

On the grander stage, Mateo has compiled a very valuable inventory of the Local Group, with emphasis on the dwarf galaxies, several of which have been uncovered only recently. To chart the scale of the Universe beyond the Local Group, supernovae have been a key element, and Branch gives an authoritative account of Type Ia supernovae and their part in the effort to zero in on the Hubble constant ($60 \pm 10 \text{ km s}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-1}$ is his present estimate). Active galaxies as probes of the more distant reaches of the cosmos are treated by Ferrari in a mainly theoretical discussion of the structure of jets, while Bertschinger considers structure in the Universe as a whole, a topic not unrelated to the distribution of the clouds of intergalactic (and intragalactic) gas which give rise to the forest of Ly α lines in QSO spectra described by Rauch.

Also to be found in this volume is a description by Kovalevsky of the first results from *Hipparcos*, perhaps a little early for mature consideration of the benefits of that mission, and as something of a complement to *SOHO* results, a modern discussion of radio emission from solar flares by Bastian, Benz & Gary. The book begins, as is traditional, with a personal comment from a distinguished astronomer, and Volume 36 is no exception, with van der Hulst reviewing a long and active career in theoretical astrophysics, a crowning moment of which must have been the prediction of the 21-cm line of hydrogen. — DAVID STICKLAND.

PAPERBACK RELEASE

Observing Handbook and Catalogue of Deep-Sky Objects, by C. B. Luginbuhl & B. S. Skiff (Cambridge University Press), 1998. Pp. 352, 30 × 21 cm. Price £24.95/\$37.95 (ISBN 0 521 62556 4). Reviewed 110, 169.

OBITUARY

W. L. Martin (1940–1999)

Bill was born in Uganda and whilst in Africa learned to speak Swahili, returning to England to attend Tonbridge School (where he was three years senior to Michael Penston). He graduated from St Andrews in 1963 with an honours degree in Astronomy, joining the staff of HM Nautical Almanac Office at Herstmonceux soon after, and was amongst the first intake on the University of Sussex MSc Astronomy course, graduating in 1967.

Bill with wife Alison and son Tony moved to South Africa a few months before his daughter Hayley was born and he started work at the Radcliffe Observatory in Pretoria on 1971 September 1. Amongst his responsibilities was the RGO spectrograph, which was fitted with the newly-developed *Spectracon* image tubes. The fault-report book notes that one of the tubes imploded shortly after a fighter aircraft from the local airbase had passed low overhead. What Bill said, however, is not recorded. The family then moved to the Cape and Bill worked for his PhD thesis on ‘Cepheids in the Magellanic Clouds’, supervised by Brian Warner. They returned to England in 1978 March where Bill completed his doctoral dissertation, submitting it to the University of Cape Town in 1980.

Back at Herstmonceux, Bill joined the Automation Department under Ian van Breda and quickly re-established himself as an active member of the RGO Club. In addition to his enthusiasm for tennis and cricket — he was captain of

the RGO team — Bill was a regular performer in the RGO pantomimes which started again in 1978 after a lapse of many years. He played Ugly Sisters and Giants with equal aplomb and gave an heroic performance as Captain Hook, playing second fiddle to a mechanical crocodile controlled from the wings by Pete Read.

From 1985 onwards, Bill supported the PATT ING TAG as Scheduler Secretary and his powers of diplomacy were used to the full as he tried to balance the many diverse requests for telescope time which came in for the telescopes on La Palma. His rôle brought him into contact with a large number of astronomers in the UK and overseas, and he earned the respect of all of them by his tactful and helpful management of their inevitably conflicting requirements. By this time his first marriage had ended, but Bill was to find lasting happiness with Joy whom he married in 1997.

He was an excellent mimic and could easily slip into any accent — his favourite being that of the South African farmer. He was a very sociable man and could often be found in the RGO Clubhouse at lunchtime helping behind the bar. He became Chairman of the RGO Club before the move to Cambridge and stayed in the post until the club was firmly established in its new location. He was Chairman again in 1997 and was a driving force behind the last RGO barbecue — held on Midsummer's Day 1998. As his daughter said at the funeral address in St. Laurence Church, Wicken on 1999 January 22, Bill was perhaps most at ease at a braai with a can of beer in his hand. — ROBERT ARGYLE.

EDITORIAL

Millennium Issue

The Editors wish to solicit contributions for a special issue of *The Observatory* to be published in 2000 February to commemorate the (false) Millennium. We are particularly keen to carry less-orthodox material than normal (which will be printed on pink pages). Potential authors may wish to consult the previous special issues of 1974 June and 1977 October for guidance, or may seek advice from any of the Editors. The usual rigorous refereeing standards will apply and contributions will need to be received by 1999 October 1.

Here & There

DINOSAURS UPDATED

... who was the first to argue that supervolcanism caused the extinctions back in 1979. — *New Scientist*, 1997 August 16, p. 26.

EVERYBODY WELCOME

Readership: Professional and amateur astronomers. Undergraduates in astrology, cosmogeny and geophysics. — *The Aurora, Sun-Earth Interactions* (Ellis Horwood), 1994.

VERY LARGE ORBITS

Even the seas below the ice crust on Europa and Titan [two moons of Venus] ... — *The Sunday Times*, 1998 January 4, p. 6.