TAAS Solstice Fest Finds Safer Spot

After fire danger closed the Oak Flat group picnic area, the location originally planned for the event, TAAS held its 2008 Summer Solstice Celebration Saturday, June 28, in the dry and comfortable cafeteria of the Griegos Elementary School. TAAS member and Griegos principal Tom Graham graciously offered the new venue.

TAAS members and guests enjoyed a delicious potluck dinner. Clouds prevented night sky observing. One alien attended (see photo below left).
President’s Message

Dee Friesen

Flying by Night

For forty years I walked out to the flight line, strapped a jet onto my body, and went to work. Much of that work was done at night. I always enjoyed the night flying because I got a different view of the night sky. For twenty years as a fighter pilot, my observing time was limited because of the many other things that I had to devote attention to while flying high-performance aircraft. When I became an airline pilot, the long legs of many of my flights gave me the time to observe the night sky.

I first glimpsed the Southern Cross while flying over the Mekong Delta in the early morning hours of February 1970. Later I learned the southern sky on long flights to Santiago, Chile, and Sao Paulo, Brazil. Over the North Atlantic on the way to Europe, I frequently observed the northern lights dancing beautifully in the winter sky.

People often ask me, “Is it different viewing the night sky from an airplane?” Yes, it is different. The sky is deep black, and the stars shine steadily because, at 35,000 feet, I am above 80% of the atmosphere. The stars are very crisp all the way down to the horizon. I will admit that the view from the cockpit, day or night, far exceeds the view from in back.

Flying with the airlines, my constant companion was the popular book 365 Starry Nights by Chet Raymo. It enabled me to educate many fellow pilots and even some flight attendants on the wonders of the night sky. Often I would print out star charts to share with crew members so that together we could identify the objects for that night. Almost always they expressed great interest saying, “I always wanted to learn the night sky.”

Let me reassure those of you who may have been or plan to be passengers that the observing of the night sky is done safely and correctly from the flight deck. It is only after we are at cruise altitude, all the checklists are complete, and the autopilot is engaged that the observing activities would begin. I always told my passengers that the pilots are concerned foremost about flight safety. After all, the pilot arrives at the scene of the accident first.

Observe—Educate—Have Fun

July General Meeting to Feature “Thinking Telescopes”

The speaker for The Albuquerque Astronomical Society (TAAS) General Meeting on July 12 will be Dr. Przemek Wozniak from Los Alamos, speaking on “Mining the Transient Sky with Thinking Telescopes.” His talk will introduce the Thinking Telescopes project, its main concepts, implementation, and scientific results, with the emphasis on recent progress in studies of Gamma-Ray Bursts (GRBs), sometimes referred to as “the largest cosmic explosions since the Big Bang.”

The Thinking Telescopes project at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is pushing the envelope by developing a network of fully autonomous optical imaging detectors with the purpose of continually monitoring the sky in search of rapid transient phenomena in astronomical objects on timescales as short as one minute.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. in Regener Hall on the UNM campus. For information, call 505-254-TAAS. To obtain a map, visit http://www.taas.org. Expand your horizons. Join us for an evening of education, entertainment, and socializing.

TAAS Help Wanted, July

TAAS needs people to assist with the following areas. If you are interested, contact Dee Friesen or any other TAAS BOD member. Contact information for all BOD members is on page 11 of this newsletter.

General Meeting Planning – Identify speakers, activities and events for the monthly TAAS meetings. Contact Dick Fate.

Education — Participate in the TAAS Educational Outreach Program by attending school star parties. Contact Bob Hufnagel.

GNTO Committee — Join the committee and receive training to become a GNTO Key Holder. Contact Pete Eschman.

Membership — Assist with the conduct of the TAAS membership program. This includes procedures to track membership, identify reasons for nonrenewal of membership, and promote TAAS membership. Contact Bill Firth.

continued on page 4
Our most recent GNTO committee meeting took place on June 5. Eleven people attended the meeting, including Larry Cash, Ray Collins, Pete Eschman, Will Ferrell, Dee Friesen, Lance Hurt, Melissa Kirk, Dale Murray, Gordon Pegue, Bill Wallace, and Steve Welch. After reviewing previous events, we passed around a signup sheet to establish duty assignments for GNTO events through November. Next, our discussion turned to maintenance and improvement needs for the facility. We decided to spend up to $250 to purchase a Camcorder for recording asteroid occultation video, so that we need not rely on privately owned equipment. We plan a Key Holder meeting at GNTO in the near future so everyone can get up to speed on newer procedures and equipment. Both Mark Fleenor and Lance Hurt expressed interest in becoming GNTO Key Holders, and we welcome their help in the months to come.

