



Winnicentrics

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

FULL MOON VISITS

by *Monica Chmielnicki*

How I love gazing up at the night sky and a breath-taking full moon. You can't help but marvel at its beauty and feel a connection, an energy. For me, the appearance of a full moon might also mean an appearance of another kind.

Over the last decade I have noticed that during full moons I sometimes get "visits". Now I'm not one to be quick to accept these visits. I like my facts and forensic evidence and while the visits are occurring I deeply question what I'm experiencing and take stock of my surroundings that I may place some sort of credibility and timeline on the experience. I have had spiritual visits or experiences before. No, I'm not a medium and I don't see dead people. I usually don't "see" anything so much as just experience the energy of a presence. They are usually familiar spirits; family, friends, animals. The visits I get during full moons are spirits of strangers. While these incidents occurred, I was fully awake:

- I kept feeling someone leaning on my arm. It was 3:00 in the morning, everyone else was fast asleep. The pressure against my arm continued, and then I felt a kiss on the side of my head. I could sense that it wasn't a kiss given easily, but yet well meant.
- Someone was caressing my cheek, very tenderly, a touch that was so gentle that it couldn't have possible been human hands. It was a light and wispy touch and at the same time very deliberate.
- I woke up because someone was sitting on me. I was lying on my side and someone was sitting on top of me. It wasn't a stifling weight but enough to wake me up. Then the weight eased off me and the room turned instantly ice cold. It was 4:00am.

if you dare to read more, turn to page 5

In This Issue:

Full Moon Visits----- page 1
 Meetings ----- page 2
 MON's, News----- page 3
 Members Observing Counts ---- page 4

Mr Bud ----- page 5
 President's Corner ----- page 6
 2007 - 2008 Budget ----- page 8
 Membership Fees ----- page 9

MEETINGS

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

Friday March 14

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 What's Up: Jay Anderson
8:00-8:10 What's New: Marlene Wallace
8:10-8:35 News from National: Mike Stevens, National Rep
8:35-9:00 Break

9:00-9:50 **Guest Speaker: Kumar Sharma: "What Can Atomic Masses Tell Us About Nucleosynthesis?"** Shortly after the Big-Bang the main component of mass in the universe was hydrogen. Since then, under the action of the four fundamental interactions (gravity, electromagnetic, strong-nuclear and weak-nuclear forces) a cornucopia of elements up to uranium have been produced through nuclear reactions in the stars in a process called nucleosynthesis. The nuclear reactions in quiescently burning stars (fusion and the s-process) cannot completely explain the observed elemental abundances. Contributions from explosive events (supernovae, x-ray bursts) provide additional means of production for the heavier elements (r- and p-processes). For example, more than 50% of the heavy elements (heavier than iron) present in nature today are thought to be produced in the r-process that takes place in supernovae. Atomic masses play a crucial role in determining the types of nuclear reactions possible, their rates and the energetics of these phenomena. The basic nuclear reactions associated with nucleosynthesis and the role of nuclear masses in these processes will be described. I will conclude with a report of work currently underway at the Argonne National Laboratory using the Canadian Penning Trap mass spectrometer to study the properties of exotic nuclei thought to be produced in stellar explosions.

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

Friday April 11

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- Hydra the Water Snake: Gail Wise
8:00-8:10 What's up: Jay Anderson
8:10-8:30 What's New: Jennifer West
8:30-9:00 Break

9:00-9:50 **Guest Speakers: Terra Jentsch and Friends: Tales from the Dark Skies of Arizona!**--Terra will share tales of her first Arizona Astronomy trip and her fellow travelers will regale us with photos of their yearly pilgrimage to the dark skies of Arizona!

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

Members Observing Nights Glenlea Observatory

Saturday March 15

8 p.m. till whenever

March means spring! That means we say good-bye to mighty Orion the Hunter as he sets out in search of game. His dogs, Canis Major and Canis Minor, are jumping up in the sky after spotting their quarry, Lepus the Hare. The hunter seems preoccupied by the menacing stance of Taurus the Bull, on the opposite side of the river, Eridanus.

Saturday April 12

8 p.m. till whenever

On April evenings we can watch Corvus the Crow as it tries to drink from Crater the Cup while perched on the tail of Hydra the Water Snake. The snake winds his way past several human-made objects – Sextans the Sextant, Antlia the Air Pump and Pyxis the Compass.

News in a minute . . .

March 22 from 8:00 to 9:00 pm will be "Earth Hour". We are looking at setting up a public event to educate people about light trespass. More details will be at the March meeting and on the email list.

The last weekend in March is the Messier Marathon!

