Who was General Nathan Farragut Twining?  
And Why is the TAAS Observatory Named for Him?

by Peter Eschman

In May of 2006 I received an interesting e-mail from Chad Plenge, a junior in high school. Chad was working on several projects about General Nathan Twining and, through the magic of Internet searches, he found our Web site. Chad was looking for background information for a project leading to the installation of a sign in Twining Park in Monroe, Wisconsin. I told Chad he was free to use any information on our Web site, as long as he cited sources.

I did not hear much more from Chad for about a year. In April of this year, I got a nice e-mail with a few images and an electronic copy of the brochure he had prepared for the April 14, 2007, dedication of the Twining Park sign. The sign bears the following text:

**Nathan Farragut Twining**
October 11, 1897 - March 29, 1982

Nathan Twining was born in Monroe, Wisconsin, on October 11, 1897. He graduated from West Point in 1918. After three years in the Infantry, he transferred to the Army Air Corps. He was Chief of Staff of the Army Air Force in the Pacific from 1942 to 1943. While in the Pacific, Twinning’s plane was forced down. He spent six days at sea in a life raft before being rescued. Twinning was
President’s Message

Sy Santos

There are all sorts of reasons why people look toward the sky with interest. Some believe that finding new scientific data will ultimately lead to the betterment of this magnificent spinning rock we call home. Others are so mesmerized by the strange, unearthly objects they find that they spend their children’s inheritance on telescopes and the glorious glass bling that follows. Then there are those who never before thought to gaze at the light of a star rather than the darkness of the sky.

And for all of these and the others we form one big group to help guide us no matter what our core motive. We come together from every walk of life with many ideas about how to make that sky make sense. This year (as in years past), we have an outstanding board of directors with fresh new ideas, some of which have come to fruition, some of which are in the making, and some of which, inevitably, haven't been voiced yet and are still churning up in those mental gears. What a joy!

Astronomy’s great draw is so multifaceted that it would take volumes to define it. There is something for everyone in astronomy and in TAAS. Have you thought of becoming a more active part of TAAS? What could you do to assist, even if it means helping just one other member just once in the year? Maybe you have a desire to add an interesting new facet to this sparkling gem of an organization. You should seriously consider it if you haven’t already – it will be a gift to yourself. I’ve always kind of snarled my lip at the term “becoming involved” because to me that only means another drain on my schedule or another obligation, as daily business takes its own heaping portion at the table of life, and rightly so, of course. When I took the step to help out in TAAS, I found a quite different environment from the mundane drain so often correlated with “involvement” in a group. After what I’ve seen and experienced, I’d really much rather refer to involvement in TAAS as “discovering new things” or “realizing a greater understanding” of the world around us, because as diverse as TAAS is, that’s what happens as a result. THERE IS SO MUCH TO GAIN!

Whether you help out at a star party by bringing a scope, simply help someone find a planet, or show up at our incredible GNTO observatory to share in learning firsthand about comets, stars, nebulae, galaxies, or a myriad of other things astronomy has to offer, you will be better for it. In doing so, you are strengthening not only your knowledge, but that of those around you, and that enriches our community.

Coming from the gal who once upon a time saw the night as simply time passed before daylight, I attest to the incredible perspective astronomy can bring to a person and the strength it can lend to everyday decisions. It puts priorities in order and helps manifest new understandings of the world around us. It’s also pretty darn nice to know there are scientists among us who really do make this a better place to live. No matter where you’re coming from or why you’re here, come discover new ideas and dig deeper into this ever expanding universe that you’re already a great part of. Find more of it. You will personally benefit from it!

Bob Havlen and Judy Stanley will present the “new” Night Sky Toolkits at our June 30 General Meeting held in Regener Hall on the UNM Campus at 7:00 p.m. The Night Sky Toolkits contain creative and interesting demonstrations and activities to be used for astronomy outreach education. Bob Havlen is the Night Sky Coordinator for TAAS. Bob and Judy invite you to take a closer look and get your hands on these exciting new materials. A social hour follows; we hope to see everyone there!
As I indicated last month, we are raising funds 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 expect to have a much smoother drive to GNTO and will have a roadway that is easier to maintain. Please send your contributions to the project treasurer, Karen Keese. Karen asks that checks be made payable to Jerry Rogers Rock Company. To mail a check to Karen, sign up for road work party notification, or ask questions about the project, phone Karen at 261-0040, e-mail skywriter@wildblue.net, or contact her at any TAAS event. I’ve sent my check to Karen, have you?

