BPAA Newsletter

Battle Point Astronomical Association, Bainbridge Island, WA

Issue 64 July-August 2004

JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, all events are at the Edwin Ritchie Observatory, Battle Point Park)

July

July 2: Full Moon

July 4: Grand Old Fourth in Winslow

July 7: BPAA Board Meeting 7 p.m.

July 9: Last-quarter Moon

July 10: Star Party Battle Point Park
Beginner Session 8 p.m.

July 14: Member Meeting 7 p.m.

July 14 – 17: Mt. Bachelor Star Party www.mbsp.org

July 15 – 17: Table Mountain Star Party
www.tmspa.com

July 17: New Moon

July 20: 35th Anniversary (1969), 1st Man on the Moon (Apollo 11)

July 24: First-quarter Moon

July 31: Full Moon

August

August 4: BPAA Board Meeting 7 p.m.

August 6: Neptune at opposition

August 7: Star Party Battle Point Park
Beginner session 8 p.m.; Last-quarter Moon

August 12: Perseid Meteor Shower Peak

August 12 – 15: Oregon Star Par ty
www.oregonstarparty.org

August 15: New Moon

August 23: First-quarter Moon

August 27: Uranus at opposition

August 29: Full Moon

September

September 1: BPAA Board Meeting 7 p.m.

September 6: Last-quarter Moon

September 8: Member Meeting 7 p.m.

September 11: Star Party Battle Point Park
Beginner Session 7 p.m.

September 14: New Moon

September 21: First-quarter Moon

September 28: Full Moon

1928 Seattle P-I *artist's drawing of early morning meteoroid splashdown near Blake Island. Courtesy Gerald Elfendahl.*

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CALENDAR NOTES

Summer is here, offering the best opportunity for those of us living in the cloudy Pacific Northwest to discover the stars. The brightest stars in the constellations Aquila, Cygnus and Lyra form the Summer Triangle. Altair, Deneb, and Vega, much brighter than their neighbors, dominate the sky through early autumn. Vega, at zero magnitude, is noticeably brighter than first-magnitude Deneb. Altair is also first magnitude and is a bit brighter than Deneb. Altair is the nearest of the three, 17 light-years away. Vega, while the brightest star in the Summer Triangle, is actually more distant than Altair.

Vega's constellation, Lyra, is one of the smallest constellations in the summer sky, but it provides a rich field for summer night viewing. Probably the most observed object in Lyra is Messier 57, a planetary nebula, know as the Ring Nebula. It is recognizable as a ring even in a small refractor, and in a larger scope, the central dark hole is clearly visible. Another Messier in Lyra, M-56, is a small but bright globular cluster. Lyra also contains several galaxies and many unusual stars, including Epsilon Lyrae, which is a Double-Double star.

Take advantage of our local star parties or the several dark-sky star parties around the region to view the summer sky, or organize one of your own. Last-minute star parties can be scheduled via our email Yahoogroup. Any member who plans to observe can invite others to join in by sending an email to bpaa@yahoogroups.com. To join our email group, send an email with your name to bpaa-owner@yahoogroups.com and we can enroll you. If you want to also have web access to the messages and files, you can join the Yahoogroups by clicking the register link for new users on http://groups.yahoo.com/, and requesting to join our group on this page: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bpaa/. The system will send us a message, and we'll approve your request after we verify your membership.

Diane Colvin
BPAA Events Director

IN BRIEF

President's Message

Paul Below

Just a short note to welcome our new board members. Nels Johansen and Matt Rothe have volunteered, Nels as Maintenance Director and Matt as Facilities Director!

We also have a couple of volunteers for the Librarian/Archivist job. Still unofficial, but looking good.

We need a Publicity Director. Currently, our events are not making it into the local papers.

Also, we need someone to manage special events, such as our annual open house.

I am very gratified at the number of people who have stepped up and taken on a role. Thank you!

And a huge thank you to those that helped with our clean up/inventory work day. We donated a number of items to the Rotary Auction, and hauled away items that the Rotary didn't want. We now have space in the meeting room, in the library, and in the furnace room!

To-Do Lists

Malcolm Saunders

Jobs to fit all skills and schedules. If any of the following tasks interest you, contact Malcolm at 780-1905 or saunders@drizzle.com for details.

☐ The deadbolt lock on the front door of the observatory still needs fixing. This looks like a fairly simple job. Contact Matt Rothe or Malcolm Saunders if you are interested.

