

Testimonials

[In alphabetical order]



David Levy

Comet hunter and discoverer of 23 comets, USA

"I am privileged to be able to write a letter of support for Amar A. Sharma's proposal to do a documentary film about astronomy. I have known Amar for a number of years, through electronic messaging mostly, and I have developed a great respect for his talents, his enthusiasm, but mostly his perseverance."

Amar first communicated with me regarding his idea to write a project about those who have searched for and discovered comets in the past two centuries. I think this is a superb idea and I hope he will see it to fruition someday. I also think his documentary proposal is an excellent idea and I urge that it be given strong support from you. Notwithstanding that the idea is a good one and has the potential to inspire millions of people, I believe that this is something India needs very much right now. India has an extraordinary tradition about the night sky that has persisted for millennia. In today's world, the simple idea of enjoying the night sky is a noble effort which deserves encouragement and support. Please take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to support Mr Sharma's unique documentary film proposal."



Denis Buczynski

Secretary, Comet Section, British Astronomical Association

"Comets are an important component of our Solar System. The study of them is fundamental to our understanding of the evolution and dynamics of the Solar System in which we all reside. The scientists who study them recognise the rich blend of professional science combined with the significant contributions made by amateur astronomers over the 400 years since the invention of the telescope. Foremost amongst these amateurs are the comet discoverers; dedicated sweepers of the skies, who seek out these comets as they enter the inner Solar System, while the rest of the world population sleeps. Men and women of all nationalities and ages have discovered comets from the diverse continents around the world. They have built their own equipment and spent their own precious time in the dark hours making searches for these important and enigmatic objects which appear unannounced in all their diverse forms. The many fascinating stories and sometime heroic struggles to make comet discoveries is a story well worth telling. For it is a story about man's curiosity about his place in the Universe and of the study of the evolving nature of the Solar System."



The science of comet astronomy and especially discovery are more and more dominated by very large survey telescopes operated by huge multinational organisations who are finding ever more distant and numerous comets as they enter our inner Solar System. Yet, incredibly, there is still a good opportunity for the lone amateur to discover a comet and announce it to the world. The comet discoverers of today take their inspiration from the legion of men and women who have made comet discoveries in the past and they follow in their footsteps. The technology involved in the discovery of comets has evolved from being mainly an eye to telescope procedure to one that uses sensitive CCD cameras and sophisticated computer software to aid discovery. This is true for professional searches and importantly the same is true of amateur endeavours. The fact that discoveries are being made by amateurs is a testament to their ingenuity and skill. These successes will continue and other amateurs will take their inspiration from today's discoverers and be able to write their names across the sky."

I have been pleased to have assisted and encouraged Amar Sharma to proceed with his biography and documentary project. This project would, if completed, be a very valuable record of the personal experiences of these dedicated individuals who have enhanced our understanding of comet science with their discoveries. Their individual stories deserve to be told to as wide an audience as possible; an audience that would find those stories and characters engaging and inspiring. I hope that Amar Sharma's project is brought to fruition as soon as possible."

Dr Kazimieras Cernis

Comet hunter and discoverer of 3 comets, Lithuania

"Visual comet hunters discovered a lot of new comets in 20th century. They observed with their small telescopes and used visual comet searching method. Today, in modern times (21st century) most of new comets are discovered by photographic methods, especially by means of CCD. The names of many comet discoverers – Pons, Brooks, Barnard, Donati, Alcock, Honda, Seki, Ikeya, Hyakutake, Hale, Bopp, Levy, Bradfield, Machholz and other observers – have remained familiar literally for centuries and decades. However the names of many other comet hunters have slipped into obscurity. Amateur astronomers like Fujikawa, Takamizawa, Sato, Utsunomyia, Panther, Honig, Everhart and other comet astronomers deserve to be better remembered. Many of visual comet hunters built their own private observatories with the means of their own finance. They spent a lot of sleepless nights conducting their comet hunting programs. Many of them had an individual success to discover many comets or to find very bright comets and achieve comet fame. Other amateurs discovered lesser of new comets or they found mostly faint comets and they are not so widely known in the comet community. This film would help to tell us more about visual comet hunters, about their comet-hunting efforts, by time-honoured visual methods."



Rodney Austin

Comet hunter and discoverer of 3 comets, New Zealand

"For the past one and half years, Amar Sharma has been working on the project to collate the unwritten history and biographical details of the select group of astronomers whose aim has been to discover comets. The project is a major task that has required dedication, considerable research and meticulous attention to detail. Comets are the pristine remnants of the very origins of the Solar System. There are many catalogues of cometary orbits. The work by Gary W Kronk, collates the observational history of the large number of comets which have been observed down the centuries. However there has been no previous research into the background of the astronomers who have dedicated their lives, in the search for these elusive minor bodies of the Solar System. To understand our place in the Universe, it takes utter dedication to observing, in often uncomfortable, cold and remote places of the planet, by single-minded astronomers. Many of those astronomers are amateur observers – amateur by definition only. Their skill is equal to any professional observer, and their knowledge of the sky is second to none. With the increase of major automatic patrols to find anything that moves in the Solar System; the golden age of the Comet-hunter appears to be coming to an end. Several of the observers are reaching old age, and many have passed on; eventually with the passing of the rear-guard, much of the romance of the Heavens is disappearing.



It is time that their story of their lives of dedication is told. Much of what could have been known about comet observers from the past two centuries has been lost, and Amar's work would make sure that important facts about observers/discoverers from the more recent times will not also disappear. This important project by Amar Sharma is aimed at recording their story, before it is too late. What he is attempting and proposing is a huge task, and will be a legacy to be very proud of. Until Amar never personally finds a comet himself, this work will ensure that his name will forever be associated with comets. And if he demonstrates the same drive and enthusiasm in hunting, I see his name on a comet!"

Shigeki Murakami

Comet hunter and discoverer of 2 comets, Japan



"Amar A. Sharma is devoted to observe comets and at the same time he is longing for compiling a book and making a film on world comet hunters. In recent years increasing numbers of comets were discovered by robotic surveys, while visual discoveries by amateurs dropped sharply. It means that comet discoverers who are still living gradually decrease. If eminent comet hunters (in many cases they are aged) pass away, one cannot record what kind of persons they were and how they worked. It is this point that Sharma is worrying about and we need to act immediately. Historically, comets have fascinated people in any period. In 18th century Edmond Halley predicted the return of Halley's Comet and the discovery of this comet was made by an amateur. Since then, a substantial percentage of comet discoveries were made by amateurs. However, today amateur comet hunters, especially visual hunters, are endangered species because of robotic surveys. I think performance of amateur comet hunters is to be recorded and worth recording as a leaf of human history, which many people are interested in."

Terry Lovejoy

Comet hunter and discoverer of 4 comets, Australia

"Comet Hunting is a fine example of where the hobbyist can collaborate and complement the work being done by professionals working at professional installations. I still find it remarkable that as of a result of my discovery of faint comet in November 2011, a number of space missions were able to plan and successfully observe the rare passage of a cometary body through the solar corona. Without that early warning many of those observations could never have been planned.

The history of comet hunting is fascinating and it appears to have its roots in the 1700's, and during the 1800's the adoption of naming comets after the discoverer as well as offering of prizes helped popularise it. This has continued to the present day, and although amateur involvement is somewhat overshadowed by professional surveys, a number of comets get found each year by amateurs. I think the documentary film is a good idea."