I have three GNTO event reports and some details from two GNTO committee meetings. Our April 21 observing event had 7 observers and 3 telescopes in operation. Thanks to Steve Welch for opening the observatory and Bill Wallace for backing up Steve and serving as Isengard host for this event. Thanks to Barry Spletzer for a great job matching an old focuser to a new mounting plate so we have a second focuser for the Isengard. This low-profile focuser allows video cameras to come to focus using focal reducers so we can encourage this type of imaging when the scope is not being used for its primary assignment as a visual instrument. Steve and Bill got lots of video work done with the new focuser on the Isengard. They viewed many video targets including the dark limb of the moon, M51 (Whirlpool Galaxy), and some 30 or so other galaxies as faint as magnitude 18. Bill is checking the video recording of the dark lunar limb for asteroid strikes. Video work went on all night, and Steve closed up as dawn twilight began.

Our May 12 training event had 10 observers and 3 telescopes. Thanks again to Steve Welch for opening the observatory and Bill Wallace for serving as Steve’s backup. Thanks to Dale Murray, who served as training instructor and Isengard host for this event. Due to the light turnout for training, as well as poor sky conditions in the early evening, no training session was held. Pete, Bill and Steve did get a number of little things done, including the installation and checkout of the Losmandy G-11 laser alignment aid. We really owe a big thanks to Barry Spletzer for his custom machining of this laser mount. This unique item would cost several hundred dollars if it were commercially made. Thanks Barry, you always come through for us when we have custom machining needs!

This custom mount allows us to mount a laser on the G-11 mount so that, after an initial careful polar alignment, we can use the laser to zero in on a horizontal target for future setups. The target is near the south fence line to insure an easily repeated and accurate mount setup. Steve spent a fair amount of time including additional star targets in the G-11 mount error model. Once all the preliminary work is done, we should be able to setup the mount, align the laser, and warm start the mount to use an existing pointing error model.

Our May 19 “New Moon Observing” event was best characterized as “No Observing.” Thanks to Dee Friesen for opening the observatory and serving as Isengard host for this event. Many thanks go to Bob Hufnagel who took the time to travel to GNTO so he could use our road dragger to smooth out the rough spots on Twining Lane. Dee also had help from Will Ferrell. Dee and Will had a productive time working with the Isengard control software, using both Maestro and TheSky for testing mock telescope alignments.

We had GNTO committee meetings on April 26 and June 7. Participants included Larry Cash, Ray Collins, Pete Eschman, Will Ferrell, Dee Friesen, Dale Murray, Gordon Pegue, Bill Wallace, and Steve Welch. We approved a new protocol for duty assignments at GNTO events. We have 3 primary assignments for each event, Opener, Backup for Opener, and Isengard Host. In addition, we have duty assignments for various training sessions throughout the year. We began getting duty assignments for committee members for May 2007 through May 2008. We now have someone assigned to operate the Isengard telescope for all scheduled GNTO events so TAAS members without telescopes have a better chance to use the Isengard as well as the 6” and 16” GNTO loaner telescopes. Please see an article by Dee Friesen (in this newsletter) for information on the new Isengard host program.

We discussed maintenance and improvement needs, and planned for future events. We have purchased a first aid kit to be mounted on the wall of the outhouse. The new first aid kit is in addition to the one in the main dome and will be available if the main dome is closed. We also purchased a mouse to use with the Isengard laptop. We have a new tarp covering the Isengard, protecting it from any rain that penetrates the dome. To save power, we replaced incandescent lights in the main dome computer room and guest trailer with compact red fluorescent and red LED bulbs.

We committed a portion of the Fall 2004 Intel grant to purchase a more sensitive video camera. We have ordered a Peltier cooled StellaCam III from Astrovid to extend our video monitoring of various astronomical events, as well as enhance our video outreach to the public. We will continue to use the StellCamEX video camera for bright objects, and use the new camera for deep space objects. Steve Welch has donated a video signal wireless transmitter and receiver that will also help to simplify our video setup at GNTO and other public outreach venues. Thanks for your continuing generosity, Steve!

Our first July event is our Training session and Observing...
LETTER TO COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

Extract from IDA Letter dated 19 March 2007

The Honorable John Dingell, Chairman,
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Chairman Dingell:

I am writing you on behalf of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), a nonprofit organization with more than 10,000 members from all 50 states and over 70 countries. We are responding to your February 28 request for comments on the issue of climate change. Light pollution is a problem that wastes a large amount of energy.

