

Date: 2002 January 29

Time: 22.30 —→ 01.00 Local time

Location: Balcony in Skärholmen
Stockholm

Temperature: Under 0°C.

Observation report #3

It has been three weeks last I observed, mostly due to the bad weather here in Stockholm. I knew that I wouldn't have many more chances to see the planets this year because my view from the balcony isn't exactly the best. The telescope was just standing there gathering dust, but what could I do to make the clouds disappear?

The clock was 19.00 this Tuesday, the clouds started to get thinner and the sky clearer. I took out the tube so it would cool down, just in case I would use it. 22.30 I decided to go out on the balcony, on the way I hoped that the clouds had disappeared. The clouds were gone! A burst of joy went thru my body. The seeing looked perfect; the stars didn't twinkle at all. I realized that this night was the best in a long time (maybe the best ever).

Pretty strange thought, as a few hours earlier the heaven was filled with clouds and the winds were blowing hard. Didn't think much of this, instead I went in and got the rest of the stuff as eyepieces, cables and warm clothes. I started with the 40mm ScopeTronix Plössl, immediately I realized that this was actually the best night ever. Well, actually I was only running in 60X so I couldn't be too sure yet. The Orion nebula was just over the roof of a house, so I thought I could give it a try. Wow! With my 90mm refractor I could see that the nebulosity was there, but not much detail within it, with the 10" LX-50 it felt more like dust-lanes. It felt wonderful.

My region is pretty light-polluted, so I realized I could only capture the "easier" targets this night. Anyway, because the air was so stable this night the planets would be interesting, it would be fun to test the resolution capability of this scope. At first I looked at Saturn, I could see the Cassini-division clearly. Beyond this I could see 5 or 6 moons. Nothing special really, so I went to the next target, Jupiter.

I was almost shocked (I do not exaggerate). In front of my eyes there was a view I thought was not possible with amateur-sized telescopes. I saw the great red spot with structure WITHIN itself, that is the "smaller storms" inside the great red spot (by the way, this was my first time I saw the great red spot). On the disk I saw several other storms, most on the top of the planet. It was like looking at a professional picture of Jupiter, only at a little distance from the picture. The amount of detail made me breathless. And all this thought I was only using the 26mm Meade SP (this gave me about 100X magnification). Immediately I inserted the 9mm eyepiece, while thinking that this wouldn't work, after all it would give me about 280X which is too much for my taste as I have never gotten a clear image with that magnification before. But, there was no problem. Image was clear, bright and sharp. At this time I saw IO came up behind Jupiter, this was nice. Even though I was up at more magnification than I had ever been up on, I felt I could insert a 2x-barlow lens and see what would happen. Well...believe it or not, no image breakdown. For a moment I couldn't believe my eyes. Here I was watching Jupiter well over 500X, and the image was still sharp/clear. It was not as bright as with the 9mm only, but still sharp. Now I was sure that this was the best night ever with my 'scope. Actually, I kept watching Jupiter for 2 hours, while it was cold outside but I didn't feel this, I was just hooked in front of the eyepiece. Under these 2 hours I saw the GRS make a half turn around the planet. Now the time was almost 01.00, and I couldn't move my fingers due to the freezing temperature, so I took

the scope in. Now thinking of it, I regret that I did not look at other things too while I had such a magnificent night. Anyway, this year had started just fine for me...

