Relativity for Poets

Dave Thomas

THERE’S a cottage industry of Einstein denial, as demonstrated by the 2006 documentary, Einstein Wrong. “Yes, he really is wrong” says the poster. Dave Thomas of the New Mexicans for Science and Reason takes on that trend at the June 2 General Meeting of the Albuquerque Astronomical Society. He speaks at 7 p.m., Saturday, June 2, at UNM’s Regener Hall. The lecture is free and open to the public.

“I like the relativity saga,” says Thomas “It shines light on some really neat and non-intuitive physics. Special relativity is a good demonstration that mainstream science can have an open mind, provided you bring evidence and data to the table. It’s also fun to poke holes in denier physics. I look at the Twin Paradox in detail, and present how it would turn out in classical (non-relativistic) physics.”

Thomas will present an animation to show how that would look. “Yes,” says Thomas, “relativity is strange, but classical physics would turn out even stranger.”

Thousands View Annular Eclipse at Area Sites

Third contact

Photo by Carl Frisch

Taken at GNTO May 20 with Canon Rebel T2i camera at ISO100, shooting through the TAAS Astrophysics 6-inch refractor at prime focus

As Seen From GNTO

by Karen Keese

We were nine strong at GNTO. TAAS members Jeff Bender, Bill Wallace, Carl Frisch, and Karen Keese were joined by visiting amateurs Pete and female companion (whose name I couldn’t retain) from the Kansas City Club and Brent from Florida, as well as DeAnna and Leonard, a couple from Belen who had their own eclipse glasses but came out to see if anything was happening at the ‘zerbatory.

continued on page 2…
President’s Message

Build It and They Will Come

One of my favorite movies is Field of Dreams. It is the story of an Iowa farmer who destroys his corn crop to construct a baseball diamond. He believes that if he builds it, people will come to view baseball. At the end of the movie, a long line of cars approaches the field as the sun sets. Nature built us a spectacular diamond Sunday night and over 20,000 people in the Albuquerque community came to view the game being played. Sunday night it was a game of tag between the moon and the sun.

As the day of the eclipse approached, people in New Mexico started looking forward to the event. The eclipse which started out as an announcement at the end of the weather sequence grew into the lead story in the evening news. I did interviews with all the local TV affiliates and was told that the eclipse was the only thing people were calling the stations about. I was even interviewed by National Public Radio. Our good friend John Fleck at the Albuquerque Journal spent over an hour with TAAS members Roger Kennedy, Dave Ray, and Robert Amdahl to ensure he had the correct details for his safe viewing guide for the newspaper. The TAAS telephone hot line and e-mail message box were crammed with requests for more information.

The message is clear: people, when made aware of events in the universe, become immensely interested in not just viewing but also understanding the science of the moment. This of course creates a tremendous opportunity for TAAS to continue to EDUCATE. Most of the time, our efforts will not be aided with a special event like an eclipse. However, we should continue to present to the community the successful programs we already have in place. The soon-to-be realized opportunities with the New Mexico Museum of Natural History will provide new opportunities for us to continue to EDUCATE. We have discussed with the museum ways to work with them and the planetarium program and will inform TAAS members about them as opportunities solidify.

It is impossible for me to personally thank everyone in TAAS who made our success during the eclipse possible. But I am comfortable in knowing that TAAS members are not seeking fame and glory. Their satisfaction comes from being an active member of the TAAS team. That is why TAAS is so effective in our public outreach. Outreach is one of the ways we HAVE FUN.

Sunday May 20, for a few hours, people forgot about politics, the economy, and their personal issues and concentrated on their place in the universe. For a short time they were passengers on the third rock from the Sun, able to OBSERVE their only satellite playing tag with the Sun. The winner is clear; it was the passengers.

The Kansas City duo was observing with a 10-inch Dob. Jeff had eclipse glasses and a refractor. Between views, Bill was busy opening the little dome so he could fine-tune the new imaging equipment that evening.

As a first-time eclipse observer, I was hoping to cram as many experiences as I could into the allotted time, so I had four pieces of welding glass of varying densities, Spletzerized 10x50 binoculars, an 80mm refractor equipped with glass filter and 25mm Plossl, and a piece of plywood drilled with several 7/64 holes for pinhole projections. Carl was imaging with a DSLR, shooting through the club’s Astrophysics refractor. Brent was also imaging, with one DSLR shooting through his refractor and another piggybacked on his mount.

Eclipse at Area Sites, continued from page 1

The Kansas City folks were particularly grateful to be there. They had tried contacting TAAS through the Web site without success, somehow found coordinates for GNTO from somewhere, entered them in their GPS, and started driving. They got lost. They have no idea where they ended up, “in the middle of nowhere” as they put it. After a while, a young man came along in his car. They told him they were trying to get to the TAAS observatory. He led them through the wilderness, deposited them at the gate, and vanished in a cloud of dust. Ah, the kindness of mysterious strangers.

