In Praise of Trailblazers—
Road Funding 75% Complete

by Karen Keese

Thanks to the unqualified success of our recent members’ matching fund drive, the Mesa Road Committee is considerably closer to its goal of funding and building a new route to the observatory. A generous $500 contribution from Complex Systems Research Inc. (Steve Welch and Penelope Boston, officers) was quickly matched by TAAS members, allowing us to add over $1,000 to the project coffers. We salute these trailblazers for their generosity and community spirit. The “Trailblazers Hall of Fame” includes:

Debra and John Chase
Bob Hufnagel
Anonymous
Pete Eschman
Bob Kyrlach
Ralph Thorman
Patricia Rose
Ernie Reaves
Anonymous
James Rickey

Through a combination of contributions from mesa landowners, the TAAS treasury, and individual TAAS members, the road-building project is now approximately 75% funded. Work is expected to begin this spring or summer when soil moisture content is

Cosmic Carnival Unfolds Under the Heavens
by Melissa Kirk

Star shaped cushions, a star mascot, decorated signs, photographs, and a Pluto ball adorned the Cosmic Carnival float at the Fiestas de Albuquerque Parade on Saturday, April 21. The parade commenced on Bellamah Avenue and traversed through Albuquerque Old Town, with onlookers and exhibitors exchanging cheers. The Cosmic Carnival was held at Tiguex Park. Exhibitors and patrons braved the cold, windy weather to participate in hands-on activities, demonstrations, and free raffles. Stubby, a red and blue rocket of the Albuquerque Rocket Society, lay under the mostly cloudy sky. The National Atomic Museum had exhibits demonstrating current and radiation. Children reveled in plastic inflatable play sets.

TAAS members performed a variety of activities, including decorating the Cosmic Carnival float and riding in the parade. Several TAAS members pointed their telescopes, and along with patrons, made brief observations of the Sun through patches of clear sky. Observers enjoyed the fleeting views even though no sunspots were visible. TAAS also had a booth set up within a tent, where associates handed out informational pamphlets to visitors.
General Meeting and Program News

Howdy Astronomy Fans; here’s the latest NEWS from your Vice President...

March 20, TAAS participated in a special school star party at Georgia O’Keefe Elementary School. I was in charge of the Starlab shows. Tom Davies and Bella Newfield assisted me. We did ten, 15-minute Starlab presentations for close to 300 very enthusiastic and grateful participants! The school’s organizing team, including Nannette Vigil and J.T. Scheider, were very accommodating resulting in a smooth operation. For those of you who would like to learn to operate the Starlab Portable Planetarium please contact me.

The Space Exploration Conference 2007 was another TAAS outreach event that can be classified as a smashing success! Bruce Levin and Dale Murray each did a short talk for over 80 excited participants. Alan Hale was the last speaker of the evening. Alan explained his Earthrise Institute and Countdown to 500 Comets programs. Very Cool!

Do check out Alan’s Earthrise Institute at www.earthriseinstitute.org. Alan extends the invitation to all astronomers to join him in his quest to observe 500 Comets, hence the program, “Countdown to 500 Comets.” At the time of this writing Alan is up to 405 comets. He posts his observations on the Earthrise Web site and invites everyone to send him their observations as well. I am adding information concerning this program to our TAAS school star party outreach. Be a part of the fun by joining Alan in the excitement and discovery; check out the Web site today!

Astronomy Program Directors from all over New Mexico have contacted me about their upcoming star parties. Check this out:

Desert Starlight Astronomy Weekend at Brantley Lake State Park. Brantley Lake State Park will be hosting its fourth annual Desert Starlight Astronomy Weekend on Friday, June 15, and Saturday, June 16. The park offers dark desert skies and wonderful camping facilities along the shores of Brantley Lake in southeastern New Mexico. All astronomers are welcome, and camping fees are waived for Friday and Saturday nights for the first ten astronomers who register. Participating astronomers must bring their own telescopes and be willing to set them up for public viewing on Friday and Saturday night. To register, call Shane Phipps at Brantley Lake State Park at (505) 457-2384 beginning May 14. Contact persons: Kathryn Jones (505) 887-5516 kathryn.jones@state.nm.us or Shane Phipps (505) 457-2384 shane.phipps@state.nm.us.

Pie in the Sky Star Festival June 15–17 at Jackson Park in Pie Town, New Mexico. VERY DARK SKIES...rustic camping, awesome folks, and of course amazing pie! Contact Michael Robinson at (505) 772-2526 pietownmike@hotmail.com.

