JANUARY

1987

PASTIMES

PHOENIX ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY -- FOUNDED 1948

JANUARY MEETING JANUARY MEETING JANUARY MEETING JANUARY MEETING JANUARY

Long time member **Dan Heim** has agreed to share his "Halley from Hawaii" excursion with us for our January meeting. His travelog will include plenty of pictures of Halley, the Islands, and the observatory atop Mauna Kea!

Same place and time: Phoenix College, Room C-102 (see map on back of newsletter) on Friday, January 23, 1987 at 8:00 p.m. Be there -- Aloha!

OUR "ACTING SECRETARY" REPORTS

Happy New Year! 1986 went out with a bang as our final meeting in December was well attended. Thanks go to members **Richard Lines** who talked about variable stars, and to **Keith Parizek** whose topic was Earth-based lunar mapping. Both were fine presentations.

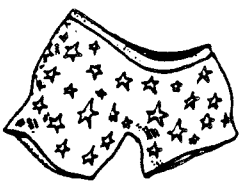
The club received an unexpected and much appreciated Christmas present from **Keith Parizek** -- a flashlight pointer for our future guest speakers to use. This is something we've been needing for quite a while, Keith. Many thanks.

About 25 people and a handful of scopes showed up at our January 3rd star party at McDowell Mountain Park. Good naked eye viewing of Andromeda, the Beehive, and Double Cluster. Another party is in the planning stages for May or June.

As you know, our former Secretary/Treasurer, **Harold Moorin** had resigned his post in the Fall for medical reasons. We're glad to report he is on the road to recovery following recent triple bypass surgery. Get well soon, Harold!

-- Reports p2

ASTROBRIEFS



Methane Rain. New analysis of the Voyager I flyby of Titan, Saturn's moon, (11/79) has shown that what was previously termed clouds of methane is actually an unrelenting rainfall of the natural gas. The methane forms directly into raindrops because Titan's atmosphere lacks a condensation nuclei -- there are no microscopic particles around which gases can condense into tiny vapor particles that make up clouds. This study will show how infrared light from the sun is absorbed and re-emitted by the nitrogen, methane and hydrogen gases that make up Titan's atmosphere. The rainfall discovery will help in determining how sunlight affects the atmospheres of other planets and moons in our solar system. . . . . .

Planetary Nursery. A new world may be forming about 500 light-years from Earth. HL Tauri, a star in Taurus, has gas and dust rotating in a manner similar to how our solar system was formed around our

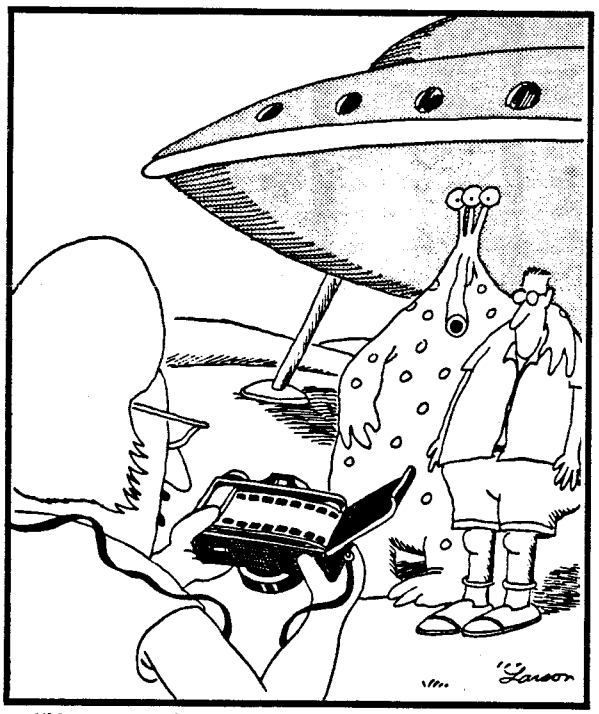
-- Briefs p2

Reports -- continued

Looking ahead: ***Dr. Ann Cowley*** *is scheduled to talk on "Astronomy in China" for February,* ***Dr. Paul Schmidtke*** *will discuss "Photometry" with us in March, and* ***Keith Parizek*** *has offered us his home for an observing session during our April business meeting.*

Don't forget, this will be your last issue of our newsletter unless you have paid your 1987 dues. Use the form on page 3 and mail it now if you haven't already.