☐ A great deal of old junk has been removed from the observatory. Naturally there is still more to do but it's a lot better than it was. The old copy machine must still be removed, either to the dump or to anyone who is interested in having it. Thank you to the many members who worked on cleaning up.

☐ Do you like gardening? The observatory has gardens but they need weeding and they could use a load of compost.

☐ Thank you to Russ Heglund for fixing the window on the second floor, north side of the observatory. The

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repaired window still must be installed. Anyone inclined to do this should contact Russ Heglund, Matt Rothe or Nels Johansen.

☐ The club owns a pair of very large binoculars. These work best with a parallelogram mount and a tripod. Designs for parallelogram mounts are freely available for anyone interested in making one for the club out of either wood or metal.

How's the Big Telescope?

Club members wishing to learn how to use the telescope should contact Malcolm Saunders. If you like hands-on learning, consider the following :

☐ The telescope still needs re-collimating

☐ Many wires go to the controls. Some dangle and should be secured with cable ties and anchors to prevent entanglement with moving parts. Other wires need their connectors replaced or better secured.

☐ Run a 115 volt circuit up the side of the ladder in the dome so that we can connect instruments at the top without using extension cords—a hazard.

☐ We have an optical encoder on the DEC drive. We would like to (re-)install one on the RA drive. Neither encoder is connected to any electronics. Jim Vaughan has worked out what appears to be a simple reliable way to read those encoders. Contact Malcolm and/or Jim Vaughan.

☐ Look into a transition from our current telescope control software to the program called "Scope." This project calls for knowledge of software, the C programming language, stepper motors and their control electronics. Contact Malcolm or Jim Vaughan. A possible second stage would be to migrate to ASCOM (see http://www.ascom-standards.org/index.html for a description).

☐ We are considering changing from hard wired controls to *Bluetooth* or another wireless system in the dome. Someone should look into feasibility and cost.

BPAA Financial Report September 2003

Eric Cederwall, Treasurer

Balance Sheet May 2004

Current Assets	32656
Fixed Assets	246591
Total Assets	279247
Liabilities	0
Equity	279247
Total Liabilities/Equity	**279247**

Income Statement May 2004

Income	Current	Year-to-date
Contributed Income	78	7269
Membership Dues	55	1250
Lecture Series	1066	2692
Other Income	319	920
Total Income	**1518**	**12131**
Expenses		
Administrative	0	1089
Program	1584	2081
Utilities	45	226
Total Expenses	**1629**	**3396**
Net Income (Loss)	**-111**	**8735**

Two Meteors

Vicki Saunders

Washington state skies made national news at 2:40 a.m. June 3, 2004, when a fireball flashed and boomed over the Puget Sound area. Meanwhile, Gerald Elfendahl has been reporting on a meteor that flashed by at 12:18 a.m., Monday, July 16, 1928.

In 2004, witnesses said the sky "lit up brilliantly," and reported the sound of explosions. Security cameras caught the flashes. Komo TV has compiled a digest of video-recorded flashes: http://www.komotv.com/stories/31552.htm

Experts such as Geoff Chester, a spokesman for the National Observatory, swiftly declared it a bolide. The glossary of Astronomy.com defines bolide as "a brilliant meteor or fireball that explodes in midair." The USGS defines it as "a generic term, used to imply that we do not know the precise nature of the impacting body..." http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/epubs/bolide/introduction.html

For discussion of the 2004 fireball check out the Dutch Meteor Society http://www.dmsweb.org/ and the Astoroid/Comet Connection's report http://www.hohmanntransfer.com/mn/0406/04.htm#wafball.

Then read what the papers said back in 1928, page 8.

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Seeing Stars (Venus):Astronomy 0.001

Anna Edmonds

Many would-be viewers have traveled great distances to see the Transit of Venus, only to be frustrated. The 2004 Transit was not visible from Seattle. But our oldest son and his family live in Istanbul, Turkey, and we'd been planning a visit. We scheduled the trip to coincide with the Transit, and hoped.

We'd sent an e-mail to Dr. Tamer Ataç of the Kandilli Observatory asking if visitors would be accepted there for the occasion, and had had his positive answer back, so we felt a responsibility, clouds or no, to appear.

Kandilli is one of the many areas of Istanbul that dot the shores of the Bosphorus, and the Kandilli Observatory sits on the crest of a hill above the Strait. Tuesday morning, June 8th, we pulled up at the Observatory just after a rain shower.