The May 5 TAAS General Meeting will feature Dr. T. Justin Bronder.
Title – “Supernovae and Revolutions in Astronomy: A Historic and Personal Journey”

Abstract – This entertaining talk follows the story of how observations of distant exploding stars-called “supernovae”-have changed our understanding of the universe. The tale introduces the science of these magnificent explosions as well as the fascinating personalities and discoveries of some of history’s most famous astronomers. From the first observations of Galileo and Kepler, through the ground-breaking work of Einstein and Hubble, on to today’s scientific celebrities, such as Stephen Hawking and Jocelyn Bell Burnell, the history of supernovae is sure to educate and amuse. The speaker’s own experiences with these “star” astronomers will add a personal touch to this scientific story.

The Speaker: First Lieutenant T. Justin Bronder was commissioned in the U.S. Air Force after graduating with distinction from the USAF Academy in 2003. He earned the first Alberta-Bart Holaday Scholarship from the Academy and studied at Oxford University’s...
As I indicated last month, we are conducting a fundraising drive to improve road conditions on the route to GNTO. TAAS is making a $500 one-time contribution and will contribute $200 in future years for annual road maintenance. Mesa area residents are making similar contributions, and TAAS members are encouraged to help with individual donations. The road work will be done by a professional contractor using heavy equipment. Once completed, we will have a much smoother drive to GNTO, and a roadway that is easier to maintain. Please send your contributions to Karen Keese, following the instructions in her article elsewhere in this newsletter. I’ve sent my check to Karen. Have you?

Our GNTO Spring Messier Marathon was March 17. This event was very well attended with over 45 people at GNTO and around 30 telescopes in operation. I reported many details about this event in last month’s newsletter article. As promised, here is the summary of the Messier Marathon results. There are four categories: Telrad Only, Charts and Telrad, Digital Setting Circles, and GoTo Scopes.

In the Telrad Only category, John Laning found 79 Messier objects at GNTO using his 17.5” Dob, and 29 more Messier objects before 6 a.m. using his 10” SCT from home. John reported that M30 and M55 were behind trees at his house. He spent 15 minutes finding M72 and M73 because they were so dim. John reports that he located all objects from memory, and did not use any charts.

Five people reported in the Charts and Telrad category. Barry Speltzer did his 55-object half marathon using a single, albeit large, paper chart and his custom protractors. Barry left before 11:00 p.m. and had a great time. He said he will find it hard to ever do a full marathon again, since the half marathon lets him have a fine evening of observing, with no need to imagine galaxies in twilight, complete his list, AND get a good night’s sleep back at home.

Eric Edwards completed Barry’s half marathon, and he counted M45 instead of the last object on Barry’s list. He said he had a wonderful time. Gordon Pegue observed the first 68 objects on the full list before the clouds rolled in. He located 41 of them from memory and used charts and Telrad to get the other 27 objects. Dee Friesen was able to get the first 70 on the full marathon list before the clouds. Dee said that on his way home he enjoyed a stop at the diner near the Interstate. Lisa Judd, our guest from Colorado, stayed the night, and I’m told she observed all but 3 from the complete marathon using sky charts and a 6” Edmund Scientific telescope made in 1957!

In the Digital Setting Circles category we have three reports. Sy Santos completed the half marathon list, observing all 55 Messiers on the list using her Orion Intelliscope for pointing assistance. She said she had a blast! Dan Clark also used Barry’s half marathon list but did not see the first item on the list. Dan did see another 5 Messier objects from the second half marathon list. Ed Kist managed to find 68 Messier objects from the full marathon list before the clouds rolled in. Like Dan Clark, Ed took advantage of his Argo Navis for pointing assistance.

In the GoTo scope category, Tom Davies used his ETX125 Meade GoTo scope and completed Barry’s half marathon. Tom said the first time through the list he had trouble seeing the galaxies, so he went back through the galaxies after it got a bit darker. Tom said he missed the last item on the list, which was not high enough before he and Eric Edwards left.

Although not related to the Messier Marathon, Becky Ramotowski reported that she was in Texas having a great time wearing her eyes out looking at dim 15th magnitude flea-speck galaxies in the Beehive.

Our most recent “New Moon” observing event was on April 14 at GNTO. Attendance was a bit lighter than expected, given the excellent sky conditions. Those there were a dedicated group, however, and we had 11 scopes in operation. Of the 11 scopes, three GNTO scopes were running, including the Isengard 16, the Jim Lawrence 16” loaner, and our C11/Losmandy Gemini system equipped with our SBIG ST-9 CCD camera operated by Steve Welch. We had well over twenty people at GNTO, including five Cub Scouts and their parents. Thanks to Dale Murray for opening the facility and serving as Isengard host for the first part of the event.

