

REFLECTIONS

of the

UNIVERSITY

LOWBROW

ASTRONOMERS

EDITOR: Jeffery Bass

vol. V

no. V

PREVIEW

This Friday's meeting of the University Lowbrow Astronomers will feature a talk by club member Jeffery Bass on "-----". As of press time, the talk is not yet "fully developed" (as they say in the trade) because it's a last minute affair. But you can just bet that it will be incredible and awesome and perhaps informative or maybe it will be boring. I don't know yet. Along with the talk will be the usual slides photographed by Lowbrows over the past month.

If you missed last month's meeting, you missed the opportunity to hear club member Don Luttermoser talk about his solar research at Kitt Peak. Doug Nelle also showed many slides from his trip to the annual amateur telescope maker's convention at Stellafane, Vermont. And last but not least, Irene and Jim Newhouse treated us to some beautiful slides of deep sky objects that they photographed from Peach Mountain using gas-hypered film. (I remember the Omega Nebula was INCREDIBLE). This month's meeting may be even MORE EXCITING so we hope to see you there.

OPEN HOUSE

The August Open House at Peach Mountain was a great success; hundreds of people showed up. Thanks go to club members Chuck Unbehaun, Matt Whybra, Doug Nelle, Kevin Lewallen and others for the help they gave in showing visitors a really good time. The next Open House will be on Saturday, September 29 at Peach Mountain.

ROOF

An important club project is being planned for the coming months: the repair of the Peach Mountain Observatory roof. At present, the Lowbrow treasury contains a little over \$440. After subtracting various expenses projected for the next 8 months (fiscal year), including the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, we will have about \$280 (probably less) with which to do the roofing job. This does NOT take into account any costs incurred during our planned annual winter Freeze-Out. If any club member has an idea or opinion about this (or any other) use of club funds contact the club President Peter Challis or the club Treasurer Jeffery Bass.

-- Jeffery Bass

HELP

On Friday September 14, the many clubs of the University of Michigan (including the Lowbrows) will take part in the 1984 Festi-Fall. Representatives from university organizations will be manning booths along the diag in order to promote their various causes and attract new members. We are planning to have a small booth out there as well. But we need people who can help set up the booth and help man it for at least an hour during the afternoon. The booth must be manned from 11 AM to around 5 PM. Call Peter Challis for details at 971-6186.

-- Peter Challis

MOUNTS and DRIVES

Once again, Stellafane proved rewarding, as amateur telescope makers (ATM's) made their annual trek to Breezy Hill to analyze and show off various telescope designs. One of the newest directions in telescope design involves not the "Dobsonian Revolution" or the big aperture craze but the innovative design of driving mechanisms. Here, amateur telescope makers have shown their gifts for improvisation, uniqueness and affordability.

The low cost Dobsonian design has practically put a telescope in every backyard and car. At the same time, the economical Poncet mount with its bolt drive has started to chip away at the sanctity of the equatorial mount. I remember in my early years of telescope enthusiasm; "if you didn't have an equatorial mount, you didn't have a real telescope."

Looking at tracking drives from an economic point of view, gear drives have priced themselves out of the market. Fortunately it has been discovered from experience that gear drives are not always necessary. Creativity in curved-bolt design has opened up a whole new "era" in celestial tracking. Another innovative technique that is quietly emerging is the friction drive; a combination of smooth disks of various sizes, minus the teeth and periodic error. The friction drive has been gaining acceptance by not only amateurs but by professionals as well. The pocket-book popularity of these drives has set ATM's scurrying for other low cost alternatives.

From out of the depths of the basement, garage or workshop, amateur telescope makers are tinkering with new designs based on wire drives and chain drives. These bringers-of-change have taken advantage of available resources and ushered in a brand new age of tracking mechanisms for our telescopes. The next major wave will be low cost Dobsonian-type Alt-Azimuth drives made from bolts, wire and chain, that will be controlled using small home computers.

And I'm willing to bet that somewhere, downstairs in a basement or in a dusty garage, some tinkerer is spawning yet another new drive configuration. It could very well be a rubber band drive.