We discussed the need to keep the GNTO Web page mostly in its current form for the time being. We plan to update portions of the Web page to reflect new equipment and recent enhancements to the facility. We finalized our GNTO assets inventory for this spring, and I have since transmitted all updates to Charlie Mullen, who is compiling a record of all TAAS assets. We reviewed GNTO budget estimates for this year, and will present this information to our TAAS Board of Directors. Finally, we expressed a desire to apply for one of the new PNM grants that focus on renewable energy resources. We hope to get help with photovoltaic system storage battery expenses and funding to help implement a security system for GNTO using a wireless Internet connection. Barry Spletzer has offered to help with the grant application.

Our most recent observing event was “New Moon” observing on June 7. I opened the facility, while Will Ferrell served as backup for opening duties. Bill Wallace served as host for the Isengard Telescope. We had twelve people attending this event with 8 telescopes in operation and several pairs of binoculars in use. We had good skies, but conditions were breezy until later when it became calm. After an hour or so, breezy conditions returned. We saw a good ISS pass, and saw a few sporadic meteors. We had some excitement when we spotted a fire burning on the north face of the mountain to the west of GNTO. We called it in, and after getting bounced around to various contacts, we were told that it was a flare-up of a prescribed burn. The flames were pretty impressive in binoculars.

We had a good shakedown using the new Feathertouch wireless motorized focuser on the Isengard, and we are now working up some supplemental battery packs to power the wireless hand pad. We had some very good video imaging using the GNTO video outreach Stellacam 3 camera on Larry Cash’s 10” LX200, so this is now proven as a capable video platform for future video outreach. After a successful evening, I closed up the facility around 3:30 a.m. Sunday morning.

Our next GNTO Training sessions take place on July 5, 3 days after New Moon. Since sunset is at 8:24 p.m., training starts at 8:00 p.m. with “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope”, which covers most of the equipment used at GNTO, ranging from the Isengard 16” reflector down to our 6” and 16” loaner Dobsonian scopes. We encourage all TAAS members to come down to GNTO on July 5 and take advantage of our great facility, as well as the chance to get checked out on some of the equipment that is waiting for you. Our single observing event for the following month is a “New Moon” observing event on August 2.

Steve Welch plans to have our CCD imaging equipment ready in our 10-foot dome whenever conditions permit. This is a great chance to learn about the imaging process and take some images of your own. We will have the comfortable Robert Ortega Building open and our Guest Trailer 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 meet every other month at 6:30 p.m. at JB’s Restaurant on Eubank just north of I-40. Our next committee meetings are August 7 and October 16. 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.
Light Pollution Definition

Back to the basics. What is it? *Light pollution* is any adverse effect of artificial light including sky glow, glare, light trespass, light clutter, decreased visibility at night, and energy waste.

Dark-Sky Destinations

Looking for vacation spots far away from sky glow? For some possibilities, see:


Specifier Bulletins

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)—The Light Pollution Authority—(www.darksky.org) recently launched their first bulletins for specific dark sky applications:

1) Volume 1, Issue 1: A Dark Sky Solution for Canopy Lighting—LSI Crossover Fixture. This first issue features an innovative dark sky solution for service station canopy lighting, suitable for new and retrofit installations. To read more and sign up for the Specifier Bulletin:

http://www.darksky.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=67536&orgId=idsa.

2) Volume 1, Issue 2: Environmentally Responsible, Architecturally Appealing, Area Lighting. This issue features an innovative dark sky solution for general area lighting applications, including parking areas, walkways, and even wall lighting (http://data.nextrionet.com/site/idsa/specbull-1-1.pdf).

Lighting for Wind Farms

Wind Farms are becoming big news in New Mexico and other parts of the southwest. What are the obstruction lighting requirements, and how might it affect astronomy? See the following: A light pollution analysis by Clanton and Associates on lighting associated with electric wind mills - turbines (wind farms): http://tinyurl.com/3zeja4.

FAA Advisory on Obstruction Marking and Lighting (includes wind turbine generators):


Using a Digital Camera to Measure Light Source Brightness / Glare

See the new IDA report on “Using a Digital Camera to Measure Commercial Light Sources” at http://data.nextrionet.com/site/idsa/Experiment%20Write%20Up%20Final.pdf.