Once there, Dr. Ataç graciously welcomed us. He apologized for the weather—hardly his fault!—and then showed us the one picture on the Observatory Web site of an early moment in the Transit when the clouds had parted. "Such bad luck," he said, "that it should be cloudy today."

"Never mind," we answered. "We're happy to be here and to meet you."

"Then let me show you our telescope."

We went up a couple of flights of winding marble stairs and into the dome. There the telescope, controlled by Hulya Yeşilyaprak, was pointed at the clouds.

Kandilli Observatory telescope

Hulya Yeşilyaprak and graph

"If it weren't rainy, we would have set up another 'scope with its solar filter in the yard," Dr. Ataç said.

Just then the clouds thinned. As we watched, a shadow crossed the sheet of graph paper that had been positioned under the 'scope. All at once, the bright image of the Sun appeared, sharp and clear, and the dark spot of Venus stood out, unmistakable, almost unbelievably real.

We all gasped. "It's there! We saw it!"

As quickly it was gone again.

For another hour we watched and visited as the clouds came and went, now allowing a faint shadow of the planet to peek through, now a sharp image, and now nothing. Hulya Hanim (Miss Hulya) pointed out the planet to visitors as it appeared. The Observatory recorded the transit electronically.

We were impressed by the competence of the staff, the quiet skill with which Hulya Haným handled the big 'scope, and the ease with which the increasing number of visitors were accommodated. Before we left, the weather had cleared a bit (it never did open up completely), and the portable 'scope was positioned outside so we could look through it directly at the Sun.

The Kandilli Observatory was founded in 1868; its telescope has been in operation since 1935. It is an equatorial refractor with a 20 cm objective diameter and a 307 cm focal length. In 1982 it became affiliated with Boğaziçi University in Istanbul.

Since 1947 the major ongoing work of the Observatory has been to observe and report sunspot activity monthly to the Sunspot Index Data Center and the National Geophysical Data Center. It has received recognition

for this from the American Association of Variable Stars. In 1973 They began to operate a low frequency radio receiver in order to research solar-terrestrial relationships.

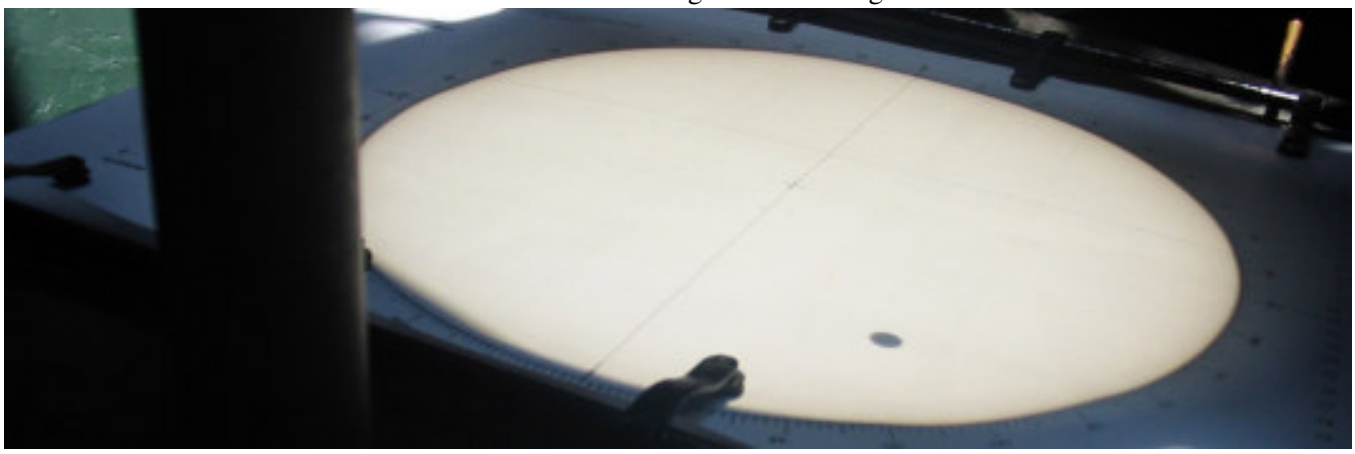
A staff of seven people works at the astronomy laboratory. More than 150 people are involved in research projects, including earthquake research, the design and production of optical instruments for astronomy, and plans for research on the Solar eclipse that will cross central Turkey the afternoon of March 29, 2006.

