

Employee Views Eclipse 1979

Williston, North Dakota, was of interest to many a sky-watcher on February 26. The town of 14,000 had one of the best statistical odds in the nation of clear skies for viewing the first total solar eclipse seen in the United States since 1972.

Among the hordes of interested eclipse viewers who flooded the town of Williston were Mary Wieckowicz, editor of *The Mason Clinic Bulletin*, and her husband, Don. The Wieckowicz's have been members of the Seattle Astronomical Society for seven years and their interest in astronomy goes back many years more with the purchase of their first telescope 12 years ago.

A 35-hour train ride from Seattle put them in the town on Saturday, February 24, at daybreak under reasonably clear skies and with high hopes of continuing

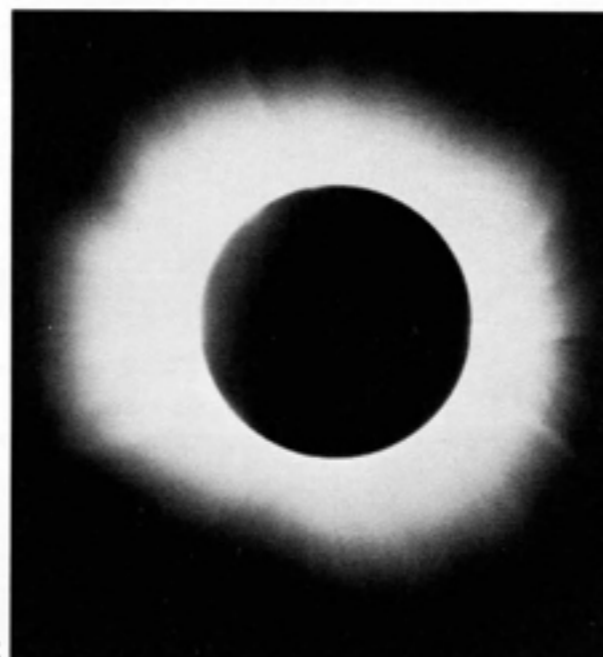


good weather. By Sunday, a blanket of clouds covered the area as a warming trend moved in.

"Our hopes of driving out from under were dashed when weather reports indicated the cover extended to eastern Montana and up into Canada," said Ms. Wieckowicz. "Luckily by midafternoon, satellite photographs showed a window moving into the area, giving Williston a chance of seeing the eclipse."

That afternoon the Wieckowicz's attended a reception held by the Williston Chamber of Commerce in honor of all the visiting astronomers. More than 20 states from across the nation were represented at the reception.

"The gathering helped to relieve tension over the uncertain weather and contributed to the excitement," said Ms. Wieckowicz.



After the reception Ms. Wieckowicz and her husband returned to their motel to rehearse procedures for photographing the eclipse the next day.

"When you only have two-and-a-half minutes to photograph you have to be organized," chuckled Ms. Wieckowicz.

And well organized they were when they arrived at their selected viewing location 40 miles northwest of Williston with cameras, telescopes, binoculars and various other paraphernalia to use in viewing and recording the eclipse. During the eclipse a tape recorder was kept running to record camera settings and shutter clicks to later pinpoint times.

"Our reactions to seeing our first total eclipse differed in form only," said Ms. Wieckowicz about her and her husband's experience. "Don,



- 1 *Diamond ring effect at end of total eclipse. This and other photos by Don Wieckowicz.*
- 2 *Photographed during total eclipse.*
- 3 *Mary Wieckowicz views the eclipse through binoculars.*

usually unexpressive, gave way to repeated exclamations about the beauty of his view through the scope while I, usually expressive, became silent!"

The Wieckowicz's say they are addicted to eclipse viewing. When asked if she intends to fly to Hawaii in 1991 to view the next solar eclipse that will be visible in the U.S. Ms. Wieckowicz exclaimed, "You better believe it! In fact I've even sent away for travel brochures on India!"

The next solar eclipse will occur in India next February.