Based on our calculations, we estimate that several billion dollars are wasted each year in the USA due to over-lighting the night. Poor quality nighttime lighting is the main cause of this problem. Such obtrusive lighting also causes blinding glare and light trespass. It reduces visibility, rather than enhancing our nighttime environment. Glare, for example, is a particular problem for our country’s aging population. In addition, astronomers and the general public are denied access to the beauty of our night skies, and many students can only see the Milky Way by going to a planetarium.

IDA’s goal is to educate the public that responsible outdoor lighting reduces energy waste, controls glare, stops most of the obtrusive light trespass, improves visibility and safety, and preserves the beauty of our night skies. By controlling energy waste, we save dollars and reduce atmospheric pollution. We believe that solutions to the problems of light pollution are simple, and that everyone, including the public, benefits from these solutions. There has been considerable media coverage about these issues, proof of a growing awareness of the problem. I enclose information sheets that summarize issues; there is additional information available at the IDA web site, www.darksky.org.

We would be honored to speak with you or your representatives about these important issues any time at your convenience. IDA believes there is a very good match of this issue with your interests in conservation of energy and reducing carbon emissions. We hope you consider the issue of light pollution as an item on your agenda for future action, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Very Respectfully,

Robert L. Gent
President, Board of Directors
International Dark-Sky Association

BILLBOARD INDUSTRY AND LIGHT POLLUTION
The Billboard Industry wants to greatly weaken the Highway Beautification Act, which means never getting rid of the old billboards that use bottom-mounted fixtures that send lots of light into the sky. See http://ga3.org/campaign/hba_07. Please contact your Senators and ask them not to allow the provision they are asking for.

NATURAL BRIDGES IS FIRST IDA DARK-SKY PARK
IDA has named Natural Bridges National Monument (UT), as the world’s first International Dark-Sky Association Park. It is a designation which recognizes that the park has among the darkest and clearest skies in all of the United States. To read full article, see www.parkremark.com.

BORDER-FENCE LIGHTS WORRY ASTRONOMERS
by Jim Lamb, Green Valley News and Sun, 4/06/07

SKY BRIGHTNESS MONITORING
Light Pollution Science and Technology Institute, 3/3/07...Satellite monitoring of the artificial night sky brightness and the stellar visibility: The interest for the protection of the night sky from light pollution is growing every day. A global scale periodic monitoring of the situation is necessary. See the following: The Night Sky In The World/.

7th ANNUAL BRYCE CANYON ASTRONOMY FESTIVAL
June 13—16, 2007
Bryce Canyon National Park’s “Dark Rangers” and amateur astronomers from the Salt Lake Astronomical Society celebrated the night. Afternoon workshops were conducted on such topics as learning the night sky, demonstrations on making your home dark sky friendly, and walks along a scale model of our solar system. In the evening rangers and guest speakers made presentations on topics related to astronomy and nocturnal animals before venturing out into the night to stargaze under Bryce Canyon’s famous dark skies. For more information, please visit: http://www.nps.gov/brca/planyourvisit/astonomyprograms.htm.

TAAS TREASURER’S REPORT (MAY)
Account balances (as of the end of May):
General Fund: $ 5,951.14
GNTO Fund: $ 7,132.03
Education Fund: $ 5,256.55
Dark Sky Fund: $ 899.31
Special Projects Fund: $ 5,330.18
Science Fair Fund: $ 400.00
Cosmic Carnival: $ 196.38
Total Funds on Deposit: $25,165.59
Total membership count (all categories): 308

TAAS TREASURER’S REPORT (MAY)
TAAS Reports & Notices

Monthly Membership Report (April 2007)

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Monthly Membership Report (May 2007)

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<th>Membership</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Members</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Location, Location, Location

- **Chaco Canyon**
  - Elevation: 6185’
  - Latitude: 36° 01’ 50"N
  - Longitude: 107° 54’ 36"W
  - Coordinates: 36.03°, -107.91°

- **Oak Flat**
  - Elevation: 7680’
  - Latitude: 34° 59’ 48"N
  - Longitude: 106° 19’ 17"W
  - Coordinates: 34.99°, -106.32°

- **UNM Campus Observatory**
  - Elevation: 5180’
  - Latitude: 35° 0’ 29"N
  - Longitude: 106° 37’ 17"W
  - Coordinates: 35.09°, -106.62°

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.

