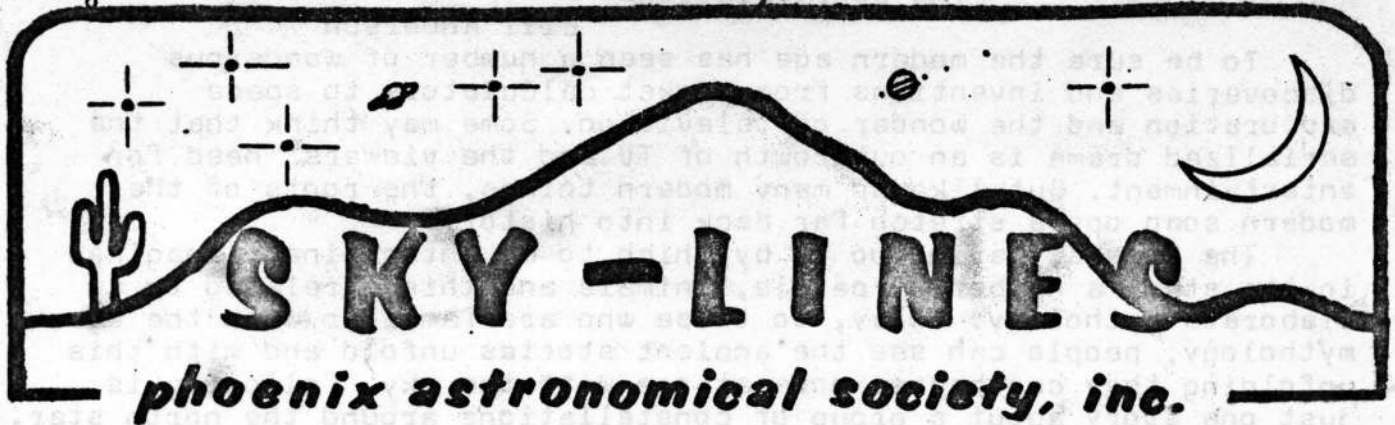




Dr. Weymann on MMT, Phoenix College Friday 27th

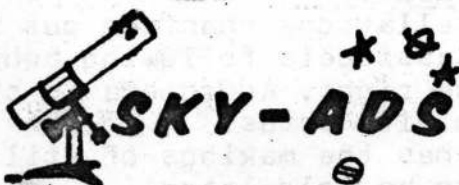
The next meeting will be January 27, 8:00 PM, C102 (southeast corner building) on the Phoenix College campus. Our speaker will be Dr. Ray Weymann from the University of Arizona. His topic will be in two parts- Stellar Winds and MMT Update.

Who said stars have winds? Actually, the "wind" that comes from the sun affects the earth in a number of ways. The Northern Lights are evidence of the interaction between the solar wind and the earth's magnetic field. The high energy particles that come from the sun also create on occasion considerable communication interference and radio fadeout. Bursts of particles from flares in the sun can be a problem for high altitude aircraft. The passenger aircraft carry alarms that notify the pilot if a burst of particle radiation is being felt. He then gets to a lower elevation to put more of the shielding atmosphere above him and his passengers. Dr. Weymann will have more to say on this interesting topic.

What's an MMT? That is the Multiple Mirror Telescope being completed outside Tucson. The idea is fascinating, though outside the capabilities of most amateurs. The scope uses several (6) mirrors in an array several times the diameter of a single mirror. Thus, the effective aperture of the telescope is that of the array, not a single mirror. The resolution of the array is much better than that of a single mirror, but the scope is nowhere as difficult to build or is as expensive as a scope with a mirror the diameter of the array. Collimation, though, is somewhat difficult.

It looks like an interesting evening of information.

Bill Anderson



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The Constellations

Bill Anderson

To be sure the modern age has seen a number of wonderful discoveries and inventions from pocket calculators to space exploration and the wonder of television. Some may think that the serialized drama is an outgrowth of TV and the viewers' need for entertainment. But like so many modern things, the roots of the modern soap opera stretch far back into history.

The Greeks, having no TV by which to be entertained, imagined in the stars a number of people, animals and things related to an elaborate mythology. Today, to those who are familiar with the Greeks' mythology, people can see the ancient stories unfold and with this unfolding they can become more at one with the sky. Following is just one story about a group of constellations around the north star.

Once upon a time, as the story goes, there was a king of Aethiopia by the name of Cepheus who has a very beautiful queen by the name of Cassiopeia. The queen was, unfortunately, rather boastful of her beauty. All was OK until one day the queen made the boast that she was more beautiful than the sea nymphs. This made the sea nymphs mad, so they complained to the gods. From this complaint (due process not being followed) came the creation of a sea monster by the name of Cetus who began laying waste the countryside. This distressed the king, Cepheus (because he was losing his tax base). So, in desperation he consulted the oracle of Ammon (the ancient version of the Hot Line). He was told that the thing he had to do to stop the monster was to sacrifice his daughter, the beautiful and innocent Andromeda to the monster. So the king did the only thing any red blooded king could do. He had his daughter chained to a rock by the seashore to await the pleasure of the monster.

But wait! Our hero comes onto the scene in the form of Perseus the Champion. This brave individual had just completed a mission elsewhere on which he slew the horrible Medusa. This formerly very beautiful woman had been turned into a terrible looking monster by the gods. She was so ugly that anyone who looked at her were immediately turned into stone (instant lithification). By the use of several tricks given to him by the gods, Perseus was able to chop off Medusa's head and put it in a leather bag. On his way back home, Perseus heard about Andromeda's plight, so he went to Cepheus with an offer he couldn't refuse. He said, "If I slay the sea monster, will you give me Andromeda's hand in marriage?" (Presumably the rest of her would come still attached to the hand, though this may not be automatic in Greek mythology.) Since the king had nothing to lose by the deal, he agreed.

Perseus then went to the place where Andromeda was waiting for the monster and instructed her in the plan of action. When the monster appeared, Perseus had Andromeda turn her head away while he drew Medusa's head out of the leather bag. Evidently the head still had the power of instant lithification, for the sea monster, Cetus, was turned into stone. True to his word, the king permitted them to wed and the two flew away on Pegasus, the winged horse. (Incidentally, Pegasus was created by the drops of blood from Medusa's head.)

Today you can still see these six constellations enacting out this story as they circle around the pole star. Cassiopeia following behind Cepheus, two steps behind and one step to the right. Andromeda is still with Pegasus, and Perseus is still having to with Cetus.

As with modern soap operas, this story has the makings of still more tales and stories, but that will have to be told later.