Pictures of the Transit as recorded by the Kandilli Observatory can be seen on http://www.koeri.boun.edu.tr/astronomy/VenusTransit/index.html For more about the study of the sun, see http:/www.koeri.boun.edu.tr/astronomy/solphys_lab.html

Bill Edmonds, right, with Dr. Tamer Ataç

The library of the Observatory is a repository of works on astronomy dating from the 11th century to the 21st. Among them are writings by the famous 16th century Ottoman astronomer, Taqi al-Din. Taqi's observatory offended Sultan Selim II's Grand Mufti, who ordered it destroyed.

For Bill and me, the experience of being included in watching the Transit at Kandilli was one we'll never forget. We'd seen the photographs of the 1882 Transit, and of course we could have watched this one in the comfort of our home, on our computer screen. We didn't need to be in Turkey. That said, the computer projection, as scientific (and unclouded!) as it was, would still have been like a textbook subject, scientifically verified, but one step removed from reality. Instead, with our own eyes we saw the event as it took place. We saw a planet almost the size of our Earth as a minuscule pimple against the huge Sun, and had for an instant an insight into the truth of astronomical research and into the magnitude of our Solar System. It was an unforgettable morning.



Transit of Venus, Kandilli Observatory (All photos by Anna Edmonds)

A Star Party – Texas-Style

Diane Colvin

Texas is a place where they take their barbeque seriously, and, as we now know, their star parties as well. The Texas Star Party is a well-organized and well-run event. But it's a long way from Bainbridge Island . . . 1,895 miles to be exact.

The Party is held at Prude Ranch, near Fort Davis, in the Davis Mountains, in the vast expanse of nothingness known as West Texas. The trip from Bainbridge to Prude Ranch took us four and a half days, driving most of each day, with only occasional forays off the highway for irresistible attractions, such as Arches National Park and Mesa Verde.

Having just dissed West Texas, I do feel compelled to say that the Davis Mountains are beautiful, and that Prude Ranch is an appealing, pastoral place. The ranch is at an elevation of 5,500 feet, and has a variety of accommodations, including guest lodges, bunk houses, RV hookups, and tent sites. The facilities include a restaurant, an air-conditioned auditorium, a swimming pool and tennis courts. There are towns nearby, with additional accommodations and restaurants and a full

range of services. Amenities abound, distinguishing the Texas Star Party from many of the star parties held in the Pacific Northwest, such as the Table Mountain Star Party and the Oregon Star Party.

There were about 650 attendees: we saw license plates from practically every region of the country. Many of the participants were regulars, having attended for more than twenty years. The Texas Star Party started in 1979, and has been held at Prude Ranch since 1982.

Harry and Diane Colvin at TSP, photo courtesy Diane Colvin

We chose the lowest of the three observing fields. It was conveniently located next to our trailer, but proved to be too close to the road. Should we ever return we would go to one of the upper fields. Despite the occasional annoying headlights, we had good viewing each night of the seven we were there, with one exception, mid-week. On that night, we were entertained instead by a spectacular lightning storm. The Texans didn't make much of it, but we were impressed.

The skies were dark, in large part due to the efforts of the Texas Star Party organization, which has worked hard to increase and preserve the darkness of the skies in the area of the Davis Mountains. With McDonald Observatory, the TSP organization has funded public information programs on light pollution and efficient lighting practices in West Texas –supporting activities such as the replacement of street light fixtures throughout the county. The skies, while dark, were not nearly as dark as those in central Oregon, in the Ochoco Mountains, where the Oregon Star Party is held. Nor was the Milky Way as spectacular.

Lighting restrictions were comprehensive, and strictly enforced. There were penalties for driving on the Ranch when lighting controls were in effect, including fines and permanent banishment from TSP. Lest anyone not take all this seriously, there was a Texas-style gendarme on site. The mere presence was enough to make a believer out of me. My comportment was exemplary for the duration of the star party.

McDonald Observatory is just 17 miles from the ranch. As Star Party attendees, we received a VIP tour of the Observatory. A research unit of the University of Texas, it is one of the world's leading centers for astronomical research. It has three principal research telescopes. We first toured the Otto Struve Telescope, the first major telescope to be built there. Constructed in the 1930s, its 82-inch mirror was the second largest in the world at the time. Next, we toured the Harlan J. Smith Telescope. It has a 107-inch mirror. When it was constructed in the 1960s, it was the third largest in the world. The Hobby-Eberly Telescope, with its 433-inch mirror, is one of the world's largest optical telescopes. The HET was completed in 1997, and is optimized for spectroscopy.

