

Found a comet? Name the stars

United Press International
SAN FRANCISCO — Amateur astronomer Don Machholtz' 1,700 hours of comet hunting has finally paid off.

The 25-year-old Los Gatos, Calif., stargazer now has a celestial body bearing his name — the reward of discovering a dim new comet just south of Sirius, the brightest star in the sky.

"I was so excited when I found it because I was familiar with that part of the sky, and I knew it shouldn't have been there," Machholtz said last week.

He immediately telegraphed the comet's position and direction to the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams of the International Astronomical Union. The bureau is headquartered at Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Mass.

The observatory — a clearing-house for comet discoveries — confirmed the existence of "Machholtz Comet" and is now tracking it. Machholtz says it will take a few days to learn the actual orbit of the new comet.

Amateur stargazers discover about half of the dozen or so comets found each year, said James Cornell of the observatory in Cambridge. Some of those, however, are rediscoveries of old comets that have not been visible for a number of years.

"Comet hunting is the province of amateurs, partly because comets are

the only celestial bodies named after the discoverer. The discoverer can name asteroids also, but he usually names them after a friend or relative, not after himself," says Cornell.

He cautioned observers not to expect to see "Machholtz Comet" because "it's just a very faint point of light. You'd need a very powerful telescope and a knowledge of the sky to see it. It's too soon to tell whether it will develop a tail."

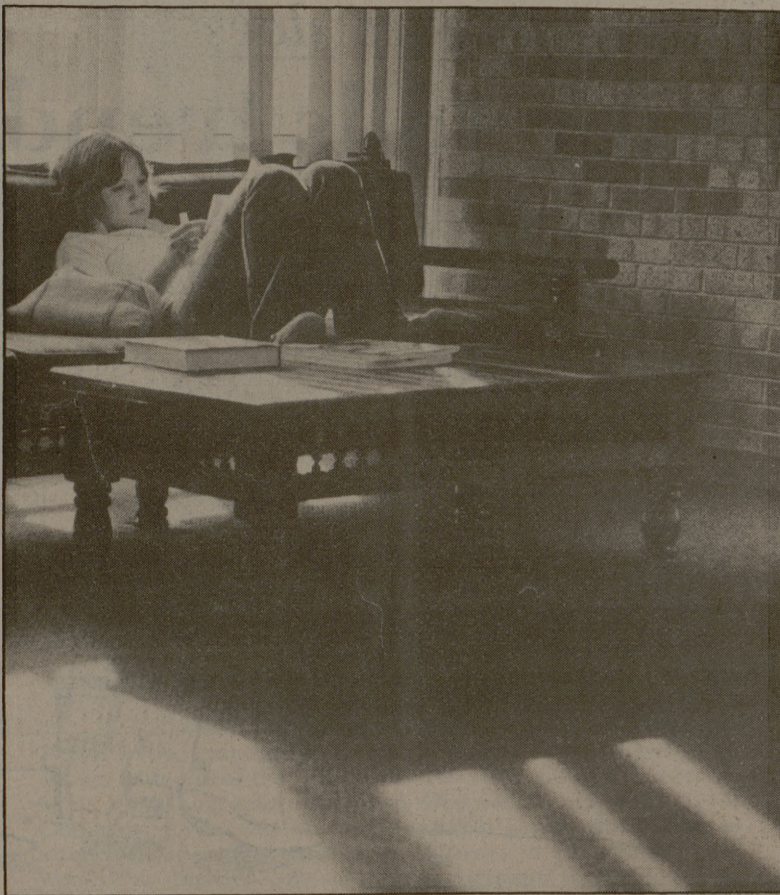
Machholtz, who began studying astronomy 12 years ago, embarked on his mission to find a new comet in 1974.

"At first my goal was to find a comet and have it named after me. But later it was thrilling just to study the sky, and I no longer felt a disappointment when I didn't see anything new," he says.

He spent 307 hours on a mountain in the San Jose area observing the heavens the first year and discovered nothing new. For the past three years, he's been spending an average of 460 hours a year at his telescope.

"It took me 1,700 hours before I discovered this comet. I guess that doesn't make me a very successful comet hunter," he says.

"But, on the other hand, it made it that much more thrilling when I first saw it and when I later got that confirmation call saying, 'Congratulations, you now have a comet named after you.'"



Hitting the books

Edie Marshall, a sophomore accounting major, finds the Memorial Student Center a quiet place to catch up on some of her homework. Many students use the couches on the second floor of the MSC for studying while others find them better for more important things - like sleeping.

Battalion photo by Ed Cunniss

First in the history of FBI

Agent accused of perjury

United Press International
NEW YORK — For the first time in the 54-year history of the FBI, an active agent has been indicted — accused of lying about taking payoffs from a New York mobster.

