those of the author. If you have comments, questions or concerns about *Winnicentrics*, you can contact any of the councilors or write to RASC, Winnipeg Centre, Box 2694 Winnipeg MB R3C 4B3

# Members' Observing Counts

The following members are working towards their:

## Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	41
Murray Rennie	26
Lindsay Price	47
Kris Keller	110

(YAY Kris!)

## Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	81
Ray Andrejowich	110
Berni Plett	45

## Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	188
Sean Ceaser	145
Mike Stephens	220

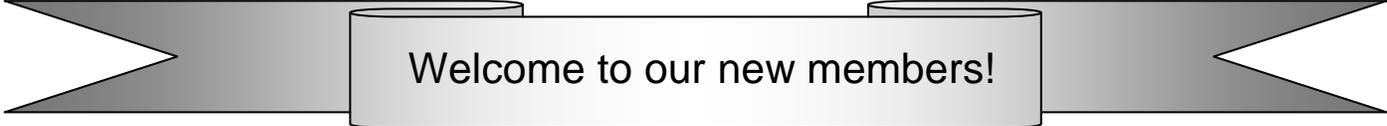
## Explore the Universe:

Peter Toth	57
Stan Runge	13
Tim Kennedy	58
Judy Starr	22
Ray Starr	21
Eugene d'Auteuil	12
Murray Rennie	6
Sandy Shewchuk	47

## Isabel Williamson Lunar

Mike Stephens	149
---------------	-----

If you are interested in using the Warm Room please contact Lindsay Price for a key (\$10.00 deposit required). If you would like training on the LX200 Lindsay will be running training sessions, but not on Members Observing Nights. You can contact him at 227-4684 or [flprice@mts.net](mailto:flprice@mts.net) or talk to Lindsay at a meeting.



Welcome to our new members!

Bryan Stach, Winnipeg  
 Don Nowicki, Winnipeg  
 Carl Epp, Winnipeg  
 Derek Copp, Grand Rapids  
 Gabe Marion, Winnipeg  
 Spencer Holmes, Winnipeg  
 Jenna Zappia, Winnipeg  
 Caroline DeHedervary, Riverton

## **A Night of Wonder** *continued from page 1*

I felt like kicking myself for not having attended these observer meetings earlier; and so I arranged for a ride to Glenlea for November the 10th, certain that I could find the place easily. The day started ominously, with an overcast sky, but wonder of wonders, it started clearing by late evening and I called upon my ride to get ready and drive me to Glenlea.

But the night makes everything so different. My driver insisted that he could read the map that I had printed out and kept going on and on, till we landed in some residential area, far from the city. I'm still not sure where exactly I forced him to stop. There was no sign of any dome. There were heated exchanges between me and my stubborn driver, who happened to be my grandson; I forced him to backtrack, drive slowly and stop the car. I walked along a dirt road where I recalled I had seen a sign and voila! I knew I was on the right track and finally guided him to the observatory grounds.

How can I forget the magical hours that we spent there among fellow amateur astronomers? In the cold dark night, with everybody dressed in dark parkas and hoodies, I could not recognize anybody, but it did not matter. The site looked like a gathering of priests tending their idols of all shapes and sizes. I mean their telescopes mostly big and bulky. Many of these druids were equipped with small red flashlights, moving from spot to spot, making everything look eerie and unworldly.

In the meanwhile, the sky had cleared up and was ablaze with stars; I could even make out the Milky Way, the Aakaash Ganga, the Ganges of the sky, as my Hindu ancestors called it. I was like a kid in a candy shop. I peeked through every telescope that had been set up and begged to see the deep sky sights that I had been yearning to see for years. I was surprised at the friendliness and knowledge of these great ones, one of whom pulled out a green laser sword that sliced through the skies and settled on M31. I saw the Ring Nebula in Lyra, the Hercules cluster, the big and ferocious Comet Holmes, the Spiral Galaxy, the dazzling Pleiades and I don't know how many other deep sky objects.

I was dizzy with delight when I heard a great grinding sound coming from the big temple, the dome of domes. It was Ron Berard who invited me to go inside, up a trapdoor and into the sanctum. The mighty 12 inch behemoth was coming to life, but unfortunately it stalled and needed tender loving care for some time to recover.

