

GEMINI

publication of the
Twin City Astronomy Club



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Event of the Month

by Bill Larson

Mercury is at Greatest Western Elongation on Labor Day

Mercury has three or four western elongations each year. The western elongation occurring in the fall is the most visible of them. Try for Mercury at about 5:45 to 6 a.m. CDT on Labor Day (if you can get up!).

It will change from magnitude +1.0, 8"6 diameter and 21 percent illuminated on August 29 to magnitude -1.0, 5"7 diameter and 81 percent illuminated on Sept. 13. Try to see the phases with a 11 cm or larger telescope.

MINUTES

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Twin City Astronomy Club, Science Museum of Minnesota, Tuesday, Aug. 1, 1978.

Al Ominsky displayed The New Astronomy and Space Science Reader, which is available at Savron's Bookstore for \$7.50.

Information was handed out by Ivan Policoff on the new Upsilon Pegasus Meteor Shower. This shower peaks Aug. 12 at 7 hrs. U.T. at a rate of about 12 meteors per hour. This coincides with the peak of the Perseid shower.

The program for the evening was a lecture by Ivan Policoff titled "Graphical Methods of Determining Variable Star Orbits," alternately titled "Mass Determination of Visual Binaries." Policoff attempted to present to an amateur audience a very complex subject involving a good deal of spherical trigonometry. He deserves an award for courage if not for success, for he thoroughly snowed much of the audience.

The subject is far too complex to summarize in these minutes. Several members of the club urged Policoff to put his presentation in booklet form for dissemination and possible sale. However, it can be said that an advanced amateur with some capabilities in mathematics and some relatively primitive equipment can master Policoff's method for determining variable star mass and orbital mechanics.

Two publications, "Some Bright Visual Binary Stars," Jean Meeus, Erps-Kwerps, Belgium, published by Sky Publishing, 1971, and "The Webb Society Observer's Handbook," Vol. I, "Double Stars," edited by Kenneth Glyn Jones, Webb Society, published by Mizar Press, 1977, were passed about the audience for inspection. (The Webb Society secretary was listed as R. W. Argyle, 42 Old Orchard Place, Hailsham, E. Sussex, BN 27 3HZ.)

Following the evening's lecture, Lauren Nelson showed the J. Allen Hynek "UFO Slide Show," accompanied by a taped narrative. This show covers both UFO sightings and extraterrestrial beings, but the latter subject is dominated by statistics rather than photographs.

LOCAL NOTES

Over 30 persons attended the star party held at Metcalf Nature Center Friday, Aug. 11, the night of the Perseid maximum. Although the sky was partly cloudy and intermittently was almost completely overcast, many Perseids were seen. About midnight, when most of the observers were there, about one per minute could be seen (including randoms).

* * *

The next regular meeting of the Twin City Astronomy Club will be a lecture titled "Future Grazing Occultations," by Jim Fox of the club. It is Tuesday, Sept. 5, 1978, at the Science Museum of Minnesota auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

The October meeting will feature K. Michael Merrill of the University of Minnesota, who will present the 30" telescope at the O'Brien Observatory, Marine-on-St. Croix. The meeting will be at the observatory at 8 p.m. There will be club members at the Science Museum of Minnesota until 7:20 p.m. to guide persons interested to the observatory site, which is about a half mile back on Co. Road 7, just inside the Marine-on-St. Croix limits. (If you hit dirt road, you have gone too far.)

The next star party will be Friday, Sept. 1, before the next meeting, with Saturday, Sept. 2 the alternative night in case of bad viewing conditions.

John Cooner would like to remind those of you who have not yet proved him with the mailing label from your Sky and Telescope to please do so. Upon receipt of the label you will receive your membership card.

GEMINI

Editor Alan Ominsky

Gemini is issued monthly by the Twin City Astronomy Club (TCAC), an affiliate of the Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minn.

The TCAC strives to promote amateur astronomy through its publications, meetings, and public programs. Membership is open to anyone. Annual regular member dues are \$16 and student member dues are \$5, of which \$1.50 is allocated for a subscription to Gemini. Subscription to Gemini is available to non-members at \$2.50 per year. Inquiries may be directed to: TCAC, Science Museum of Minnesota, 30 E. 10th St., St. Paul, MN 55101.

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