

REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

THE UNIVERSITY LOWBROW ASTRONOMERS' NEWSLETTER

December Vol. 2 No. 7 Editor: Brian McGraw Weather forecast: Cloudy

What's Up

by Jim Cypser

If the sky is clear after sunset on December 13th, keep an eye peeled for Gem- inid meteors. This year they peak during the early morning hours of the 14th, but the Moon rises a little before eight o'clock the night before and doesn't set until ten the next morning. This has been one of the all-around worst years ever for meteor-watching, with Moon- light washing out part of all of all the best showers. To top things off, the Quadrant- ids peak during the day on January 3rd. Luckily, next year looks better.

Venus reaches greatest brilliancy about December 16th, shining at roughly magnitude -4.5 in the south- west shortly after sunset. During the late "early" (!) morning hours Mars is near- ly overhead, while Jupiter and Saturn are farther to the east.

Below are listed the phases of the Moon between now and the next meeting (see the note at the bottom of the page?)

Dec. 4	first quarter
10	full
17	last quarter
26	new
Jan. 3	first quarter

ANNOUNCEMENTS

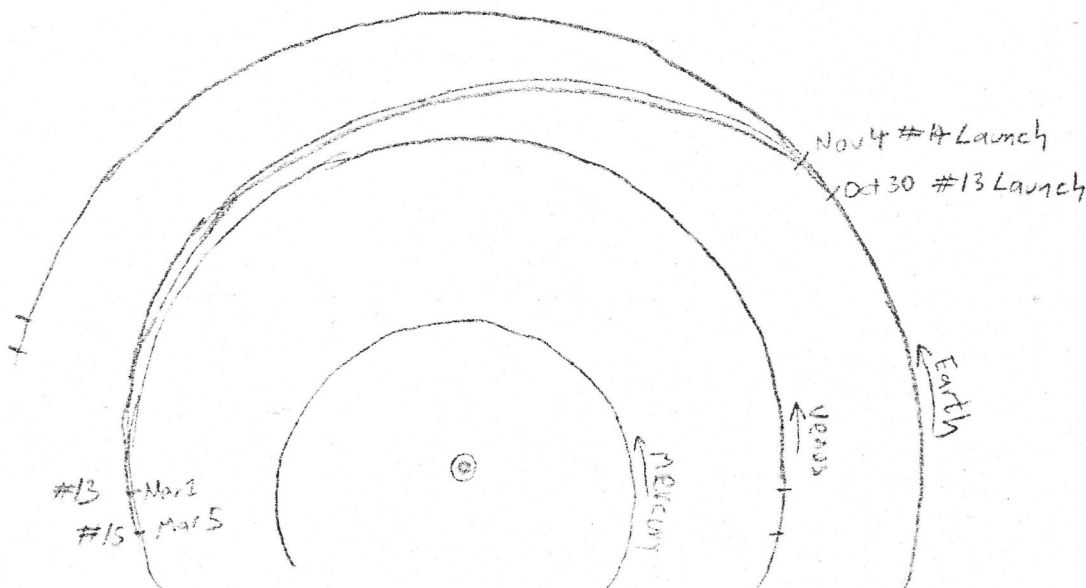
- Kitt Peak is apparently out of danger. Dr. Hiltner has learned that the Air Force has definitely decided to build it's base at an alternate site.
- Three undergrads are doing an independent study project with the department of astronomy here, and they have priority when it comes to using the 15- inch telescope in Angell Hall. They won't be using the 10-inch.

The January meeting will be Friday the 8th, 7:30, 5006 Angell Hall.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: VENERAS 13 & 14

by Peter Alway

Although U. S. planetary exploration may be grinding to a halt, next year won't be totally devoid of planetary encounters. This fall, the Soviet Union launched two unmanned spacecraft to Venus. Each of the two craft, Venera 13 and Venera 14, will carry improved versions of the cameras used by Veneras 9 and 10 in 1975 (Those craft took the first photos from the surface of another planet). In addition, the landers are equipped with sampling drills and X-ray fluorescence spectrometers, similar to a device on the American Viking Mars lander capable of detailed chemical analysis of rock. The Soviet landers are targeted to land on lowlands southeast of the Beta shield volcano when they arrive on March 1 and 5. The two spacecraft will join the remains of six other Russian vehicles that have survived venusian temperatures and pressures all the way to the surface. Each lander in the current generation of Venera probes is accompanied by an orbiter. The orbiters study particles and fields as well as the upper atmosphere of Venus, and in 1984 the orbiter (or something similar) from a Venus mission will fly by Venus on to Halley's Comet.



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Alway, Peter	711 Arch #203, Ann Arbor, MI 48104	662-1917
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Bass, Jeff	2155 Cram Pl. #13, Ann Arbor, MI 48105	761-9712
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Krapf, Charles W.	2294 Woodview #858, Ypsilanti, MI 48197	483-1838
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Nelle, Doug	302 Pauline, Ann Arbor, MI 48103	663-2080
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Patterson, Joe	Somewhere around Harvard I think	
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