It was getting chilly and I was glad to get to the Warm Room to warm up my old bones till the behemoth was functional again. I climbed back through the trapdoor and looked through the eye of the Cyclops, and saw the Andromeda Galaxy, in all its splendor. But it was getting late and my driver was beginning to show signs of impatience. It was time to depart and reluctantly, I got out of the great dome and headed for the parking lot.

As we drove back to the city, the light pollution seemed to switch off the stars and constellations one by one, till I could barely make out Vega when I reached home. When will the night regain its glory, I thought regretfully. Then I wondered if I should buy a bigger heavier telescope and start going to a gym to build up my muscles to lug it around. Should I buy a car to transport it? How should I get rid of the arthritis in my knees? I'm sure I won't do any of these things, but I also know I shall never forget the enchanted night of the tenth of November.

## Book Review

*Gil found this book under the Christmas Tree and couldn't put it down.*

**Herschel 400 Observing Guide** Stephen James O'Meara ( Cambridge University Press, 2007 ) 370 pages. ISBN 978-0-521-85893-9, hardcover. \$65.

Steve O'Meara has written yet another guidebook for the amateur in which he bases his writing and descriptive text entirely on his personal observations, and on his research using original source material. This approach has served him well in past books, and continues to do so with his latest work.

O'Meara divides the book into the four seasons, and then each season is broken down by month. Each month is then divided into seven nights, which the author deems is the minimum number of nights required to observe the objects for each month. His approach provides the observer with an efficient strategy for observing and completing the list in a timely manner, without losing valuable observing time.

The main body of the book contains all the information necessary to properly observe each object on the Herschel 400 List. Each entry begins with the essential data concerning the object, such as constellation, position, magnitude, size, and visibility rating. Below this information is a b&w photograph of the object, which serves as an excellent tool for positive identification of an object when at the eyepiece. The text below each photo begins with a general description of the object, then continues with directions on how to locate the object using the very useful charts provided in the book, and finishes with a quick view, where the author gives his own overall impression of the object.

The book ends with an index and three appendices. Appendix A contains the entire Herschel List. Appendix B has the H400 Checklist, where the observer can enter the information or notes regarding his or her observations. Appendix C lists the book's photo credits.

O'Meara observed all of the objects in the Herschel 400 List under the pristine skies of his home in Volcano, Hawaii. He employed a TeleVue 4-inch f/5 Genesis refractor on a Gibraltar altazimuth mount. He used only three eyepieces: a 22-mm Panoptic, a 7-mm Nagler, and a 4.8-mm Nagler, for magnifications of 23X, 72X, and 105X. He also used either a 1.8X or a 3X Barlow for higher magnifications, and a TeleVue Qwik Point as a finder.

He points out that if he was able to complete the list using such modest aperture, it is because he was unaffected by light pollution. He goes on to mention that the list was originally developed to challenge observers using a 6-inch or larger scope and coping with moderate light pollution.

This book can serve as a complete reference guide for the amateur who has made the commitment of completing the Herschel 400 List. The author's flowing prose and engaging style not only make it a pleasure to read, its content and organization greatly simplify the task of finishing the list in a timely manner. It is arguably his best book yet, and serves to cement his reputation as being one of the finest visual observers of our time. My advice to those who are thinking of undertaking the challenge of the Herschel 400 List is to purchase this book.

*Gil Raineault [raineaul@mts.net](mailto:raineaul@mts.net)*

## EYES TO THE SKIES

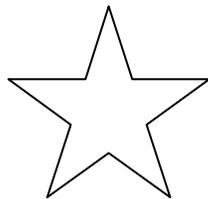
Have you owned a telescope for years, but all it does is collect dust in your basement? Having trouble telling Orion's belt from Cassiopeia's throne? Does looking at the night sky cause you to scratch your head in wonder? Then do we have the answer for you!

The Manitoba Museum is hosting a six-evening program on the basics of astronomy this spring. *Eyes to the Skies* will take participants on an in-depth tour of our night sky including constellations, planets, the Moon and much, much more.

Using images and video, hands-on demonstrations, handouts and the unique technology of the Planetarium Star Theatre, even the most beginner of stargazers will be able to navigate the night sky like a pro by the end of this course.

This winter session begins on Tuesday, January 22nd and runs six consecutive Tuesdays until February 26th from 7 pm to 9:30 pm. You can register by contacting our Programs Registrar Heather Anderson at 988-0626 or [handerson@manitobamuseum.ca](mailto:handerson@manitobamuseum.ca). The cost is \$99 for non-members, \$85 for members.

