George Pellegrino Ground Breaking Speech
31 March 1990

On Sunday 31 March 1990 a groundbreaking ceremony marked the beginning of the construction phase of The General Nathan Twining Observatory. At the ceremony, earth was moved, hands were shaken, and speeches were delivered. The following text is a copy of the speech delivered by former TAAS president George Pellegrino.

“There are occasions when we can enjoy the luxury of setting back, calmly reflecting upon our accomplishments, those projects we've seen through to fruition, and those we've set in motion.

This is not one of those occasions. At this point in time it is fitting that we recognize those who have toiled, those who have been generous, those who have enabled our visions to take wing and rise above the confusion of random possibilities.

To those of you that have been part of this intense effort, our most heartfelt thanks!

Expressing our gratitude, reflecting on the events of the past, these are fitting rituals for an occasion such as this. However important, however significant these may be, we must now change our focus to the future.

There are a number of people for whom this structure is an end to itself. The final page of a story that goes something like this, "We asked; we received; we built; and we all lived happily ever after!"

For others, this observatory holds the promise of becoming a porthole, a window if you will through which they and others may view the cosmic wonders that have captured the imagination of humanity since its very beginning. To witness the mystery as it unfolds in the timeless depths of space.

And to some of you, this building will stand as a monument to the great man whose name it will bear. A man who accomplished more than any of the presidents that he served.

Any of these notions, alone or combined, are admirable. However, to allow ourselves, and others to accept any finite perspective is to lose sight of the infinite
potential this piece of land has to offer.

If we allow our minds to reach deep into the future, if we indulge the collective imagination, and do so with childlike wonder, if we can let go of the restraints that obscure our vision...refuse to accept the idea that "We cannot", and replace it with "We can", the path will then and only then make itself apparent.

Some of my friends look about them and see a meadow that will soon host a cement block building.

When I first set foot on this land, I looked around and in my mind's eye I saw a group of buildings, structures connected by passageways, a library; a cafeteria; a dormitory; a research center with computers linked to telephone lines, sending out data to those who had requested it. People collecting information from the instruments of this observatory, as well as from a remote site a hundred miles away, or more, connected by a microwave link, driven by sophisticated robotics controlled from this very spot. I see generations of children inspired to reach for the stars, enticed by the magic and wonder of the universe to contribute to the forward direction of humanity.

If we refuse to allow the short sighted to infiltrate our ranks and steal our dreams, if we can prevent any individual from luring us into a narrow path with cries of "Oh no, we'll never be able to do that. That's too big a task!"

If we reject those who would settle for mediocrity, if we dare to let the dreamers dream, and not lose sight of this glorious future, we will achieve it, it will only be a matter of time.

Thank you.”