International Astronomy Day is approaching quickly. Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 10. We will have a display inside the Forks Market during the day, with solar observing outside, then a public observing session at night by the Oodena.

The Winnipeg Centre Executive Council

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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

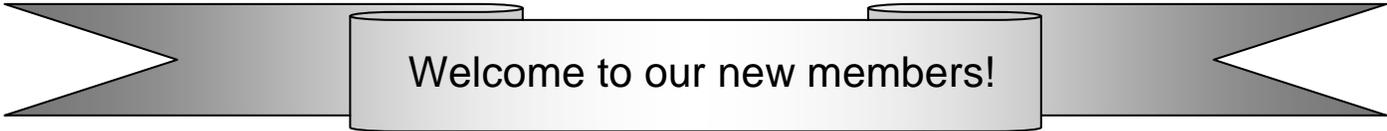
Explore the Universe:

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
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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 or talk to Lindsay at a meeting.



Welcome to our new members!

Lauren Gervais, Winnipeg
 Ed Collom, Winnipeg
 Kevin Reimer, Winnipeg
 George Newton, Winnipeg

Full Moon Visits *continued from page 1*

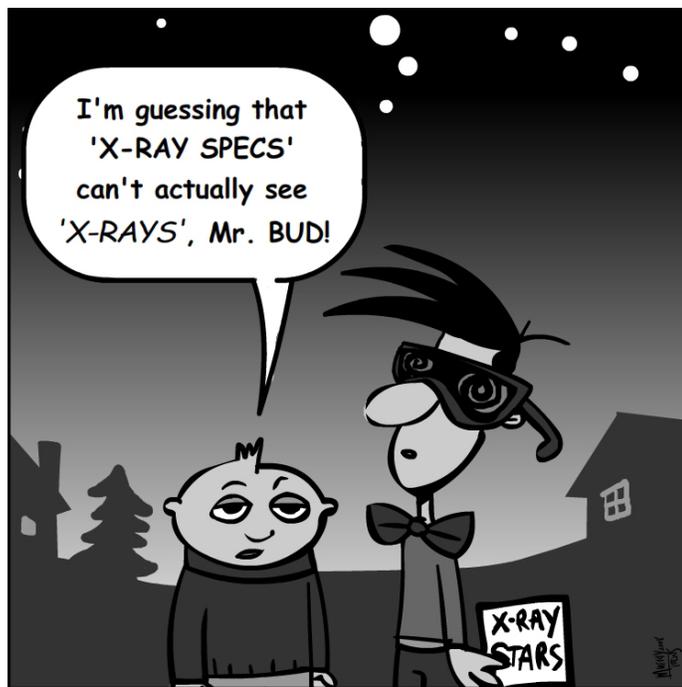
- I woke up because I could hear someone calling. The name they were calling was indistinct, it was a young woman's voice and it sounded like it was coming from the end of a tunnel. I woke myself up because I thought my husband's snoring was playing tricks on my hearing. Upon waking I still heard the calling that continued for about a minute. It was 11:00pm and everyone else was in bed.
- I heard whispering of 2 or more voices. Thank goodness this happened during the day. I was at home alone and there were no TV's or radios on. At first I wasn't sure what I was hearing so I stood still and paid attention. There was no doubt what I was hearing. It lasted for a minute or two. I'm not sure if the room turned cold because the blood in my veins had turned to ice. I heard the whisperings again at 2 more full moons.

So why me? Over-active imagination? Maybe to a cynic, maybe to a non-believer, but to me these things are as tangible as tasting or touching something of substance. Like I said, I like physical evidence, I like the facts. I need to know that these things are really happening and that I'm not flipping my lid. I read once that during a full moon, the veil between the world of man and the world of spirit becomes thin and thus some are able to cross the threshold. Is this myth or truth? My usual visits are familiar ones, ones with stronger ties to me. The full moon brings strangers to me. I do feel though that these visits are just random passings by, that they have not come to me specifically with a message.....yet.

Monica is a friend of your editor. When she mentioned to me that the full moon has its effects, I asked her to write about it for us. I had no idea what she was going to say! When I told her this was amazing, she answered, "If you think that's amazing, you should see what happens certain nights when I do Karaoke. I actually SEE things. Spirits love when you sing with your whole heart." - Gail

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

by Murray Toews



President's Corner

Astronomy in the "Winter-Peg"

*Ron Berard, President,
RASC Winnipeg Centre*

As we approach the end of what was arguably, the harshest Winnipeg winter we've had in years, I recall a co-worker in the fall confidently professing that "*they* say it's going to be a really cold one this year!" My glib response to such comments is always, who is "*they*"? Well, I don't recall the response to my rhetorical question, but who ever "*they*" are, "*they*" were right *this* time. Maybe Jay knows who "*they*" is. Maybe Jay is one of "*they*". If so, then I hope Jay will let us know when *we*'re in for a break!