For more information, contact instructor Mike Jensen at 988-0613 or [mjensen@manitobamuseum.ca](mailto:mjensen@manitobamuseum.ca).



## INTRO TO TELESCOPES WINTER SESSION

### **One-Evening Workshop: Tuesday, January 15, 2008**

This workshop is geared towards anyone who received a new telescope over the holidays and needs some help in getting it to work. It will also be useful for anyone considering buying a telescope. Learn what to expect - and what NOT to expect - when you look for objects in the night sky through a telescope.

We'll have telescopes on hand to demonstrate the different models, and participants are encouraged to bring their own telescopes as well. We'll give your scope a once over to make sure it's in working order, and offer suggestions for making your telescope work for you.

In addition, participants will be given a brief overview of the night sky, including good "first targets" to point your telescopes at. Beginner skywatchers are also encouraged to take the Museum's *Eyes To The Skies* basic astronomy course to get in-depth guidance to negotiating the night sky.

*Intro To Telescopes* is a one-evening workshop taking place Tuesday January 15th in the Manitoba Museum's Auditorium from 7pm to 9:30pm. The cost is \$25 for non-members and \$15 for members.

## COMBINED TELESCOPE AND ASTRONOMY COURSES WINTER SESSION

Register for both courses and get all the tools you will need to become "naturalists of the night"! Combined costs for both the *Intro To Telescopes* and *Eyes To The Skies* courses are \$115 for non-members and \$95 for members.

## President's Corner

*Ron Berard, President,  
RASC Winnipeg Centre*

### **“Happy New Year!”**

In terms of the Seasons, January has few attributes worthy of celebration. Sure, we have long periods of darkness in January, but few useable observing opportunities. If it's clear, it's usually too cold. If the temperatures are milder, it's usually cloudy. However, it's more the cultural implications that January brings that make it special.

One aspect of January that I do like is that it caps off the Holiday Season. I find that by New Year's Eve, I've had enough shopping, wrapping, writing, visiting, eating, drinking, eating, exchanging, eating, and “celebrating” to last the year! Thank Goodness it's almost over. Now “let's celebrate like it's 1999!” Ok, so that song has lost some of its relevance.

The point is, January is a time when many of us tend to reflect on the past year and contemplate the new one, hopefully building on the past successes, and learning from our mistakes in order to make the New Year a better one.

As far as the RASC goes, I've found the past year to be a great one. In my opinion, we've had many more successes than mistakes to reflect on. We've seen a growth in our membership, and also in the number of telescopes members are pointing at the sky, not to mention their collective aperture! Members have also participated in over 10 public observing events, in turn expanding the number of people and organizations in Manitoba that have enjoyed astronomy in a meaningful way.

We've had rogue comets and bright planets to chase, we've found new ways to share our astronomy adventures, we've partied under the stars together more often than I can recall in the 7 years I've been a member, and we've also succeeded in raising a substantial cash infusion to make the coming year one to build an even richer diversity of activities and resources on.

As for mistakes, I really can't think of any mistakes made collectively, and I've no significant personal regrets for any of my time spent doing things with and for RASC Winnipeg. I wish I could say the same for other aspects of my life? But, that's what hobbies are for aren't they? To help balance those aspects of life that are, well, *not* fun and games! That's why I find this club to be such an important part of my life. Not because being President gives me special status or attention, but because it has supported my hobby and brought so many great people into my life. That makes the challenges of being President a worthwhile effort.

**So Happy New Year!** May 2008 be an even greater year for all of us!

## Starry Night Raffle

On December 16, we held our Starry Night Raffle. The winners were as follows:

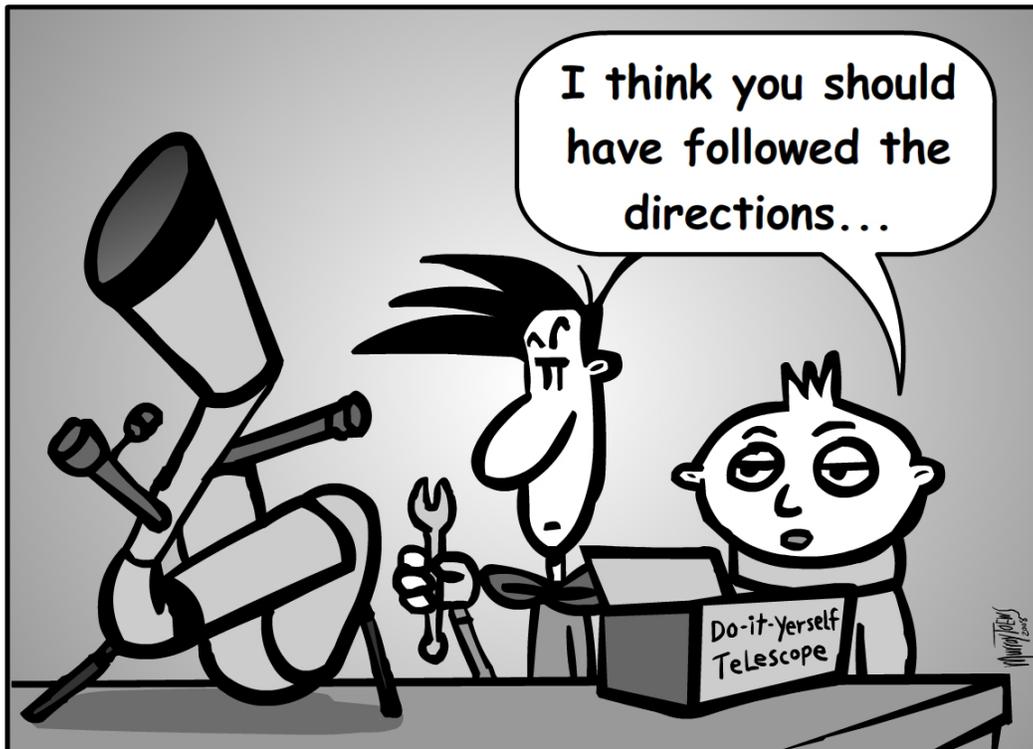
- 1<sup>st</sup> Prize: William Armstrong----8" Orion XT8 Dobsonian Telescope
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Ted Bronson----8 X 40 Antares Binoculars
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Roy Becket----\$50.00 Cash.

The Raffle was a big success. We sold over 900 tickets exceeding our target. A big thanks to all the generous donations that made this raffle possible, and to all the members who helped sell tickets. Congratulations go out to Kris Keller, who sold 140 tickets and won a case of Possl eye pieces, Stan Runge, who sold 70 tickets and won a red dot finder, and Nicole Choptain, who sold 50 tickets and won a set of 1 1/4" filters.

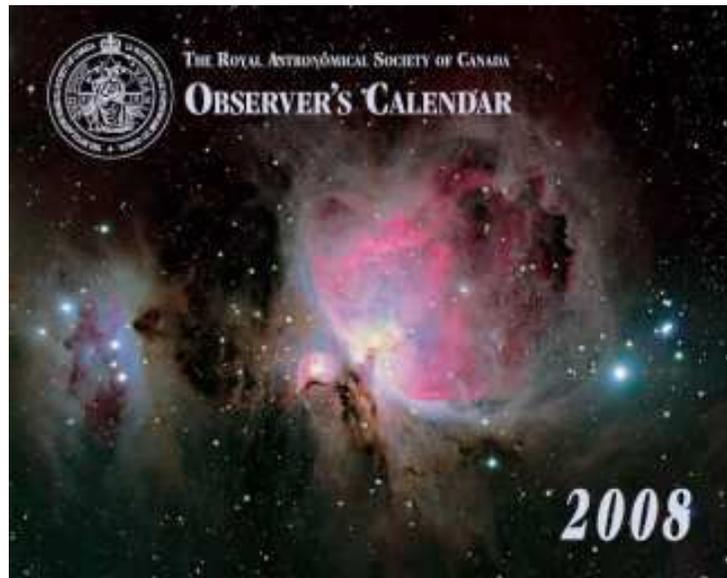


### *Mr. Bud . . . Does Astronomy*

*by Murray Toews*



## 2008 RASC Observer's Calendar



There are a limited amount of 2008 RASC Observer's Calendars still available. Contact Ron Berard at [rcberard@gmail.com](mailto:rcberard@gmail.com) or call 668-6551 between 5:00 and 9:00 pm weekdays, or 10:00 am and 5:00 pm weekends.

RASC Member Price: \$16.00