Donations to TAAS

- **General**: Darrell Eidson, Pete Eschman, Rick Hudson, Andrew Lydon
- **Education**: Rick Hudson, Alvarado Elementary School, Griegos Elementary PTA, Silicon Valley Community Foundation/Davies
- **GNTO**: Jeff Bender, Darrell Eidson, Pete Eschman, Rick Hudson, Dan Richey
- **Dark Sky**: Pete Eschman, Dee Friesen, Rick Hudson, Karen Keese, David Penasa, Ernie Villescas
- **Special Projects**: Rick Hudson
- **Cosmic Carnival**: Dee Friesen, Smart Use LLC and Others

Thank You

Editor’s Note

Please note that the deadline for the July 2007 issue of the *Sidereal Times* will be Friday, July 13. Please e-mail text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word. Please attach photos and illustrations separately. The e-mail address for the newsletter editor is editor@taas.org.

Membership Services

- **for**: Membership Inquiries, Events Information, Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Beverly Firth at membership@taas.org

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581 Albuquerque, NM
Fun Times with the Isengard  
by Dee Friesen

To encourage more use of the Isengard Telescope, the GNTO committee established a new position known as the “Isengarder.” Every TAAS activity at GNTO will have an Isengarder on hand to help operate the Isengard Telescope. This person, fully trained in telescope operation, will be available to assist others in using the Isengard. In the past, TAAS members have taken advantage of our “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope” training, but not had sufficient opportunity to use the telescope after training. The Isengarder will be in the observatory dome for any TAAS member desiring assistance with the Isengard or loaner telescopes. This is a tremendous opportunity for TAAS members to gain experience and confidence with these wonderful instruments. All TAAS members are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to have fun with the Isengard Telescope at your observatory.
Welcome to New TAAS Members

STEPHEN BAYLISS
JOHN BOEDEKEL
PATRICIA BOTTs
LEN LORENCE
ANDREW LYDON
EDWARD MEEK
ROBERT NORTON
SCOTT KENTON / TATUM

July 2007

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<td>14 GNTO NM Observing</td>
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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.

School Star Party.

TAAS General Meeting

Saturday, June 30, 2007
7:00 P.M.
Regener Hall
University of New Mexico
(See map, back page)

The New Night Sky Toolkit

Bob Havlen, TAAS Dark Sky Coordinator
and Judy Stanley, TAAS Vice President
Meeting Minutes

TAAS OFFICERS MEETING

Flying Star Restaurant 10700 Corrales Road May 3, 2007

Officers present: Sy Santos (President), Judy Stanley (Vice President), Tom Graham (Secretary), Dan Clark (Treasurer)

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

Corrections to the April Minutes
None to report.

New Business
Astronomical league. This item was deferred until the full board can meet to discuss.

Correspondence
Telescope donation. A telescope was donated, and we are looking for someone who can clean the scope.

Treasurer’s Report

Account balances (as of the end of April):

General Fund: $  5,766.71
GNTO Fund: $  7,022.03
Education Fund: $  5,156.55
Dark Sky Fund: $  894.31
Special Projects Fund: $  5,330.18
Science Fair Fund: $  400.00
Cosmic Carnival: $  663.60
Total Funds on Deposit: $25,233.38

Total membership count (all categories): 309

Committee Reports

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)

Official Calendar Update
International Sidewalk Astronomy night will be May 19; Judy will help those interested in coordinating.

Old Business

Cosmic Carnival wrap-up will be June 4 with directors of museums.
Road progress was deferred.
Inventory. Inventory accounting is on track
Insurance. This is still under review.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Corrections to the May 3 Minutes
None to report.

New Business

a. The board approved paying $10.00 for TAAS to join the Astronomical League; members who want to join will pay $7.50. They may only join at two different times a year (July and December), and they will not be prorated.
b. Judy will assist with the scope loaner program. Thank you.
c. Dee Friesen continues to explore new opportunities for TAAS. Many of these involve the museums located near Explora. Pat has kindled a desire to have Sidewalk Astronomy revived at local gathering places.
d. The inventory should be completed and updated soon.
e. A resolution that deals with scheduling conflicts passed with all voting for except two abstentions. That TAAS will have five core events that will require board approval to schedule an “Official” TAAS event that conflict with GNTO. Those core events are:
   a. General Meetings
   b. GNTO
   c. Oak Flats
   d. Educational Outreach events
   e. UNM observing Friday nights

Correspondence
A 10” Dob was donated to TAAS.

Treasurer’s Report
See elsewhere in the newsletter.

Old Business

a. Dee gave a recap of Cosmic Carnival and reported that next year’s planning was ongoing and gaining support.
b. Pete reported that work continues on the road to GNTO

Meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Who was Gen. Twining?, continued from page 2

financial contributors, and 4 other sources of other contributions, so he really pulled a lot of the town's resources together to pull off a really nice project. Chad is to be commended for doing a great job of background research and bringing a complex project together for the memorial sign.

