

LETTERS

Sir:

With the co-operation of the Buffalo Museum of Natural Science, the Amateur Telescope Makers and Observers of Buffalo entertained more than 1,000 cub scouts on February 1st. Astronomical movies were shown continuously from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. Small groups were guided from there to the hall of astronomy, the Spitz planetarium, an exhibit of telescopes and astronomical teaching aids, and the Kellogg Observatory.

The cubs were asked to observe and report the lunar eclipse of February 10th. There were early returns from 39 youngsters. Drawings indicate good observation of the shape of the shadow at mid-eclipse.

F. SHIRLEY JONES
Buffalo Museum of Science
Buffalo 11, N. Y.

Sir:

For most persons just beginning their study of astronomy, as well as for many like the writer who can follow it only intermittently, it is very easy to forget one rather important pattern of the solar system—the radial order of the planets. Bode's law provides us with a handy means for quickly estimating the planetary distances, but if the order of the planets slips our minds we are little better off than if we didn't know Bode's law either.

To those, then, who forget but wish they didn't, the writer offers a suggestion. The initial letters of the planets fall in the order of the initial letters of the words of the following mnemonic sentence (perfected only after many long minutes of effort):

"Solar Mass Very Easily Makes All Jupiter's Satellites Undergo Numerous Perturbations." The initial word puts the sun in its proper location (for those who are really forgetful); and "All," like Bode's law, takes account of the asteroids.

If anyone should object that solar gravitational influences really aren't terribly significant in the orbits of any but the outermost of the Jovian satellites, the writer must agree, but points out that this sentence does at least convey incidental information of greater value than that in the more famous mnemonic for the stellar spectral classes.

JAMES E. McDONALD
Iowa State College
Ames, Iowa

Sir:

I recently purchased a copy of *Sky and Telescope* from a newsstand, and immediately became one of the family. I am an amateur astronomer as well as a gospel minister. As I leave church in the evening, I note the position of the stars, and I check with my watch.

Here on the California coast we seldom see many stars at night, because the air is misty. However, I can usually see the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper, and I find it interesting to note their position and check the time. One evening I found that my watch had stopped, and as I was used to checking the position of the dippers, I estimated the time and set my watch by the stars. The next day I found that it was only five minutes behind

Sky and TELESCOPE

Copyright, 1952, by

SKY PUBLISHING CORPORATION

CHARLES A. FEDERER, JR., *Editor*; HELEN S. FEDERER, *Managing Editor*

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD: *Clement S. Brainin*, Amateur Astronomers Association, New York; *Edward A. Halbach*, Milwaukee Astronomical Society; *Donald H. Menzel*, Harvard College Observatory; *Paul W. Merrill*, Mount Wilson Observatory; *Charles H. Smiley*, Ladd Observatory; *Percy W. Witherell*, Bond Astronomical Club.

time! Perhaps this little incident will encourage other amateur astronomers to become aware of the great clock of the sky.

REV. DELBERT BULLIS
213 Cottage Grove Ave.
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Sir:

On Saturday, March 1st, the atmosphere was quite clear in Syracuse, N. Y., when I went out before sunset looking for a good vantage point from which to view Mercury (found in 6 x 30 binoculars quite easily, but just beyond the range of the average unaided eye).

To my initial disappointment, the sun entered a heavy cloud bank about one degree above the horizon in an otherwise clear sky. As the last remnants of the sun disappeared into the cloud, the green flash came into view and caught me quite by surprise. I was watching the solar limb in the binoculars. The air was transparent enough to have required a filter to look at the sun before it contacted the

cloud, but during the last half minute before the upper limb vanished, the sun could be comfortably viewed without a filter.

The mountain peak effect of the cloud permitted two views of the flash not more than two seconds apart. The color seemed definitely bluish, perhaps partly real and partly retinal fatigue in the red.

I do not recall any references to the green flash in the literature describing observation of it behind a cloud bank; the emphasis is always on a distant horizon preferably over water. My only view before this was over Lake Ontario last summer. Perhaps, with the aid of a cloud bank or a very distant hill, optimum visibility might be procured by balancing the greater dispersion at low altitude against the greater transparency at higher altitude.

PAUL W. STEVENS
2322 Westfall Rd.
Rochester 18, N. Y.

VOL. XI, No. 7
WHOLE NUMBER 127

CONTENTS

MAY, 1952

COVER: On this portion of a photograph taken with the 20-inch astrographic telescope of Lick Observatory, five asteroids have left their trails during the two-hour exposure; they are indicated by the arrows. The plate was taken through a coarse grating over the telescope objective to produce short spectra for photometric purposes. North is at the top, east at the left; the center of the field is approximately at $12^{\text{h}} 3^{\text{m}}.5$, $-0^{\circ} 17'$, 1950 co-ordinates. Lick Observatory photograph. (See page 163.)

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN — James C. Corn	159
W. A. COGSHALL	161
THE MINOR PLANETS — Otto Struve	163
NASHVILLE PLANETARIUM	167
AMERICAN ASTRONOMERS REPORT	169
Amateur Astronomers	172
Books and the Sky	173
Gleanings for ATM's	175
Here and There with Amateurs	181
Letters	158
Terminology Talks	168
News Notes	162
Observer's Page	177
Planetarium Notes	168
Southern Stars	182
Stars for May	183

BACK COVER: A portion of the moon at 17 days, with the Aridæus cleft running downward from the center, and Hyginus, sharply bent, stretching out from the crater Hyginus. The Hyginus cleft may be seen in a 2-inch telescope. This is the northwest central portion of the moon, and the photograph was taken with the 100-inch telescope, one-half second exposure. Mare Vaporum is the dark area extending outward from the right side of the picture. Mount Wilson Observatory photograph.

SKY AND TELESCOPE is published monthly by Sky Publishing Corporation, Harvard College Observatory, Cambridge 38, Mass. Entered as second class matter, April 28, 1939, at the Post Office, Boston, Mass., under Act of March 3, 1879; accepted for mailing at the special rate of postage provided in Paragraph 4, Section 538, Postal Laws and Regulations.

Subscriptions: \$4.00 per year in the United States and possessions, and to Latin-American countries; \$7.00 for two years. Add \$1.00 per year for Canada and for all other foreign countries, making the total subscription \$5.00 per year and \$9.00 for two years. Canadian and foreign remittances should be made in United States currency. Single copies, 35 cents. Circulation staff: Betty G. Dodd, manager; Nancy R. Bolton; Virginia K. McAuliffe.

All notices of change of address must be sent three weeks in advance and accompanied by old and new address, or we cannot make the proper change. When sending your renewal order, or writing in regard to your subscription, your current mailing address must be given. For most efficient handling of your subscription, please return our bill form with your renewal payment.

Editorial and advertising offices: Harvard College Observatory, Cambridge 38, Mass. Unsolicited articles and pictures are welcome, bearing adequate return postage, but we cannot guarantee prompt editorial attention, nor are we responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.