The star party featured some excellent speakers, including David Levy and Wil Tirion. But the undisputed star was Omega Centauri (NGC 5139). It proved to be the real reward for driving nearly 2,000 miles south. Omega Centauri is one of the nearest globular clusters to the earth, and is by far the brightest and largest. Its stellar population is estimated to exceed one million. Although 15,600 light years away, it is visible to the naked eye.

The beauty and magnificence of Omega Centauri prompted us to consider the Southern sky. There is that Winter Sky Party in the Florida Keys, you know. And it's only 3,487 miles from Bainbridge.

Planetarium's Progress

Sally Metcalf

The original Planetarium Committee, headed by John Rudolph, researched just about everything BPAA might need to know in order to choose and develop a planetarium system. They compiled the information into the *Planetarium Report*. The current committee met on June 5, 2004 to carry that work forward. They considered the following options:

Possible Formats

- ✯ Fish-eye lens on Boxlight projector as an equivalent for a portable projector
- ✯ "Poor Man's Planetarium"
- ✯ Portable projector and dome in meeting room
- ✯ Stationary (or portable) projector and dome in an addition to the present building
- ✯ Portable projector and dome that could go out to schools

Fish-eye Lens

If we can develop a fish-eye lens to fit the Boxlight projector, the stunning capabilities of *Starry Night* software would be available to BPAA planetarium audiences.

Matt Watson has designed a multiple-lens fish-eye apparatus to fit the BPAA Boxlight. He donated his time, quite a gift, given that he usually charges $150 per hour. If the club approves the effort, BPAA would provide the glass. Bob Mathews would grind the lens, and Allan Saunders would do the mechanical engineering. Cost would be around $15,000. Development would take about a year.

The project could be ground-breaking. If successful, it could make highly versatile planetariums economical for small organizations like BPAA.

The committee had questions:

- ✯ What if the Boxlight model for which the lens is designed becomes obsolete or unavailable?
- ✯ Boxlight will not give out specifications for its projectors. Uniting lens with projector will demand reverse engineering: challenging!
- ✯ Will the image that is projected be good enough to satisfy the club? A quality show was a high priority to the original Planetarium Committee. According to the *Planetarium Report*, some distortion of images around the edges of the display could result. Also, there is the issue of fill: additional pixels needed when an image programmed for a flat surface is spread over a curved dome. We may have to create software to create fill: more challenge!

Poor Man's Planetarium

Jim Vaughan would like to purchase a $2000 wide-angle lens to attach to a Boxlight that will result in a 90-degree zoom. *Starry Night* supports this zoom ratio. This lens could hint at what the fish-eye lens can do. We could use it until the fish-eye is developed, as a marketing tool for the fish-eye, or even as a final projector, although it only projects a partial image of the sky, not the full dome.

Classic Planetarium Projector vs Fish-Eye Lens Projector

The most significant difference between the fish-eye lens projector and the classic style of planetarium projector is the type of show we could put on. The Boxlight/fish-eye lens gives us access to *Starry Night* software.

A classic projector shows the celestial bodies and their movements from any point on Earth. It is not as versatile as the Boxlight/fish-eye option with *Starry Night*. There are, however, many celestial bodies that can be shown by a classic projector and many programs available. Harry Colvin at the recent Members Meeting suggested the outstanding software called *Planetarium,* based on photographs.

The committee had questions about the classic projector:

- ✯ Would it be possible to show close-ups of the sky, singling out a galaxy or a planet, as can be done with *Starry Night*?
- ✯ Would the small number of programs make the number of new shows too limited?
- ✯ How many programs does BPAA need to offer its planetarium audience?
- ✯ Would in-house programming even be possible?

Bainbridge kids study astronomy in elementary, middle school, and high school. This could mean presentations to six to seven hundred school children a year, if the Bainbridge school district uses the planetarium. Kitsap county district students also study astronomy. It's essential to involve the school districts in our planning.