For more details on General Nathan Twining, this Web site will get you started: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_Twining

So how does this all connect with our observatory? General Nathan Twining’s son, Nathan Twining Jr., donated land to TAAS with the understanding that we would build an observatory named for his father. So now you know, and thanks to Chad Plenge, we all know more about the man for whom our observatory is named.
on July 7. Sundown on July 7 is at 8:24 p.m., so the “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope” starts at 8:00 p.m. The introduction covers most of the equipment used at GNTO, including our Isengard 16” reflector as well as our 6” and 16” loaner dobsonian scopes. If enough people are interested, we may offer an “Introduction to GNTO Astro Computing Resources” later in the evening. This second session covers computer hardware and astronomy-related software at GNTO. Steve Welch plans to have our CCD imaging equipment ready in our 10-foot dome. This is a great chance to learn about the imaging process and take some images of your own. Be sure to mark your calendars now for this opportunity to learn about your observatory and enjoy the relaxed company of fellow observers. This will be a great chance to visit GNTO, especially if it is your first visit to your observatory!

When driving to or from GNTO, please be on the lookout for free-range cattle and be especially cautious around calves. The young ones are very unpredictable, and they love to run right in front of your vehicle at the last minute!

Our second event for July is a “New Moon” observing session on July 14. We have only one event scheduled for August, which is a “New Moon” observing session on August 11. When sky conditions are favorable, Steve Welch plans to have our CCD imaging equipment ready in our 10-foot dome for all events. If you are interested in CCD imaging, please be sure to check with Steve. We will have the comfortable Robert Ortega Building 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?

GNTO committee meetings are open to any interested TAAS members and they provide a great way to get more involved with your observatory. We need your help. Our next scheduled meetings are August 9 and October 4. We meet every other month at 6:30 p.m. at JB’s Restaurant on Eubank just north of I-40. If you have questions about GNTO, please contact me (Peter Eschman, gnto@taas.org, phone 873-1517).

I hope to see you soon at your observatory.

Observatory Road Project Update

by Karen Keese

In a pair of work parties in May, TAAS members completed preparation of the proposed new route to GNTO by removing 21 mesquite bushes that would have slowed down grading operations.

During the first session, Steve Welch, Jim Rickey, Carl Frisch, and Karen Keese hand dug seven of the mesquites. At the second session, Jim, Carl, and Karen returned and were joined by Bob Hufnagel. Bob--armed with electric saw, truck, and chain--greatly expedited stump removal for the remaining mesquites.

Jim is a relatively new member who hails from Baltimore, and he worked like a dynamo. We sincerely appreciate his pitch-in attitude. Jim is looking forward to taking his telescope to GNTO to take advantage of our incomparable New Mexico night sky. However, despite our assurances, he does not yet seem convinced that he can leave his dew-zapper at home.

Road-building work is expected to begin during the summer monsoon season, when soil moisture content is 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. The road building project is now approximately 75% funded. If you have not yet contributed, your support would be most welcome at this time. 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.

Checks should be made payable to Jerry Rogers Rock Company. Project Treasurer Karen Keese is collecting and recording all payments. Contact her at 261-0040 or skywriter@wildblue.net for check-mailing instructions. Thank you for helping to blaze a new trail for the membership!

Many thanks to Jim, Steve, Bob, and Carl for contributing sweat and equipment to the mesquite-busting effort and for helping to maximize our project dollars.

Clear skies!
FOR SALE

Takahashi 5-inch refractor telescope with mount, tripod and extra lenses in new condition

Takahashi FS-128 5” f 8.1 Fluorite Apochromat Refractor with EM-200 Mount (equatorial motor mount with remote control, polar alignment telescope, and counter weights), wooden tripod SE-L, 7 x 50 Takahashi finder scope with holder, diagonal prism (1.25”), and 5 oculars. Oculars: MC LE 5 mm, MC LE 7.5 mm, MC LE 18 mm MC LE 30 mm and Teleview 2X Barlow. All equipment (except tripod) in original boxes. Used twice due to personal eye damage. A Rolls Royce of scopes in perfect, new condition. Price: $7,950 OBO

Contact Stan Schmidt at (505) 856-1592.

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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

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Trailblazing  See Observatory Road Project Update, page 9

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Jim Rickey and Karen Keese
Steve Welch, Jim Rickey, Karen Keese, Carl Frisch
Bob Hufnagel snare a mesquite stump
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