

Stargazer

(Continued from 1D)

Brown takes both color and black-and-white photographs. He develops the black-and-white pictures in his basement, but has no facilities for processing the color shots.

He seemed to be particularly fascinated with the Andromeda galaxy.

"That galaxy is thought to be similar to the Milky Way galaxy," Brown said. "If you have excellent sky conditions and are high in the mountains, you can spot the glow of that galaxy with the naked eye."

Brown's hobby is expensive. "There's not any place to stop," he noted.

But it is attractive because there are so many facets that can fully occupy a person, he added.

Brown could spend all his time just reading and researching without using the telescope, he said. But that would not be as fun.

He keeps up with various astronomy periodicals. His prime interest is to perfect his space photography. "I'm trying hard to do better and feeling a little frustrated in the process," he admitted.

Long-exposed photographs often pick up objects that Brown cannot see when he peers through his telescope.

Brown has never taken any school courses in astronomy. The self-taught astronomer said it took

him "a long time to become comfortable with the subject because I had to dig everything out by myself."

He added, "There's simply no end to the things you can study and read."

June Brown supports her husband's interest in astronomy.

She does not spend much time in the observatory at home, but she enjoys visiting major observatories during vacations, Brown said.

Brown often seemed awed while discussing astronomy.

"The whole subject gives you a perspective most people who don't study astronomy can never have," he said. "The tremendous distances involved can't be appreciated unless you have some understanding what the universe is like."

Winter has not been kind to the Billings astronomer.

"I wish the weather would straighten out," Brown said. "There haven't been any good skies for a couple of months."

He expects "to get back on track" in April and May.

That's when the neighbors will start popping in at night again for a glance at deep space through Brown's telescope. Brown said he especially enjoys sharing the mysteries of space with curious children. "They're always welcome."

Keith Brown: Stargazer (continued)

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