In the early evening, Steve Welch and Bill Wallace attempted to make a video recording as asteroid 494 Virtus occulted a background star. The plan was to use Steve’s video camera in place of an eyepiece on the Isengard. Early evening twilight and new equipment shakedown glitches made it difficult to locate the target star. Unfortunately, these conditions conspired and the correct star field was not located until a few minutes after the predicted occultation. Measuring...
On April 14 Steve Welch and I attempted to observe an occultation of a star by the asteroid Virtus (494). The attempt was unsuccessful because the occultation occurred when the sun was just 8 degrees below the western horizon and the star was mag 11.2, very difficult. The star was finally located some eight minutes after the event. Some visiting Cub Scouts watched the failed attempt.

Asteroid occultation prediction software is now operational so we can predict local events including an estimate of the probability of occurrence. Shoot me an e-mail at wcwallace2@comcast.net if you would like some predictions. Give me your Lat/Long coordinates.

Clear skies!

In Praise of Trailblazers, continued from page 1

adequate for grading. The amount of detail work we do, as well as how many segments of the route we can complete, will be determined by overall project funding.

We are seeking outside funding to raise additional cash. In the meantime, if you have not yet contributed, your support would be most welcome. Members who regularly use the observatory, members who have stopped going to the observatory because of the road condition, and members who have complained to me about the road (you know who you are!) are especially encouraged to contribute.

Make checks payable to Jerry Rogers Rock Company. As project treasurer, I am collecting and recording all payments. If you prefer to contribute sweat to the cause, you can volunteer for a road work party, tentatively scheduled for some time in May. We will stretch our project dollars by removing about 20 mesquite bushes from the proposed new route in advance of grading.

To mail a check to me, sign up for the work party notification list or ask any questions about the project, please contact me at 261-0040 or skywriter@wildblue.net, or flag me down at club events. Thank you for helping to blaze a new trail for the membership!
TAAS Reports & Notices

Monthly Membership Report (March 2007)

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Note from Treasurer

Clarification of New Member and Renewal Policy
Renewal notices will be mailed out 1 month before expiration date. Renewals and new members will be dated on the first of next month no matter when during the month they arrive. This will help with the database reports and queries.

There will also be no grace period for renewals. Please make sure that you send in renewal information and your check before the expiration date. Renewal of magazines and new subscriptions will be sent in twice a month. All checks are to be made out to “TAAS”. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you have any questions or special needs pertaining to membership and/or magazine subscriptions, contact the Treasurer, Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org.

Welcome to New TAAS Members

Elesha Fertow
Connie and David Martin
Thomas Miller
Charles Mullen
Robert Williams

Editor's Note

Please note that the deadline for the June 2007 issue of the Sidereal Times will be Friday, June 15. Please submit text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word. Please attach photos or illustrations separately. The e-mail address for the newsletter editor is editor@taas.org.

Location, Location, Location

• Chaco Canyon
  6185' elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  36° 01' 50"N  107° 54' 36"W
  36.03°  -107.91°
  36° 1.83'  -107° 54.60'

• Oak Flat
  7680' elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  34° 59' 48"N  106° 19' 17"W
  34.99°  -106.32°
  34° 59.80'  -106° 19.28'

• UNM Campus Observatory
  5180' elevation
  Latitude  Longitude
  35° 5' 29"N  106° 37' 17"W
  35.09°  -106.62°
  35° 5.48'  -106° 37.29'

To convert from Degrees, Minutes, Seconds:
Divide seconds by 60, then add minutes, then divide by 60 again.
For security reasons, GNTO location is available by request only, so please contact Pete Eschman for GNTO information.

Donations to TAAS

General: John Chase, David Martin
Education: Georgia O'Keeffe School
GNTO: Barney Fuller, David Martin
Dark Sky: Barney Fuller, David Martin

Special Projects
Science Fair: Accent Windows
Cosmic Carnival: Jewel Karpel, Steve Welch and Penelope Boston, Complex Systems

Welcome to New TAAS Members

Elesha Fertow
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Editor's Note

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Contact Beverly Firth at membership@taas.org

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581 Albuquerque, NM
## May 2007

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<td>19 GNTO NM Observing. Chaco Canyon Star Party</td>
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<td>31 Board Meeting</td>
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## Educational Outreach

Shannon Mann

### Duranes Elementary School Star Party Tuesday, May 15

This will be our last school star party of the school year so please plan on making this one! The school is located at 2436 Zickert Road NW in the North Valley just north of I-40. The event will run from 7-9 p.m. with sunset occurring at 8:03 p.m. MDT. Please plan on arriving closer to 7 p.m. as we will need time to eat, set up, and prepare for the student onslaught. We will need telescope volunteers as well as indoor docents. Please contact me for further information at education_coord@taas.org.