Fundraising

Sally Metcalf volunteered to be the Planetarium Project fundraising workhorse. Whatever planetarium format BPAA chooses, there appears to be a lot of community support for a project with John Rudolph's name on it. Veteran Bainbridge Island fundraisers say that it would not be difficult to raise $150,000 for the planetarium in John's name, if BPAA begins fundraising while his memory is still fresh. The most expensive option—a projector and dome housed in an addition onto the present facility—would cost around that amount. And we are considering less expensive options.

BPAA already has $11,000 set aside for the project and has hardly begun to raise funds. The financial picture looks promising.

We must work expeditiously to answer the questions we have raised. Funds should be forthcoming if we act while the memory of John Rudolf remains strong in the community.

Members interested in helping with the Planetarium Project give Sally Metcalf a call at **206/842-6719.**

1928 Seattle P-I *artist's drawing of primary meteor trajectory. Later observation analysis suggests it may have come more out of the south and passed over The Dalles, OR and Tacoma. Courtesy Gerald Elfendahl*

The Meteor— Part II

Gerald Elfendahl

(Continued from previous issue...)

At 12:18 a.m., Monday, July 16, 1928, a meteor roared bright across the skies of Puget Sound. For 5 to 7 seconds, night became day, explosions were heard, huge waves washed ashore near Harper and Manchester: dead fish floated ashore the next day. *The Seattle Times* and *P-I*'s first stories were told in Part I.

The Bremerton Daily News Searchlight noted other reports, including one from Manette which echoed Seattle and Tacoma reports that the meteor came to earth toward the SW. An Olympia report said it came to earth in an easterly direction (with) "a tremendous concussion and many called newspaper offices thinking there had been a great explosion.

"Dean Morken, driving in Seattle, heard a strong hissing sound.... Everything was lighted up light as day, with a brilliant blue light,' he said. 'I jumped out of my car to look up and as I did so, the meteor seemed to disintegrate and fall. It came from slightly east of south and appeared about 500-feet above the earth.'

"Chief of Police Walter Barowski noticed the glare after midnight as he cruised through the streets of Bremerton in the night prowler car. 'It looked like a huge ball of fire— the sky was lit up with a bluish tinge and suddenly the thing seemed to explode making a triple detonation and earth rumble.'

"Acting (Kitsap) Sheriff Amos Corliss (saw the meteor) while riding his automobile near Horseshoe Lake. Don Young and Miss Muriel Rogers and a party of other Manette youth were out riding. They said it looked as though the meteor were directly over Bremerton and about to fall on the city."

"A meteor so bright that its light filled the sky for miles and the roar of it hitting the earth or water rattled the windows of houses in the city and woke many from their sleep" made page one, column one of Monday's *Tacoma News Tribune*. "It buried itself somewhere in Pierce County or to the NW."

Most reports reaching the *News Tribune* offices and police station were from residents of South Tacoma, McKinley Hill and from American, Gravely and Steilicoom Lakes: "It appeared at first as a dull glow, rapidly increasing until the light filled the whole sky. The light then died out rapidly and a moment later came the roar of an explosion. This resembled a giant cannon of some kind with a series of deep reverberations following which lasted 10 or 15 seconds.

"While many saw the glare and heard the explosions, few saw the meteor itself. Among those who saw (it) falling, perhaps the best view was obtained by Dr. G. A. Wislicenus, 3502 North 29th St., who, with his wife, rushed to their bedroom window, attracted by the glare.

'After the brightest glare passed, I saw what appeared to be four fiery balls, close together, falling rapidly towards the earth,' said the doctor. 'The direction was just a little west of north and the meteorite seemed to be traveling from south to north. The four balls rapidly died out as they approached the earth and soon all was darkness again.'

"Dr. Wislicenus' observations indicated that the meteorite might have exploded into a number of parts and burned out before it hit the ground. In that case, the noise might have been that of the meteorite blowing up, rather than it striking the earth.

"J. J. Lynn, attendant at Western Washington State Hospital ... saw a red ball with a trail of fire pass over the hospital toward the northwest and thought it landed in the Sound."

The noise of the explosion caused rumors that there had been a horrible accident at the DuPont (dynamite) facility. Authorities at DuPont said there were stories of the explosion coming from every direction on the compass "making it impossible to tell its direction."

The Seattle Star in a Monday front page story "Meteor Darts Over Seattle," reported: "Police and telephone operators in nearly every town and city along the coast were kept busy for hours explaining what many thought to be a great fire or quake. ...It lighted up the city nearly

as brightly as the sun. ...It resembled a great flaming skyrocket."