TAAS Help Wanted, July

continued from page 2

Observing — Identify significant observing events for TAAS members and events to present to the public. Creation of observing contests and observing lists for members to complete to receive TAAS awards.  
    Contact Steve Welch.

TAAS Membership Survey — Create a survey of the entire membership to identify the interests, desires, critiques, and thoughts of the membership concerning the activities and events of the organization.  
    Contact Dee Friesen.

TAAS Social Events — Assist with the planning and conduct of TAAS social events.  
    Contact Diane Murray.

TAAS Web Site — Assist with the planning and design for a new TAAS Web site to include e-mail procedures and other electronic communications.  
    Contact Dee Friesen.

International Year of Astronomy planning — Assist with the planning of TAAS events for the IYA.  
    Contact Dee Friesen

Again, if you are interested, please contact Dee Friesen or any other TAAS BOD member. Contact information for all BOD members is on page 11 of this newsletter.
Donations to TAAS

General:
ALBERT BRETTNER
JAMES RICKEY
UNITED WAY

Education:
TOM ANDREWS

Dark Sky:
BARNEY FULLER
ED JUDDO

Welcome to New and Returning TAAS Members

TERRY DUNBAR
TIMOTHY FORD
KEVIN MCKEOWN
KURT SANDQUIST
MELVIN SHAFFER

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.

Note from Treasurer

Clarification of New Member and Renewal Policy
Renewal notices will be mailed out one 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.

Membership Services

for:
• Membership Inquiries
• Events Information
• Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Bill Firth at membership@taas.org

Editor’s Note

Please note that the deadline for the next issue of the Sidereal Times is Friday, August 1.

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org
P.O. Box 50581 Albuquerque, NM

Monthly Membership Report

June 2008

Membership  Current Month  Past Month  Change
Regular  216  211  5
Family  69  69  0
Educational  8  7  1
Total Paid  293  287  6
Honorary  7  7  0
Complimentary  35  35  0
Total Members  335  329  6

The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
## Star Party Sparks Enthusiasm at American Cancer Society’s Camp Enchantment

Larry Cash

This year’s star party June 3 at the American Cancer Society’s Camp Enchantment at the Manzano Mountain Retreat was a great success. Between 50 and 60 kids of varying ages and approximately 15 camp counselors were there. We had great weather, (no clouds except for the Milky Way and no wind) clear skies, and very enthusiastic kids asking hundreds maybe even thousands of questions.

Before dark, we looked at the forest ranger tower just west of the camp with our scopes and binoculars. Later we saw Saturn, Mars, and various stars such as Arcturus, Vega, and Regulus. The darker skies then started to unveil the Ring Nebula (M57), Hercules Globular Cluster (M13), and others. At 9:15 p.m. the kids were back in their bunks, but some of the counselors stayed and were treated to Omega Centauri, M81 and M82, the Dumbbell Nebula, the Double Double in Lyre, and other great objects.

Thanks to the following docents who went down and gave the kids their time and energy: Pete Eschman, Gordon Pegue, Larry Cash, Melissa Kirk, John Laning, Bob Hufnagel, Charley Mullen, Jim Seargent, Ann Seargent, Bruce Levin, and Nate Levin.
### August 2008

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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 Building, Corner of Lomas and Yale

**Blue =** Non-TAAS events

**=** School Star Party

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**TAAS General Meeting**

Saturday, July 12, 2008
7:00 P.M.
Regener Hall
University of New Mexico
(See map, back page)

**Mining the Transient Sky with Thinking Telescopes**

Dr. Przemek Wozniak
Los Alamos National Laboratory

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**Sidereal Times Deadline**

2

**GNTO NM Observing**

8

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The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
TAAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
June 12, 2008
University of New Mexico Physics and Astronomy Building

MEETING MINUTES

Directors present: Gordon Pegue, Melissa Kirk (Secretary), Bob Havlen, Charlie Mullen, Dick Fate (Vice President)

Directors absent: Dee Friesen (President, excused), Pete Eschman (excused), Tom Davies, Dan Clark (Treasurer), Steve Welch, Larry Cash (excused), Bob Hufnagel.

Ryan Demares is on leave of absence from the Board of Directors.

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m.

TAAS Screensaver
The Directors discussed giving general meeting speakers some sort of gift, such as a copy of the TAAS screensaver, or perhaps the speakers could be treated to dinner before the meetings.

TAAS Store
Dave Downs will be working with Black Duck to prepare a proposal for the July Board meeting.