Never was it more apparent that "*they*" were correct, as the evening of the Lunar Eclipse, where several hundred hardy "Winter-peggers" were treated to views of Saturn, Mars and a beautiful crimson Moon. Those of us who hosted the event will recall it as the coldest public event we've ever held; and for Gail, it was also the most painful.

Being an amateur astronomer in "Winter-peg" can be a challenge at times. When it isn't too cold, it's too humid; when the conditions improve in spring, the evening twilight makes a weekday observing session less practical; when the weekend comes, so do the clouds; then come the mosquitoes! With such conditions, it really helps to know someone like Jay. And, thanks to his recent presentation, we now have better idea of how to use satellite images to hedge our bets when observing opportunities do come around. With Jay's help, perhaps we can all eventually become one of "*they*".

Regardless, March is here, and with it, the faint fuzzies in Virgo and Coma Berenices (always easier to write than say out loud). It's also the time that Messier Marathons becomes possible. A time where it is nearly possible to see an entire year's worth of night sky in a single night. Unfortunately, Manitoba rarely seems to give us the opportunity, hence the annual migration of "Snow Owls". Yes, these illusive nocturnal snow birds always head for the darker skies of Arizona, and their numbers are multiplying! At April's meeting, we'll get to hear tales of the migration from novice Snow Owl, Terra Jentsch with the help of her travel companions' photos and video.

Yes, we've survived a harsh winter. Perhaps, some of us didn't do much in the way of observing or astrophotography. But I certainly feel we've still had the opportunity to remain engaged in the hobby. Rarely a day goes by when there isn't a post on the RASC list. A new piece of equipment; a quick glimpse at the planets; an interesting website; a get well soon wish; even expressions of condolence and grief. All of these messages keep us connected to the community of enthusiasts we've become as members of this club.

As the Spring of 2008 approaches, I realize that there are a good deal of projects we've undertaken to improve the Winnipeg RASC for the benefit of the entire membership. Some remain to be completed, others have only been discussed, yet others may remain unstated inspiration in the minds of our membership. The future is bright.

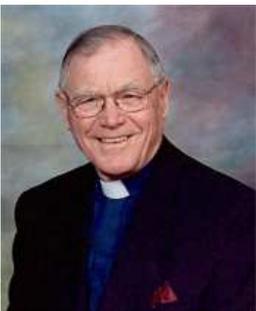
Last year was an exceptionally successful year for the club, and this year should even be better. Yet, recent events at the National level have brought forward the sobering reality that in order for our club to continue to be successful, we need to consolidate our foundation. We need to complete and ratify our bylaws, as these essentially represent our constitution. This task is currently approaching its culmination at the council level. Hopefully, we'll all be voting to ratify our bylaws in the coming months.

From my perspective as president, the process of developing bylaws has consequentially helped council to review our club's infrastructure and administrative practices. In turn, we've worked towards improving how we use and manage our resources. In the end, all this effort contributes to bolstering our organization and ensuring the persistence of our community. Speaking for myself, while I may not yet have made the ranks of "they", it's encouraging to know that on many levels, I'm one of "we". And that heartwarming idea helps get me through the last of the long, cold, "Winter-Peg" nights.

Fare Well to Friends



Our most sincere sympathies to the family of our friend, Patrick O'Connor who passed away on February 7. Patrick was a long-time member of the Winnipeg Centre. He was always the fellow to contact about asteroidal and lunar occultations as he was so enthusiastic about such events. He travelled with his family all over North America to catch them. Patrick could always be counted on to attend the public events in the Whiteshell and surrounding area. He will be missed very much.



We are also saddened by the passing of Fr. Firmin Michiels, who passed on March 2, 2008. To his family and friends, we express our sincere condolences. The members who knew him valued his friendship and dedication to our Centre. He was a valued member, and we will miss him.