The Star shared wire service stories from Portland, Tacoma, and Steilicoom adding, "Near Lincoln beach, south of Seattle, and the Tacoma Golf and Country Club, the blast was reported felt." The spot where it landed was still a mystery. Academicians were not quick to leap to any conclusions. UW Dean Henry Landes told *The Star* "...Very possible that the flaming body seen this morning was a meteor. Such things occur.... It is very possible that it fell into the Sound, but it could have fallen on the ground without being noticed."

With a second day to reflect upon what happened, journalists shared more observations and editorials on July 17 and 18. A tugboat captain got his story into Tuesday's *Bremerton Daily News Searchlight*— "Tugboat Man Sees Meteor Strike Water— John Hefner returning from Anacortes to Bremerton declares fiery meteorite landed near his boat at Point No Point.

"...He noticed an unusual light fastly *(sic)* approaching his boat. The glare was intense and Hefner was unable to look directly at the phenomena. According to the captain, the flaming mass of rock struck the water about 200 feet in front of his boat. It was accompanied in its descent with a swishing noise and gave off a hissing sound as it struck the water.... The tugboat captain was alone in the pilot house...and believing that he was experiencing something unusual, awakened others on the boat to substantiate what he felt might have been an hallucination.

"R. E. Mullin of the (Bremerton) Garland Hotel...was walking on Warren Ave. near the Navy yard fence when he first noticed the meteor. Thinking it was a skyrocket, he paid it no attention than to marvel at its unusual color and brilliance of the glow.... Shortly after, about fifty seconds, Mullin heard the explosion, what he thought was the exhaust of a large diesel engine. By his calculations, Mullin thought the meteor was about 12 miles overhead and traveling at a rate of 1,200 feet per second."

An AP story noted that Port Angeles shared the meteor display: "Earl Sanderson and Jake Pollanz both saw (it). Sanderson was returning from Beaver by automobile and was forced to pull off of the road because of the brilliancy of the light on his windshield. The growling of his dog, Prince, attracted his attention and he turned in time to see the meteor breaking into two pieces. 'Each one was as large as the moon,' he said but with brilliancy 'that rivaled the sun.'

"Pollanz said the meteorite seemed to dissolve when it came about level with the top of Mt. Angeles and left a trail of sparks in its wake. Both men remarked on the ghastly green light thrown off."

On Tuesday, a new *Time's* story was accompanied by a cartoon. A dapper fellow says, "I tell you, I saw it and heard it land just off Alki." A sailor replies, "Who's your bootlegger?" Another man insists, "I saw it break up in the air!" And another, "I was in Portland that morning and saw it land in the Willamette!"

The Time's "Widely-Scattered Areas Say Meteor Fell There" let it be known that "eyewitnesses" from throughout the PNW declared "positively" that the meteor landed "nearby." There was no lack of experts to interpret events.

W. G. Wells, UW Library staff superintendent with a "hobby of astronomy" told readers that the meteor seen in the region "was an unusually large one... probably" and that it "first became visible at an elevation of eighty miles and came gradually lower." Without reporting seeing it, he estimated its diameter at three feet, its weight at 100 to 200 pounds and its speed at twenty-miles-per-second— "five or six times faster than a bullet." He deduced that its course "indicated that it was likely to have become detached from the Aquila of the Eagle constellation."

Unnamed astronomers told the *Times* that perhaps the meteor disintegrated near the earth and that pieces did land in both Lake Steilacoom and Puget Sound, accounting for varying contentions. Other "astronomical authorities" said they "smile at these reports, saying that a meteor reaching the earth's atmosphere leaves a deceptive impression as to its landing place."

Authorities were sceptical of a reports such as the one that came from the AP in Vancouver, BC: "J. B. Murphy, a prospector from Mount Squeah, shortly after midnight, Monday, saw a strange light in the sky and heard a whistling noise. He was amazed to see a meteor close above him. In a moment it plunged down into the Fraser River a short distance from where he stood. Mr. Murphy was convinced that the meteor fell into the river because of the splash he heard as the meteor disappeared from sight."

Were meteorites found?

TO BE CONTINUED ....

Gerald Elfendahl is a lifetime resident of Puget Sound, a local historian and author of an environmental history and geomorphology of Bainbridge Island. He can be reached at: gelfenda@earthlink.net

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Electronic submissions preferred.
Attach graphics as seperate files.
Hard copy will not be returned without SASE.

Battle Point Astronomical Association

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