

New Books

"Our Sun," Donald H. Menzel, Blakiston Co., Phila., 1949, 326 pp., \$4.50.

Published June 23, this long-awaited book completes the eight volume set of the Harvard Books on Astronomy which have been of such interest to amateurs. The author is a professional astronomer who has specialized in solar research.

The book is addressed to nontechnical readers and is liberal with illustrations and photographs as well as background explanations of physical concepts and terminology. This means that the author has had to compress into relatively limited space his descriptions of solar structure and activity, methods and problems of research, and solar-terrestrial relationships. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is some unevenness in presentation. Oversimplifications can be noted along with passages of some technical difficulty. It is inevitable, too, that some important aspects of the subject be treated rather sketchily in a book of this length. One would like, for example, to have more details on the many new advances in research related to the war effort.

The book can still be considered a useful and up-to-date introductory survey of solar knowledge. There is much interesting material in the central chapters which cover sunspots, details of the solar surface, prominences, the corona, and atomic processes. Somewhat less complete is the collateral matter on effects on radio communication, meteorology, and geophysics of the upper atmosphere.

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STAR DUST
National Capital Astronomers

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SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

- Aug. 31 Wed. Open house Naval Observatory.
- Sept. 7 Wed. Open house Naval Observatory.
- Sept. 10 Sat. "The Shape of the Universe," Dr. Bancroft W. Sitterly, 8:15 p. m., Commerce Auditorium.
- Sept. 15 Thurs. Open house Young Memorial Observatory, 4410 River Road, N. W. 8:00 p. m. Call the Rotbarts EM 0119.
- Sept. 17 Sat. Technical Discussion Session, 8:00 p. m. Department of Commerce Foyer.
- Sept. 18 Sun. National Capital Parks Star Outing. Campfire Site, 16th & Colorado. 8:00 p. m.
- Sept. 27 Tues. Regular observing night at NCA Alvin Clark 5-inch, Naval Observatory, 8:00 p. m.

Monday and Tuesday, 7-10 p. m. Telescope making class, Roosevelt High School, 13th and Upshur, N.W. Miss Irene Warthen, instructor. Telephone SH 9451. Closed Monday September 5 and Wednesday September 7.

DR. BANCROFT W. SITTERLY, professor at American University and formerly astronomer at the Van Vleck Observatory of Wesleyan University and at the United States Naval Observatory, who speaks to us September 10 on "The Shape of the Universe," says of his subject:

"We cannot perceive the shape of the galaxy of which our sun is a member. The host of individually observable stars with few exceptions are relatively close to the sun and even the star clouds of the Milky Way are not major galactic features. The greater part of the stellar system is concealed from us by obscuring matter, yet there are many reasons for believing that the system represents a spiral nebula and even its dimensions and rate of rotation can be estimated. Evidence is obtained from stellar distribution in the sky, from stellar motion, from clusters and variable stars, and from comparison with other galaxies. Some of this evidence will be presented and discussed."

ELEMENTARY COURSE IN ASTRONOMY: The trustees of the National Capital Astronomers have decided that a course in elementary astronomy should be offered to the membership. We have made arrangements to obtain a complete course in astronomy that will include the textbook, "Introduction to Astronomy," by Baker, and a complete set of lesson helps and instructions for each of the sixteen lessons. We shall conduct this as a course with meetings once each week, starting some time the latter part of September, and continuing for sixteen weeks. Those who take the course will decide where the classes will be held. Dr. Francis P. Wells has agreed to conduct the class. The price of the course will be \$7.50 for each member of the class. The book, together with all of the lessons and instruction work, will become the property of each class member. All those desiring to take the course must register not later than September 10 with the secretary, Miss Janet Perkins, or Bob Wright. For any further information concerning this course, please call Bob Wright, SLigo 6548.

PERSEID METEOR COUNT scheduled for Friday, August 12 was rained out. A few persons showed up for the National Capital Parks Star Outing on Sunday night, August 14 in spite of the bad weather. A showing of astronomical slides was held.

TECHNICAL DISCUSSION SESSIONS. For those who are interested in elementary astronomy we are offering a course covering that subject. For those who are further advanced we offer this year a new series of technical discussions. These will take the form of round-table discussions permitting those advanced members attending a chance to ask questions and learn the "know how" of the actual work done by astronomers. We shall have at each session a guest astronomer who will tell us the nature of his work. He will give us details not usually found in print. This, we hope, will give our advanced members a deeper insight into the problems and techniques involved in astronomy.

FORSYTH ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY group guests of NCA. A group of Forsyth amateurs headed by Mr. and Mrs. M. T. Y. McManus were guests of NCA for a tour of Naval Observatory August 3. The rainy skies began to clear at 11 and Mr. Cilley made the visit a success by remaining at the telescope until midnight.

The two and one-half year old Forsyth club carries out a very active program. Mr. McManus left some interesting papers and exhibits with us. One paper describes a scale model of the Hale 200", observatory, and grounds which an engineer member constructed. This has been widely used to arouse interest in astronomy, being exhibited at the Engineer's Fair, as a center for library exhibits, and for demonstration purposes before a number of groups. The Winston-Salem astronomers engage in the building of telescopes and stellar cameras--in their homes. Mirrors range in size from 3" to 12". They have descriptions and plans for various types of cameras and mountings which they have constructed and will be glad to make them available to anyone wishing to see them. Miss Boling will bring to the next NCA meeting some interesting charts which they constructed to locate and follow the course of the asteroid Vesta and also samples of their stellar photography and pictures of equipment used. The Forsyth astronomers extend an invitation to any NCA member to visit them if passing near Winston-Salem.