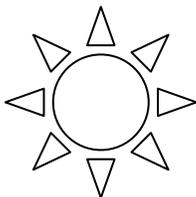
Fare Well

PROPOSED BUDGET 2007-2008**INCOME**

Membership	2,900.00
Prepaid Membership	22.00
Calendar Sales	500.00
Donations	350.00
Life Member Grant	66.00
Interest GIC	75.00
Coffee Kitty	200.00
Spruce Woods	0.00
Raffle	2866.00
National Grant	1093.00
Other	0.00
TOTAL	7,894.00

EXPENSES

Newsletter	500.00
Insurance	955.00
Travel	500.00
Glenlea Flood	900.00 (Raffle \$600)
Bursary	200.00
Meetings	250.00
Web Site	85.00
Obs Electricity	200.00
Obs Maintenance	500.00 (Raffle)
Science Fair Winner	100.00
Bank Fees	50.00
Spruce Woods	0.00
Library	25.00
Supplies	130.00
Grant Project	1593.00 (Raffle \$500 + Grant)
Member Resouce Fund	1088.00 (Raffle)
Awards	210.00
Executive Discretionary	200.00
TOTAL	7,611.00
NET	283.00



Spruce Woods Star Party Photo Exhibition

Members of the RASC Winnipeg Centre are invited to participate in a photo exhibition as part of the Spruce Woods Star Party (SWSP) event. All photographers, from the well experienced to those just starting out, are encouraged to participate.

Photos can be of astronomical objects, but can also (and are encouraged to) represent the diverse elements of a star party.

All photos received will be exhibited in the Observing Tent during the SWSP for the enjoyment of the attendees.

The SWSP Committee will select one photo to be used as the 2008 SWSP promotional photo. This photo will appear on the poster, website, dinner ticket, and any other promotional use related to the SWSP.

Please submit up to three photos accompanied by your personal contact information.

Please send your photos via email to:
swsp_photo@mts.net

Photos will be accepted until Friday,
March 14, 2008.

Thanks for your participation

Aligning Membership Fees with the Cost of Service
An Important Proposal to National Council
Prepared by the Board Pilot Committee (2008-02-28)

Summary

The Board Pilot Committee (BPC) is recommending to National Council that decisive action be taken to resolve the structural problems that are preventing the Society from achieving fiscal stability. The Society's membership fees are significantly lower than the cost of membership and heavily subsidized by our net publications and other non-membership fee revenue.

With increasing downward pressure on our publications business, the Society must take steps now to remove our dependency on publications and other non-membership income in providing services to members, and in so doing, eliminate annual deficits and free up resources for mandate activities that are consistent with the Society's purpose and mission.

Recommendations

The BPC recommends retaining current membership services and increasing fees to provide sufficient revenue to provide current services, plus a small contingency to allow for the assumptions and caveats mentioned previously, with an expectation that there will be a drop in membership numbers.

However, if the membership (or the Council) rejects the proposed fee increase it is recommended that the current SkyNews bundling agreement be terminated, and a new agreement be negotiated that provides access to an electronic version of SkyNews to all members and a preferentially priced printed subscription.

Under the Society's governance model, any change to our membership fees must be passed at a meeting of the Society membership (usually the Annual Meeting). The Board Pilot Committee is recommending that National Council adopt the following four motions to resolve the fiscal crisis facing the Society for the foreseeable future. Motions 2 and 3 would then be proposed for consideration at the 2008 Annual Meeting in Toronto.

Motion 1: Resolution of National Council

This resolution is a formal statement of intent both for the immediate situation at hand as well as for the future. This resolution if adopted by National Council would become a policy statement for the Society and would become a touchstone for future budget deliberations.

Moved by the Board Pilot Committee that the following resolution be adopted by Council:

Whereas,

1. The Society has and continues to face chronic financial uncertainty with respect to changes in the Canadian dollar and changes in publication revenues;
2. The cost of servicing each member is estimated as being approximately \$7-10 more than the current membership fee collected from each member annually; and
3. The Society's income from publications is presently applied to enhancing membership benefits rather than advancing astronomy.

Be it RESOLVED that the Council of the Society recommends to the membership that appropriate measures be taken to bring the cost of membership into balance with the membership fees collected to ensure the long-term stability of the Society and to enhance the Society's capabilities to advance astronomy and astronomy education in Canada.

Motion 2: Change to Timing of Handbook Mailings for New Members

Under existing bylaws, most new members of the Society effectively receive two copies of the Observer's Handbook in their first year of membership — one for the current year and another for the next year. With a turnover of about 800-1000 members each year, this entitlement costs the Society approximately \$4000 to \$5000 per year (roughly \$5.00 per member for printing, postage, packaging, and handling). This proposal still ensures that every member will receive one Handbook per year of membership. New members will be offered a discount coupon permitting them to purchase the current year's Handbook as part of their new-member package. This should also provide a modest increase in Handbook revenue for the Society.

