

by Frank Israel, Sterrewacht Leiden

Dear Editor,  
The article: "Light, cosmic messages from the past" in *EPN* 46-4 contained two small errors.

- Sanduleak was not a star but a person. Nicholas Sanduleak was an American astronomer of

Rumanian origin who published in 1970 a catalogue of stars in the Large Magellanic Cloud. The precursor of SN 1987A was listed in this catalogue and is referred to as Sk -69 202a (or Sanduleak -69 202a).

- The supernova remnant Cas A was observed for the first time in the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, not in 1680. The supernova explosion that created the remnant occurred at some time in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but there are no unequivocal records of its occurrence. The very bright star was probably obscured by dense clouds of dust in the line of sight. ■

## The author responds

We agree with the comment that the blue supergiant star, progenitor to supernova 1987A in the Large Magellanic Cloud was officially named Sanduleak -69° 202. We apologize for the sloppiness.

To the second comment, we agree that the remnant of Cas A is officially first observed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as

a radio source. Optical and x-ray observation identified that source to be an expanding supernova remnant of a supernova that has exploded about 340 years ago (from today). There have been frequent discussions and arguments ever since if that remnant is associated with a suddenly appearing and short-lived bright star that

was observed in 1680 by the British Astronomer Royal John Flamsteed at (or near) that location. (David W. Hughes: Did Flamsteed see the Cassiopeia A supernova?, *Nature* 285, 132-133 (1980). That possible observation is what we have been referring to. ■

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