-- Bill Krist



"Yes, yes, already, Warren! ... There IS film in the camera!"

Briefs -- continued

Sun about 4.6 billion years ago. Beta Pictoris, a star in the Southern Hemisphere constellation also has a swarm of debris moving in the prescribed manner to create planets. If it is a true formation it could mean that other stars have planetary systems like our own. . .

Galaxies Galore. *Seven new galaxies have been discovered in a void 600 million light-years from Earth. This void could possibly contain 2,000 galaxies the size of the Milky Way. It is that large (300 million light-years in diameter). Some observed activity indicates the possibility that stars may be in the process of forming from cosmic dust and gases. This discovery will affect theories on how matter is distributed in the universe. Details will be published in the* ***Astrophysical Journal Letters.*** *. . . . . .*

Inching Along Mars. *Scientists are preparing to map Mars for a 1992 project using a camera designed by an A.S.U. team. The wide-angle or fish-eye system will be able to fill in the photographic details where the 1976 Viking lander passage left off. Also on board will be an A.S.U. experiment -- a spectrometer to detect differences in the heat the planet emits. This should disclose what materials make up Mars. Once this is known scientists can map the entire body of Mars, a small strip will be mapped each day. . . . . .*

Astral Projection. *Want to sleep under the stars every night -- in complete comfort?! Have your walls melt away as you drift into dreamland? StellarVision, Inc. can precision align an astronomically correct skyscape according to any given date on your very own ceiling. The*

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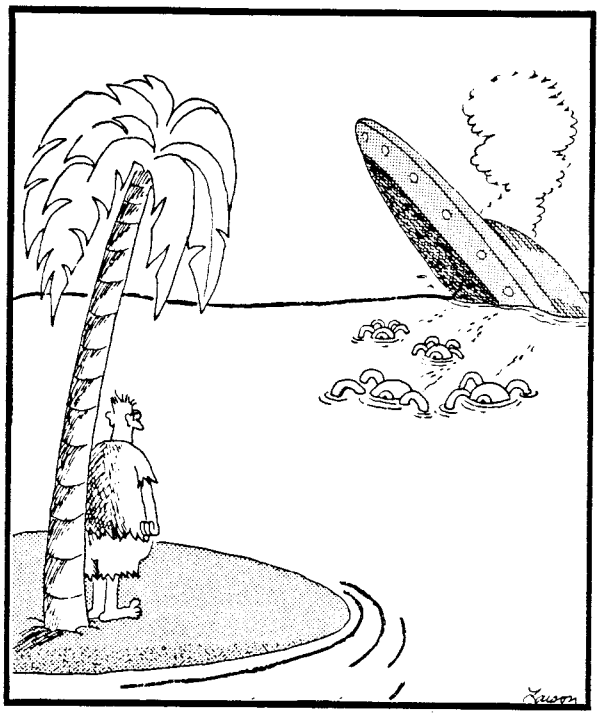
Oregon based company paints the stars to glow only in the dark. Installment costs may vary but the franchise here in Arizona regularly charges $1.80 a square foot based on ceiling area. The walls are completed down to the light-switch level at no extra cost. . . . . .

Quasar Mechanics. *Quasars are smaller than galaxies, yet outshine them. The glow is hundreds of times brighter. Why? They're galactic wrecks, jumbled galaxies, collision-scenes. In order to collide the galaxies have to be spiral and must have been rotating in the opposite directions. Although catastrophic, the event is not so much of a crash as it is a "soft merger". It wasn't the stars striking each other but rather the clouds of gas and dust slamming together. About 3,500 quasars have been catalogued since the first discovered in 1963. Oh, yes, the chance of the Milky Way being overrun by another galaxy is slim -- our neighbors don't have enough gas. . . . .*



(ASTROBRIEFS is edited by Helen Lewis)

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PHOENIX ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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Membership Type:

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