Program Report
TAAS will spend $2-$3 per person, or about $200 for the barbecue on June 28. Anyone who has not committed to take food to the picnic can coordinate with Diane Murray. There are fire restrictions at Oak Flat. Someone needs to be in touch with the District Ranger Station for one week prior to June 28. Public parks are full on summer nights.

Committee Reports

Education
Bob Havlen sent an e-mail to the TAAS-L e-mail list containing the information about downloading sky maps from some of the Night Sky Network (NSN) toolkits. Members can download the sky maps in order to have them at star parties. TAAS members can post summaries of nonofficial TAAS events to the NSN website.

2009 is the International Year of Astronomy and the 400th anniversary of Galileo using a telescope to discover the Jovian moons. Judy Stanley attended a recent meeting of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP). ASP is planning events for the International Year of Astronomy.

New Business
Approximately 10% of the TAAS members attend general meetings. The Directors discussed ways to increase attendance to the general meetings, including asking members the level of participation they expect to offer, and paying for advertisements. Melissa sends announcements about TAAS events to the Board of Directors, TAAS-L mail list, the Webmaster, the Newsletter Editor, the Observatory Director, the Events Coordinators, and 40+ additional people, including various journalists. She also publishes the notices in the KOBTV and Albuquerque Journal calendars. TAAS does not pay for the announcements.

Events Retrospect
1. There was a star party at Oak Flat on May 31. There were 36 telescopes and 150 to 200 people from the general public.

2. TAAS members hosted a star party for the American Cancer Society on June 3. There were nine telescopes and an estimated 70 children.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.
Want to Save on Gas?
Carpool to GNTO

Have you ever decided to not attend a TAAS function at GNTO because you did not want to make the drive to the observatory? If your answer to this question is yes, you may be interested in the idea of carpooling to GNTO. The GNTO committee is investigating the interest in and options for a car-pool program to the observatory.

The purpose of the program would be to make GNTO more accessible to TAAS members who otherwise are unable to attend functions at the observatory. GNTO is a wonderful asset that all TAAS members should be able to utilize and enjoy. We all need to decide if a car-pool program would help accomplish this goal.

Your assistance is needed in determining if there is a sufficient interest in this effort to continue with the idea. We would also like to get your ideas on how a carpooling program should be conducted.

There are several general options that can be considered. First would be to carpool from an Albuquerque location. Second, we could arrange for a meeting spot off the interstate, (a large store parking lot for example), from which we would carpool the final distance to GNTO.

Some of the things that need to be considered when carpooling are (1) equipment of attendees (2) arrival and departure times and (3) willingness of TAAS members to be the car-pool drivers.

Since you can chose from a selection of good scopes and eyepieces waiting for you at GNTO, you don’t even need to bring your own equipment!

If you are interested in this idea and have comments or suggestions, please forward them to Dee Friesen or any other member of the GNTO committee. Dee can be reached at 856-1593 or friesend@comcast.net. The GNTO e-mail address is GNTO@TAAS.org.
Free Telescope Offer

What’s that? Did you say Free? That’s right FREE! Any TAAS member can borrow a TAAS telescope. Contact Dale Murray at telescope_loans@taas.org or 286-9533 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.

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.


Online Sidereal Times Delivers Big Benefits

Barry Spletzer

In a sweeping move to provide top quality communiques to our members while conserving our precious resources, TAAS is pleased to re-announce the availability of this newsletter the Sidereal Times in full color. That’s right, catch the blush of the monthly speaker, the blue eyes and red hair of that cute 6-year-old at the School Star Party, the depth and vibrance of all the full-color illustrations. Online reading also allows you to enlarge for eye comfort and click to most Web addresses instantly.

The catch is that the full-color version is only available at our Web site: www.taas.org. If you prefer to download and read your newsletter on your computer—or print it yourself—rather than receive a paper copy by mail, please notify the TAAS treasurer, Dan Clark, at treasurer@taas.org to have your name removed from the Sidereal Times mailing list. This will provide you with the newsletter of your choice and save TAAS money.

Now that many of our members are taking advantage of this offer, our mailing list is less than required to get a bulk-rate postage discount. The newsletter is now mailed at first-class rates. So, it is more important than ever for you to get your newsletter online. Thanks for your consideration.
# 2008 TAAS Board of Directors/Staff

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNM Observatory Coordinator</td>
<td>Robert Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Master</td>
<td>Bill Firth</td>
<td>899-0950</td>
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MEMBERSHIP: You may request a membership application by sending e-mail to membership@taas.org or calling (505) 254-4722. 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, student (grades K-12), or military membership. 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 Web site 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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