Moved by the Board Pilot Committee that article 3.06 of By-Law #1 be amended as follows:

“3.06 (3) Every person who is

- (a) a member of the Society as of November 1; or
- (b) joins the Society as a new member between November 1 and December 31 in any year is entitled to receive the Observer's Handbook published for the next calendar year. Every person who joins the Society as a new member between January 1 and January 31 in any year is entitled to receive the Observer's Handbook published for the current calendar year.”

Motion 3: Corrective Membership Fee Increase

This motion proposes a membership fee increase for the Society that would bring the Cost of Membership in line with existing programs and services. The average cost to service a member is currently estimated at \$41.60 while the average revenue per member (after current fees are fully in effect in 2009) is estimated at \$37.35 (a shortfall of \$4.61).

The proposed fee increase of \$7 for ordinary members is higher than the shortfall to account mostly for:

- An expected drop in members (requiring overhead costs to be covered by fewer members)
- The continuing decline of publication revenue (requiring a larger fraction of the fixed overhead costs to be borne by the members)
- The costs to service honorary members, and to make up for the revenue shortfall for Youth and Life Members

This motion also brings the cost of servicing members outside of Canada in line with actual costs. The BPC found that these fees were significantly out of step with actual costs of postage and shipping resulting in a major adjustment for these members. This is especially needed now that the Canadian/US currency exchange rate is near par.

Moved that the annual and Life-Membership fees of the Society be changed as follows:

1. For members with Canadian postal addresses:

.. Ordinary members - changed to \$66.00 with the Society portion equal to \$44.00 and the Centre portion equal to \$22.00; and

.. Youth members - changed to \$41.00 with the Society portion equal to \$27.30 and the Centre portion equal to \$13.70.

2. For members with United States postal addresses (in US dollars, unless stated):

.. Ordinary members - changed to \$82.00 with the Society portion equal to \$60.00 and the Centre portion equal to CDN\$22.00; and

.. Youth members - changed to \$57.00 with the Society portion equal to \$43.30 and the Centre portion equal to CDN\$13.70.

3. For members with postal addresses outside Canada and the United States (in US dollars, unless stated):

.. Ordinary members - changed to \$111.00 with the Society portion equal to \$89.00 and the Centre portion equal to CDN\$22.00; and

.. Youth members - changed to \$86.00 with the Society portion equal to \$72.30 and the Centre portion equal to CDN\$13.70.

4. and that the Life Membership fee be increased from \$2100.00 to \$2350.00.

These new fees shall become effective at a date determined by the Executive Committee, except no earlier than 2008 July 1.

Motion 4: Contingency for Changes in Services

The fee increase outlined above is the preferred option for the Society recommended by the Board Pilot Committee. It allows the Society to retain the bundled arrangement with SkyNews, which is a popular member benefit — particularly with beginners. It is also a critical tool to attract new members to the Society.

The retention of SkyNews with a fee increase is also supported by the results of the recent membership survey, which indicate that nearly 80% are likely or very likely to renew their membership (note that the increase proposed in the survey is \$4 higher than proposed here).

The Board Pilot Committee believes that should the proposed fee increase motion fail at the Annual Meeting in Toronto that National Council must immediately undertake to balance the cost of membership with membership revenue to ensure the long-term health and stability of the Society.

Removing SkyNews as an automatic print subscription for all members is the only viable option open to National Council that will resolve the fiscal issues facing the Society and does not require a By-Law change under our governance structure.

Moved by the Board Pilot Committee that, should the Society membership not approve increases to fees proposed at the next Annual Meeting, the Executive Committee shall be empowered to terminate the current SkyNews bundling agreement and to negotiate a new agreement that provides access to an electronic version of SkyNews to all members and a preferentially priced printed subscription.

Conclusion

This report and its recommendations have been prepared by the Board Pilot Committee and reflect our considered judgment as the best way forward for the Society. The option of continuing to wrestle with deficits and cost cutting year after year while offering membership services at artificially low prices is not a responsible way to manage the Society's finances. It also distracts valuable Society volunteers from concentrating on the true objects of the Society — to promote the advancement of astronomy and allied sciences.

Under our governance structure, the RASC cannot resolve these issues without the support of the membership. We call upon all members of National Council to endorse these proposals and to recommend their implementation to the membership.

REFERENCES

For complete survey results and detailed analysis go to:

www.rasc.ca/private/reports/survey_analysis_20071124.pdf

www.rasc.ca/private/reports/survey_results_20071124.pdf

ATTENTION SKY & TELESCOPE SUBSCRIBERS!

Sky & Telescope offers a discount subscription program to RASC Centres if 5 or more members are currently subscribed. The Winnipeg Centre appears to have fallen below the minimum requirement, and could lose this privilege. Please confirm your subscription details with Mike Stephens to make sure we maintain this valuable service.