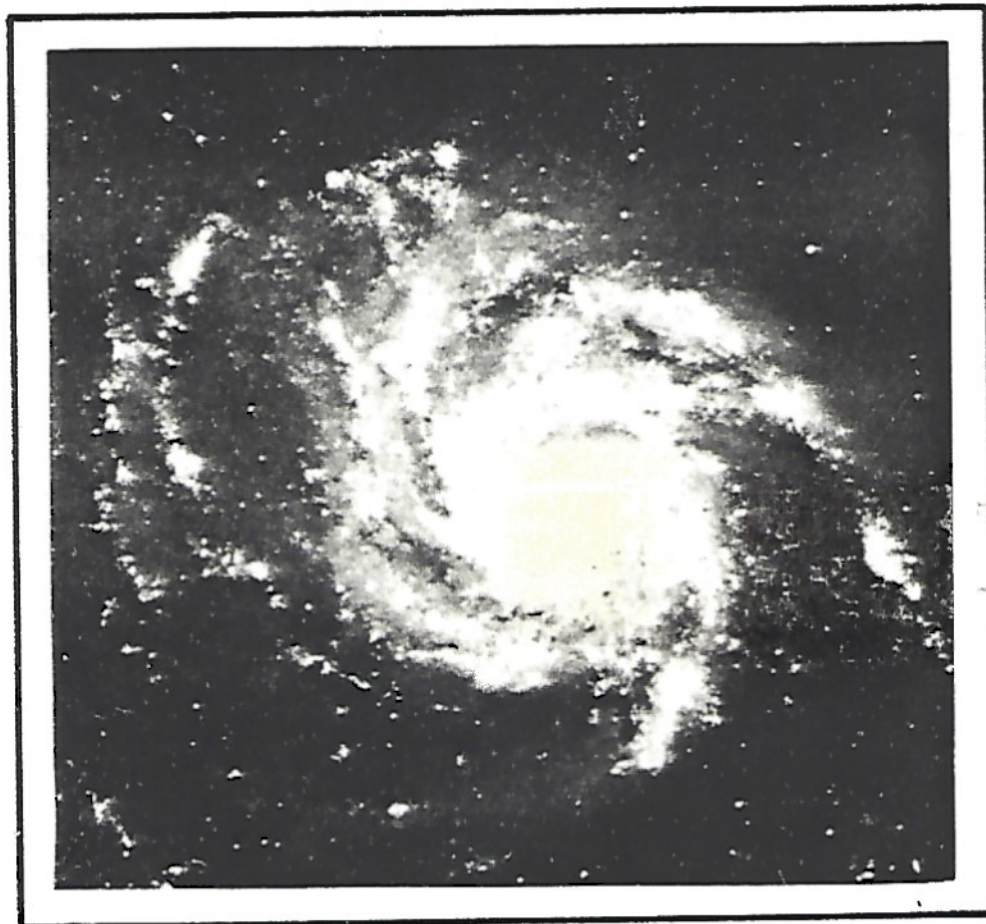
Clear skies!

-- Jack Brisbin

STAR PARTY

The Michigan Space Center in Jackson, Michigan, has asked if members of the University Lowbrow Astronomers (that's us) could participate in a star party and twilight talk on Saturday night October 20 at the Michigan Space Center. (This is the Saturday the week BEFORE the October Open House at Peach Mountain.) This event is being held, also, with the help of Jackson area amateur astronomers. If you are interested in helping out, please call Doug Nelle at 663-2080.

-- Doug Nelle



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Monthly Meeting

SEPTEMBER 14 7:30 p.m.

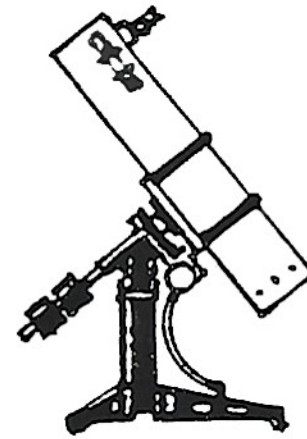
Detroit Observatory Classroom

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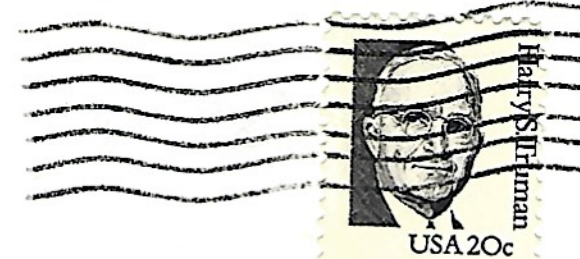
program: Jeffery Bass on
a mystery topic

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