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-- An Asteroid Named Puiching --

by Pat Wong C15

Asteroid (minor planets 小行星) and **meteoroid** (流星体) are rocks and metals (e.g. iron) floating around in the solar system mostly between the orbits of Mars (火星) and Jupiter (木星). Most consider asteroids to be bigger than a half kilometer in size and meteoroid to be smaller and frequently only millimeters in size. As a meteoroid falling through the Earth's atmosphere burning up during the high-speed descent, we call the flash of light **meteor** (shooting star 流星). If any part of a meteoroid survives the fall through the atmosphere and lands on Earth, it is called a **meteorite** (隕石) [1]. Before people learned how to mine iron ore deep below the Earth's surface, ancients made their weapons and tools from iron-rich meteorites.

If a large asteroid hits Earth, it could be life threatening and even cause mass extinction. Scientists believe that was what happened to the dinosaurs some 65 million years ago giving mammals a chance to evolve.

As you can see, asteroids can be our existential threat. NASA spends a lot of resources to track about 14 thousand of these asteroids. If we discover early enough that one may hit Earth, we should have the technology to deflect its trajectory to avoid such a deadly encounter.

My son, Michael, is a planetary scientist. Imagine how surprised he was to run into one of these asteroids named Puiching. It turns out that whoever discovers a new asteroid has the privilege to name it. This fellow William Kwong Yu Yeung (楊光宇 1960 -) [2] was born in Hong Kong, is a Puiching graduate and a Canadian amateur astronomer with telescopes based in the United States. He is a prolific discoverer of asteroids, ranked number 2 in the world of amateurs. The following are a few of his discoveries:

Asteroid Name[3]	Provisional Designation	Discovery Date	Discover Site	Discover
19848 Yeung chuchiu 杨注潮 (父)	2000 TR	Oct.02, 2000	Desert Beaver Observatory, AZ 沙漠之狸	W. K.Y. Yeung 楊光宇
77138 Puiching 培正	2001 EN	Mar.02, 2001	Desert Beaver	楊光宇
77318 Danieltsui 崔琦	2001 FL86	Mar.27, 2001	Desert Beaver	楊光宇
110288 Libai 李白	2001 SL262	MAR.23, 2001	Desert Eagle Observatory, AZ	楊光宇
110289 Dufu 杜甫	2001 DM262	MAR.23, 2001	Desert Eagle 沙漠之鷹	楊光宇

References and Footnotes

[1] <<http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/faq/>>

[2] <<https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%A5%8A%E5%85%89%E5%AE%87>>

楊光宇, 1960 年生於香港。筆名向問天。業餘天文學家。現任香港天文學會會長。他畢業於香港培正中學, 及後前往加拿大升學就讀工程學, 畢業後回港助父經商。他於 1999 年開始在美國亞利桑那州擁有一名為“沙漠之鷹及沙漠之狸”的私人天文台, 專門從事小行星等的搜尋工作。發現 2000 多個小行星。在全球業餘小行星搜索者中排行第二。他較為人熟悉的發現, 是於 2002 年發現 J002E3 天體, 後被證實為阿波羅 12 號登月火箭的第三節 (the 3rd stage of a Saturn V Rocket that propelled Apollo 12 to the moon)。

他於 2004 年開始研究小行星自轉周期。他亦定期把觀測記錄撰文, 發表於香港的一些天文會社刊物和報紙中。

S.S. thinks he may be a graduate of either 1977 傑社, 78 英社, or 79 榮社。

[3] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minor_planets#Main_index>