

Wheaton Man on 'Speaking Terms' With Milky Way

By **RONNIE MULLALLY**

The rumor about town that Grote Reber, 212 W. Seminary avenue, who some seven years ago built an apparatus in his yard to record radio short waves, had made contact with the moon long before did the U.S. Army, was a vast understatement.

This reporter learned, upon visiting with Reber the other night, that he is way ahead of the Army when it comes to being on familiar terms with the planets. Over two years ago the local astronomy enthusiast received "messages" from the Milky Way.

And in case you don't know, as this unscientific-minded reporter did not, the Milky Way is just a lot further away from the earth than is the moon. Reber explained it to me in figures computed from the amount of time it has been proven that light takes to travel.

Reverses the Procedure

While the Army went out looking for the moon by way of radar, Reber played "hard to get" and made the Milky Way come to him. The Wheaton radio man hasn't ever tried to send out any waves to the moon, nor to any of the planets. His machine records their impulses to the earth.

Just to show how much further away the Milky Way is than is the moon I'll quote some figures as they were quoted to me: Light takes one and a half seconds to travel from the the moon to the earth. It takes eight minutes to get to us from the sun, while it takes three and seven-

tenths years for light to come from the closest star to the earth. And the stars in the Milky Way, which is visible to us here, are a lot farther from the earth than are the closest stars. This Milky Way that we see, Reber told me, can be likened to a large group of island stars. There are many Milky Ways, but we can't see them with the naked eye.

Keeps Facts

On Hand

On my way over to the Reber home the other night, I saw the huge ghost-like skeleton machine looming up against the darkness, while a street light reflector opposite banged in the high wind. I wondered if I would dare climb up on top of the "wave catcher" to get some first hand information about contacting the planets. However, it turned out that there is no need to climb this skeleton to hear about the facts of radio impulses and short waves. It's all recorded on a chart in the basement of the Reber home.

At present the machine is out of order but the radio engineer says that soon he will have it fixed up again, and then friends, you can get yourself an invitation over to the Reber house some night to listen to messages from the Milky Way . . . But don't be too disappointed if you only hear a buzzing sound similar to that made by a boiling teakettle, for that's the voice you get from the Milky Way, which, I learned makes contact with us simply by way of some super-wave language.

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