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METEORS

Continued from Page 1

Dr. Robert L. Zimmerman, astronomer and University astrophysics professor, agreed that many scientists are predicting a meteor storm because of Swift-Tuttle's passage by the sun last year. Zimmerman indicated that scientists were talking about it through e-mail.

Zimmerman said that before 1992, the Perseid showers seen were actually debris that had decayed off of the Swift-Tuttle comet as it passed by the sun long ago.

"They were out there waiting hundreds and even thousands of years for Earth to collide with them," Zimmerman said.

Zimmerman said that when Swift-Tuttle passed by the sun in 1992, new meteoroids boiled off of the comet. However, in 1992 the new meteoroids were hard to see because they were upstaged by a full moon. This year's Perseids will be particularly visible because there will almost be a new moon.

Zimmerman and thousands of other star watchers all over the world will go out in search of clear, dark skies Wednesday and Thursday to study and enjoy the spectacle. *Astronomy* magazine predicts the best sightings in Asia and Europe, but a storm could happen anywhere.

Many amateur star watchers have had "star parties." These celestial paparazzi stay up late into the night. As they sit in the dark under blankets, they sip coffee, munch cookies and probe the sky with their eyes. Some will take photographs and record data to present to astronomical organizations.

Meteors and their parent comets are made of, among other things, chunks of methane, ammonia and carbon dioxide ice and bits of intergalactic rocks and dust.

When comets made of this "dirty ice" pass by the sun, the sun's intense waves of heat and light thaw off bits of debris. This process of decay makes a gaggle of new "shooting stars," which intersects the path of Earth and hits its atmosphere like bugs on a windshield.

The Swift-Tuttle comet orbits the sun on an elliptical path that takes 130 years. As Earth tilts into this newly hatched stream of meteoroids, inhabitants will be able to see the luminous phenomenon of sand-sized particles entering the atmosphere at 160,000 mph.

To observe the shower or storm, find a place well away from city lights with few or no trees. Look in the northeast sky toward Pegasus or Polaris, the North Star. The shower will begin after midnight and may peak between 3 a.m. and dawn.

Professor Zimmerman recommends bringing



The appearance of the Leonid meteor showers in 1833, according to an artist.

binoculars to observe meteor trails as they are blown and distorted by winds in the upper atmosphere. *Astronomy* magazine suggests bringing sleeping bags or blankets for warmth, coffee, snacks, bug spray and a chaise lounge. It is also recommended to work under red light to keep eyes adapted to the dark.

Zimmerman said people should not be afraid of being struck by meteors. Most are the size of sand grains trekking 50 to 60 miles above observers on Earth. He said essentially all of them will burn up in the atmosphere.

Meteors can sparkle, smoke and sizzle. According to historical data, sonic booms have been heard from larger meteoroids and comets. The larger ones can look like giant refrigerators on fire, shooting through the sky like rockets and leaving vapor trails that last in the eyes for minutes after their passage and in the imagination for the rest of one's life.

If you want to wish on a falling star, then Wednesday and Thursday should be lucky days.

PHYSICS

Continued from Page 1

sions and invited talks by prominent physicists from all over the world.

A President's Banquet, with University President Myles Brand, was in the Willamette Hall Atrium Sunday night with bluegrass music for entertainment.

This, as well as other evening banquets during the conference, provide the opportunity for the most significant attribute of the conference — the opportunity for delegates to exchange ideas in a setting that only occurs every three years with people that they might not otherwise be able to communicate with.

The conference also provides an opportunity for scientists to visit the United States when, without funding from the sponsor, the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics, and the International Science Foundation, they would not be able to.

Vladimir Kashirin from the the Academy of Sciences Ukraine in Kharkov is visiting America for the first time. The only other time he has been out of the Ukraine was last March for a small conference in Germany.

"America is very different," said Kashirin in halting English. "But it's interesting to walk around the city and to look at the University. I have also met some very interesting people (at the conference)."

Kashirin, like most of the delegates, gave a talk about his work. His was titled "Electron Phonon Interaction in Thin Disordered Films Bi" and his speciality is

'It's very nice to meet people interested in your work, and it's a good atmosphere.'

— Sasha Inyushken,
physics delegate

quantum interference.

Kashirin will also attend three of the four satellite conferences that are pre- and post-LT20 in Eugene. There are four other satellite conferences in Minneapolis, Boulder, Berkeley and LaJolla, Calif. These conferences, including LT20 in Eugene, happen from July 26 to Aug. 14.

Administrative assistant Sandi South said the conference is going well.

"You make so many assumptions (when you are organizing a conference), but you can't ever be too clear," she said. "Given that this was essentially put on by a group of students, it's going very well."

Aside from South, administrative coordinator Janice Niemela, Chairman Donnelly, Vice Chairman and Treasurer Martin Wybourne, and Dietrich Belitz and Steven Gregory, of which the last four are professors in the University's Department of Physics, the conference is staffed by students from the University.

"The staff is killing themselves to do a good job," Niemela said of the students. "(And) so far everything is going very smooth-

ly with no serious problems."

Some of the most serious problems seem to be along the lines of: "Which bus do I take to Valley River Center?" "Where can I buy a good bottle of wine?" and the necessity of a professor faxing home because his cat was attacked and stuck in a tree.

Chairman Donnelly's only response to the conference so far was: "I'm breathless!"

Delegate Sasha Inyushken from the Russian Scientific Center Kurchatov Institute in Moscow is very pleased with the conference.

"It's very nice to meet people interested in your work, and it's a good atmosphere," said Inyushken, who recently spent six months working in a lab in Berkeley. "Eugene is a very nice, a very beautiful place and the people are nice."

The conferences should create a positive impact on the community. Many of the delegates brought members of their families, taking the number of visitors possibly up to 2,000.

Each visitor is estimated to stay an average of 10 days and expected to spend an average of \$125 per day. Combined with the direct spending of about \$650,000 in preparation for the conferences, the influx of money will total about \$3.15 million.

Donnelly, who is also involved with the Oregon Bach Festival, used the multiplier for the "ripple effect" of spending in the community. If the same sort of multipliers are applied to LT20 as to the Oregon Bach Festival, the economic impact could possibly reach as high \$6.6 million.