Event location map at [http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=2436+Zickert+Road+NW+Albuquerque,+NM+87104&sll=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=31.426353,58.095703&layer=layer&ie=UTF8&z=15&ll=35.114327,-106.673942&spn=0.015832,0.028367&om=0](http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=2436+Zickert+Road+NW+Albuquerque,+NM+87104&sll=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=31.426353,58.095703&layer=layer&ie=UTF8&z=15&ll=35.114327,-106.673942&spn=0.015832,0.028367&om=0)
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### TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, May 5, 2007**

7:00 P.M.

Regener Hall

University of New Mexico

(See map, back page)

**Supernovae and Revolutions in Astronomy: A Historic and Personal Journey**

Dr. T. Justin Bronder

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### Notes


GNTO = General Nathan Twining Obs.

GNTO Training = GNTO Observing and Training.

GNTO NM = New Moon Premium Observing Night

UNM = University of New Mexico Observatory. Call the TAAS hotline @254-8227, or the UNM hotline @277-1446 to confirm, or unm_coordinator@taas.org.

ATM = Amateur Telescope Making. Call Michael Pendley for information @296-0549, or atm@taas.org.

P & A = UNM Physics and Astronomy Corner of Lomas and Yale.
Minutes of the Officers Meeting

TAAS Officers MEETING

Flying Star Restaurant, 10700 Corrales Road
April 5, 2007

MEETING MINUTES

Officers present: Sy Santos (President), Judy Stanley (Vice President), Tom Graham (Secretary), Dan Clark (Treasurer), Larry Cash (Board Member/calendar coordinator)

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Corrections to the March Minutes:
None to report.

New Business:
Three adjustments were made to the calendar.

Correspondence:
No new correspondence.

Treasurer's Report:
Account balances (as of the end of December):
- General Fund: $5,114.53
- GNTO Fund: $6,644.98
- Education Fund: $3,114.55
- Dark Sky Fund: $849.31
- Special Projects Fund: $5,310.18
- Science Fair Fund: $400.00
- Cosmic Carnival: $450.00

Total Funds on Deposit: $21,883.55

Total membership count (all categories): 329

Committee Reports:
No new correspondence. All committee reports will be published in the Sidereal Times (Note: All committee chairs will send their reports directly to the Newsletter Editor, Gary Cooper, at editor@taas.org.)

Old Business:
None

Meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

General Meeting and Program News, continued from page 2

Exeter College. In the autumn of 2006 he was awarded a Ph.D. from Oxford for his thesis work on Type Ia supernovae and cosmology. He is now a research physicist in the field of fiber optic lasers for Air Force Research Labs at Kirtland AFB. He and his wife are thoroughly enjoying the sunshine in the Land of Enchantment after many years in the charming, though rainy, United Kingdom.

A Call to Service!
As TAAS Members you may or may not know that the TAAS Board of Directors is always looking for members who wish to be more involved with the business and service side of TAAS. If you have been considering becoming more involved, or if you have a desire to insert your own contributions/program ideas, and/or if you would like to serve as a Board Member, Committee Chair, or Officer, please contact Judy Stanley 269-4833. TAAS Officers and Board Members will be contacting the membership in the weeks to come regarding some of the positions mentioned above. We would love to hear from YOU!

Future of LodeStar Astronomy Center Unclear
As many of you may know, I am the educator for the LodeStar Astronomy Center, a community outreach project of the University of New Mexico. Unfortunately UNM has decided to turn the Astronomy Center over to the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science effective June 30. The details are still being worked out even at this late date. I will keep you posted. There has been no word concerning future plans for the Astronomy Center from either the museum or UNM.

This means the future of astronomy education in New
such phenomena is a core function of our recently formed TAAS Asteroid SIG. Steve Welch and Bill Wallace did have a very successful Pluto occultation of a background star on March 17, and I understand they are working to finalize and report their results. In conjunction with other observers, GNTO data will help to establish Pluto’s precise orbit and atmospheric conditions. See the Asteroid SIG report elsewhere in this issue.

Scheduled events for May include Training and observing on May 12 and a “New Moon” observing session on May 19. Sundown on May 12 is at 8:01 p.m., so “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope” begins at 7:45 p.m. May 19 is also scheduled as a Chaco event, so GNTO will offer a closer option for those who do not want to drive to Chaco. Our only scheduled event for June is a “New Moon” observing session on June 16. When sky conditions are favorable, Steve Welch will have our CCD imaging equipment ready in our 10-foot dome for all events. If you are interested in CCD imaging, please check with Steve.