Special agent, Joseph Stabile, 50, of Commack, N.Y., was charged Friday with two counts of perjury by a federal grand jury in Brooklyn.

Stabile, assigned to the FBI's office in the New York City Borough of Queens, is alleged to have accepted \$10,000 of a \$15,000 payoff from John Caputo, a gambling figure involved with the late Joseph Colombo's mob family, Justice Department sources in Washington said.

The indictment came just before expiration of the five-year statute of limitations. The FBI said Stabile, a 16-year veteran of the bureau, has been "relieved of his duties."

If convicted, Stabile faces up to five years in jail on each count.

Officials said a fellow FBI agent — George Moresco — agreed to testify against Stabile long after learning of the payoff.

"In 1973, he (Moresco) was under the impression the bureau didn't want to discover allegations of bribery" because it would affect its image, one official said.

Sources said when the alleged payoff occurred, Stabile was working on an investigation of gambling activities by associates of Colombo, who died last spring seven years after he was shot in a gang war.

The sources said Stabile reportedly had been assigned to convert Caputo, under indictment in 1973, into an FBI informant.

The indictment charges Stabile and a former New York City police sergeant shared a \$15,000 payment from Caputo after falsely representing the money would result in dismissal of his indictment.

Stabile specifically was charged with lying under oath on Sept. 17,

1973, to a grand jury investigating whether he ever received illegal payments from Caputo in a corrupt transaction as an FBI agent.

The indictment also charges Stabile lied in denying to the grand jury he had described the payoff to Moresco.

According to the indictment, Moresco told the grand jury of several conversations with Stabile in which the agent told of accepting \$10,000 from Caputo and said police Sgt. Eugene Statile got another \$5,000.

Officials said Stabile has since left the New York Police Department.

The entire episode leading to Stabile's indictment appeared to be described, with fictional names, in the book "Brick Agent" by former FBI agent, Anthony Villano that was published last year. Whether the book helped authorities break the case open was unclear.

In Villano's book, a character identifiable as Moresco expressed fears that an FBI agent taking bribes from the mob also could "sell out" government informants to organized crime.

"None of them would live 24 hours," the book said.

A&M space industrialization club seeks help, members from all fields

By PAT DAVIDSON
Battalion Reporter

Far out! Unbelievable! Out of sight!

These terms do not describe T-STAR, a new organization for the industrialization of outer space at Texas A&M University.

T-STAR, or Texas A&M Space Topics And Research Society, is a "serious, science fact organization," says Tom Glass, administrative chairman of T-STAR.

But it is not a technological society, he said.

"As far as I am concerned," Glass said, "every discipline (field of study) can relate to our organization."

T-STAR will serve as a forum for idea exchange concerning use of outer space, Glass said. It will promote involvement of Texas A&M and its students in space research. It also will promote development of an international center of information, ideas, and studies in the area of space application, he said.

Right now, the majority of our members are either engineering or science people," he said.

"I don't like that. I wish we had a broader range of membership." Glass is a senior chemical engineering major.

"When I'm talking about space industrialization, there are just as many legal problems, marketing problems, economic problems, and business problems as there are technical problems. In fact, I think those are the bigger problems than

are the technical ones."

Dr. L. D. Webb, professor of civil engineering at Texas A&M and adviser for T-STAR, supports this idea.

"The worst possible thing for us," Webb said, "is to be categorized as a technical space research group."

"That implies engineering," he said.

"Now the engineering is necessary, of course, and most of it has already been done. What we need now are humanists, the space law people, the marketing people, the psychologists, and so forth," he said.

Space industrialization, Webb said, is a new technology that uses the special environmental properties of outer space like zero-gravity for the social and economic benefit of people on earth.

Glass suggested opportunities for different majors.

Marketing majors, he said, can research what materials will be available and what products people will buy that can be made in space. They can also study the costs necessary to make these products economically, he said.

"It becomes a microcosm of the earth," Webb said.

Another feature of T-STAR stressed by Glass and Webb is its serious, fact-oriented nature.

"This is a science fact club, not a science fiction club," Glass said. "If you're interested in science fantasy, Star Wars, Battleship Galactica, Star Trek, or something like that, the place you need to be is Cepheid Variable, because there's already a club for science fiction."

"We're looking for people interested in reality and not fantasy," Webb said. "It's more of a group of pre-professionals, I suppose."

"People who understand that you don't have to have a degree stamped on your forehead to be responsible, and that you don't have to be a graduate to be a professional who can take pride in what you do."

The society has long-range goals that include setting up an international space resource center within the Texas A&M system. Glass said it would be comparable to the agriculture and engineering extension services within the system.

Short-range goals include setting

up a space resources exhibit in the library, Glass said. The group also plans to send delegates to a national conference of the American Astronautical Society in Houston next month.

The next meeting is tonight at 7:30 in Rudder Tower, room 504.

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