WESTMINSTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
of Carroll County, Maryland

Newsletter for July 1985, Vol 2 No 7

July Meeting: 31st at WMC

WAS member Mike Potter spent June observing from the Israeli countryside using a 40-inch telescope. Mike will tell what is the nature of his work, what was accomplished, and why Israel was selected as the observing site. He has some slides taken through the telescope during infrequent lulls in the observing program. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Wednesday July 31, in Rm. 111 of Lewis Science Hall, Western Maryland College, in Westminster.

President's Message

Summer is in full swing and the days are once again getting shorter, to the advantage of the astronomer. The evenings are warm and balmy, often sticky and humid, with hazy skies. The nightbirds sing till dawn, and the rooster crows at 3:00 a.m. The mosquitoes are getting thick. Neighbors enjoy midnight bashes with bright floodlights creaming defenseless starlight. Bats flutter around the garage as I regain my composure, stooping with shaking hands to pick up Tirion chart #22 from the floor. Yes, I like Summer, but I really miss Winter.

There is a lot of nocturnal wildlife out there not including astronomers. Last year Carroll County had the highest number of confirmed rabies in Maryland, so it pays to be cautious while observing. If a strange animal approaches you or your telescope, go inside or get into your car; do not take chances. The intruder will soon leave. I once observed from Claytor Lake State Park in Virginia when a skunk came up in the dark and sniffed my bare foot. I don't know who was more scared, me feeling that wet nose, or the skunk after I jumped five feet in the air. Have a warm, safe, and clear summer.

Curt Roelle

Westminster Welcome Wagon

Three visitors at the WAS Astronomy Day June 8 have become members. Welcome aboard the following:

Kenneth Flynn Jr.	Josh Fortenbaugh	Joe Pekala
503 David Court	2430 Braddock Rd.	3300 Hooper Rd.
Mt. Airy, 21771	Mt. Airy, 21771	New Windsor, 21176

Record Turnout at July Star Party

The July 19 star party at Blaine Roelke's was the best attended in club history. At least ten instruments were present including a 13.1" reflector , three 8" telescopes, two 3" refractors, and assorted smaller refractors and reflectors [this writer noticed other instruments including a C8 shamefully lying unused in parked vehicles]. The telescope of honor was Mike Potter's 17.5" open-tube fork-mounted Newtonian, newly installed

inside the Roelke observatory. There were nearly 30 people present representing WAS and the Baltimore Astronomical Society, including 12 from the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore.

Comet Halley Recovery Star Party August 16

Returning after 75 years to the August WAS star party is none other than Halley's Comet. The first ever WAS "Halley Rescue" star party will be Friday, August 16, at Curt Roelle's home, starting around 8:30-9:00 p.m. Note that the comet will not be well placed for observation until shortly before dawn, so be prepared. Please help us recover this historical comet.

The address is 3481 Salem Bottom Road, Westminster. Call 848-6384 for directions or to confirm the event in case of weather. Although never a problem before July's party, overflow parking will be at Salem United Methodist Church, across the street and a block South. Please leave enough room at the base of the driveway for satellite parkers to unload before going to park their vehicle. There are no shoulders to park on.

Astronomy Day: Encore!

Printed at right is a letter received from the Carroll County Library in response to our Astronomy Day exhibit. The presentation encouraged so many favorable comments that we have been asked to "play it again" in the Fall at the Eldersburg branch. This is a perfect opportunity to reach others in a different part of the county who may be interested in astronomy.

CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

50 EAST MAIN STREET
WESTMINSTER, MARYLAND 21157
PHONE: 848-4250 or 876-9008

June 18, 1985

Curtis W. Roelle
Westminster Astronomical Society
3481 Salem Bottom Rd.
Westminster, MD 21157

Dear Society Members,

The Carroll County Public Library would like to thank you for your excellent "Meet the Astronomer" program held at the Westminster Library on Saturday, June 8. Comments from library patrons were very enthusiastic. We were delighted to be the site of your excellent presentation.

I would ask your society to consider repeating this program at our Eldersburg Branch Library in the Fall. Please contact me if you would be interested in doing this. Again many thanks and I look forward to working with your group in the future.

Sincerely,

Elaine Meyers
Program Coordinator

EM:ls

Definition

The following is yet another definition from the Prairie Astronomer, newsletter of the Prairie Astronomy Club, Lincoln, Nebraska:

> **APPARENT MAGNITUDE:** The apparent brightness of a star or other celestial body, expressed in terms of the system of stellar magnitudes. The system had its origins in the classification by brightness of some thousand stars carried out by Hipparchus in the second century B.C., and was standardized by Pogson in 1850. The mean of the twenty brightest stars in the sky is defined to be magnitude 1 (or first magnitude), while the faintest stars normally visible to the unaided eye on a clear dark night are said to be of magnitude 6 (or 6th magnitude); stars which are

between these extremes take intermediate values of magnitude. Thus, the brighter the star, the lower its magnitude. 6th magnitude stars are defined to be 100 times fainter than 1st magnitude stars, i.e. a difference of 5 magnitudes corresponds to a difference in brightness of a factor of 100. The scale is logarithmic.

ABSOLUTE MAGNITUDE: The Apparent Magnitude which a star would have if it were located at a standard distance from the Earth of 10 parsecs (32.6 light years). Clearly the apparent magnitude of a star depends upon the ammount of light it emits (luminosity) and on its distance (brightness diminishes as the square of the distance); if all stars were at the same distance then their apparent magnitudes would be true indicators of their relative luminosities. By definition, the absolute magnitudes of stars provide a measure of their relative luminosities, by comparing the apparent brightness which stars would have if they lay at the same distance.

WAS CALENDAR

July 31	7:30 p.m. EDT	Monthly Meeting at Lewis Hall
August 11-12		Perseid Meteors peak before dawn
16	6:06 a.m. EDT	New Moon
16	8:30 p.m. EDT	Halley Rescue Star Party

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Westminster, Maryland 21157