The comfortable Robert Ortega Building is open for all events. Our Guest Trailer is available for coffee, hot chocolate, and any snacks you might want to share. We’ve got a bunch of great equipment waiting for you at GNTO, so plan your trip to GNTO soon. Why wait?

Mexico may be in jeopardy. As we are the largest astronomy society in the state, I know the public will be counting on TAAS to keep our telescopes pointed up and the invitation open for all to “take a look.” Requests for astronomy outreach programs pour into my office each week. It is my goal to keep the existing astronomy education programs operating whether through TAAS’ outreach program, “Box of Stars,” or through the many astronomy organizations, professional and amateur astronomers, and the astronomy community at large.

At this time no one knows how this situation will work itself out. However, it is clear, based on the number of requests I get each week for astronomy outreach programs, that there is a need and a desire for such programs to continue! In the “Golden Age of Astronomy” in the “Land of Enchanted Dark Skies” I see New Mexico and TAAS as the leaders in Astronomy Outreach Education.

The article in the March/April 2007 edition of Night Sky magazine entitled “Dome, Sweet Dome” by Alan Dyer details the importance of astronomy centers around the United States as the “hub” for the astronomy community. It would be a great loss to the astronomy community to lose our astronomy center altogether.

Although I have no concrete information to share, I write this to inform you of this development and of my goal to keep the astronomy outreach programs in place.

Sincerely and respectfully submitted by your humble Vice President 2007,

Judy Stanley
TAAS Sky Quality Meter

TAAS has a Unihedron Sky Quality Meter available for use by members. You can borrow this meter from David Penasa at (505) 277-1141 (W) or (505) 275-2480 (H). The SQM may be reserved on a first come, first served basis for durations up to one week. Compare the sky brightness at your favorite viewing site with other sites. TAAS events such as school star parties, Messier SIG, and GNTO take priority. The following links give information on checkout and operating procedures for our SQM.


Free Telescope Offer

What’s that? Did you say Free? That’s right FREE!

Any TAAS member can use this coupon to borrow a TAAS telescope.

Contact Dale Murray at telescope_loans@taas.org or 296-2479 and receive a loaner telescope absolutely free. You can choose from scopes with apertures ranging from 6” to 13”.

Some restrictions apply. Offer valid for current TAAS members. Offer is first come first served. Late comers will be put on a waiting list.

Neither TAAS nor the telescope curators will be held liable for any lost sleep or other problems arising from the use of TAAS scopes. Borrowers are required to enjoy the telescopes.

CCD Camera for Sale

For Sale:
SBIG ST-7 CCD camera
Parallel port model
Includes 12V and 110AC power adaptors, 1.25” and 2” nose pieces, case, manuals
Make me an offer. drichey@sandia.net
2007 TAAS Board of Directors/Staff

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Judy Stanley
Vice President / General Meeting Coordinator

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Secretary

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897-9034 (H)

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Director

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Bill Firth
Director

Patricia Rose
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Dee Friesen
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Web Master
Alan Scott
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webmaster@taas.org
MEMBERSHIP: You may request a membership application by sending e-mail to membership@taas.org or calling (505) 254-TAAS (8227). Applications may also be downloaded from the Web site. Annual dues to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society are $30/year for a full membership and $15/year for a teacher or student (grades K-12). Additional family members may join for $5/each (teacher, student and family memberships are not eligible to vote on society matters). New member information packets can be downloaded from the website or requested from the TAAS Membership Services Director at membership@taas.org You may send your dues by mail to our newsletter return address with your check written out to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society or give your check to the Treasurer at the next meeting.

MAGAZINES: Discount magazine subscriptions to Sky and Telescope and Astronomy as well as discounts on books from Sky Publishing Corporation are available when purchased by TAAS members through our society. Include any of the above magazine renewal mailers and subscription payments as part of your renewal check. Make checks out to TAAS (we will combine and send one check to the publisher). Warning: publishers take several months to process magazine subscriptions.

ARTICLES/ADVERTISEMENTS: Articles, personal astronomical classified advertisements and business card size advertisements for businesses related to astronomy must be submitted by the deadline shown on the Society calendar (generally the Saturday near the new Moon). Rates for commercial ads (per issue) are $120 per page, $60 per half page, $30 per quarter page, $7 for business card size. The newsletter editor reserves the right to include and/or edit any article or advertisement. E-mail attachments in Microsoft Word, 11 point Palatino, justified, no indent at paragraph beginning, one space between paragraphs is preferred. ASCII and RTF are acceptable. One column is approximately 350 words. Contact the Newsletter Editor at editor@taas.org for more information.

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