As a first-time eclipse observer, I was hoping to cram as many experiences as I could into the allotted time, so I had four pieces of welding glass of varying densities, Spletzerized 10x50 binoculars, an 80mm refractor equipped with glass filter and 25mm Plossl, and a piece of plywood drilled with several 7/64 holes for pinhole projections. Carl was imaging with a DSLR, shooting through the club’s Astrophysics refractor. Brent was also imaging, with one DSLR shooting through his refractor and another piggybacked on his mount.

Throughout the event, I continually moved among my color and magnification options—thrilled alike by the unmagnified lime-green view through #12 welding glass, the 10x deep-orange view through the binoculars, and the 16x yellow-gold view through the refractor. Of course, we all shared views with one another through our various pieces of equipment,
As Seen From Mesa del Sol

by Amy Estelle

Utter joy!

After two weeks of iffy skies, where a clear sunset was a rare sight, I was relieved that the weather was stunningly clear on Albuquerque’s day to shine as a prime location for the annular solar eclipse. The Moon caught up with the Sun on-time in an endless blue sky overhead.

When I arrived at Mesa del Sol at 3 p.m., the public had already formed a long line to get eclipse-viewing glasses at Bernalillo County’s big white tent. Musicians were performing and the atmosphere was festive. Steve Welch, Roger Kennedy, and other TAAS members were already handing out information and showing the public solar views from a smaller...
THE BIG NEWS this month is that the new TAAS Member-Friendly CCD Astrophotography Program has seen first light. I handed over the reins to Bill Wallace, who will have Pete Eschman’s, Lisa Wood’s, and my enthusiastic assistance. Thanks so much to Bill and Pete and Lisa—I know they are going to make this incredible new equipment/capability at GNTO a big success.

In April and May, GNTO was scheduled to be open for three nights. First, we had observing/training scheduled for April 14, but it was clouded out. The next week, we had a very successful GNTO Scavenger Hunt/Messier Marathon backup date. As you may recall, the official Messier Marathon on March 24 was partly clouded out—clouds rolled in for a few hours, and scared away most people, so even though it cleared and several people got over 100 objects, the people who gave up had a second chance on April 21. The Messier Marathon redux and Will Ferrell’s Scavenger Hunt were a big success, and I think we can look forward to more from Will in the future—thanks, so much for your support and work, Will!

I’m posting this column from GNTO on the only May GNTO New Moon Observing night, Saturday the 19th, the night before the Annular Eclipse. We’ve had a tremendous turnout here with visitors from 8 different states, 20 scopes on the field, and me occasionally manning the Isengard. Pete, Lisa, and I helped Bill get first light on the new CCD setup, and hopefully there are pics of that elsewhere in this issue. It’s been a great night at GNTO, but most of the visitors are packing up early to rest for the eclipse tomorrow.

Eclipse coverage is elsewhere in this issue, but as I am posting this early on the morning of the Eclipse, I only know that Karen Keese and Carl Frisch will open and observe from GNTO, along with whoever shows up for this location.

There will be two June GNTO observing nights. The first is on Saturday, the 16th (three days before new moon) and the second is on June 23, when we will (as we do four times a year) conduct a short training class for using the 16” f/6 Newtonian Isengard telescope and other equipment at GNTO. If you want to be checked out to use the Isengard by yourself, show up—it only takes an hour or two to learn to use this fine instrument on your own.

Our next GNTO committee meeting is Thursday, June 21. As always, we welcome participation from all TAAS members. The meetings are a great way to get more involved with your observatory (and there is free food!). We need all the help we can get, since it does take a village to run an observatory.

GNTO is open to all TAAS members and their guests and we have at least one or two official observing nights every month, weather permitting. We also have unofficial flash observing events, and Bill Wallace is thinking about special CCD imaging nights, too—keep your eyes open! You will appreciate the warm and comfortable Robert Ortega Building (the ROost!), and our guest trailer next to the dome is always open with coffee, hot chocolate and any snacks you might want to share. Our 16” Isengard scope in the big dome, the Big Glass that the club’s “Old Guard” often brings to these observing nights and our four loaner scopes are just part of the great equipment waiting for you at your observatory. Please plan your next trip to GNTO soon. If you have any questions about GNTO or GNTO committee meetings, contact me, Steve Welch, e-mail: gnto@taas.org, 505-866-7668 (home) or 303-530-2661 (mobile).

. . . Eclipse at Area Sites, continued from page 3
One of the families near me included a ten-year-old boy named Joseph. After showing him how to use the Super Solar Box, he taught his dad and mom to use it. Joseph became an expert and soon took over completely, instructing total strangers how to see the Sun through the box. In the meantime, I set up the refractor to view a green-tinted Sun (produced by the filters) and stunning sunspots.

Albuquerque Journal reporter John Fleck sauntered over and asked about the Super Solar Box. That started our conversation and sharing views of the eclipse that would last the rest of the day. John would wander off and interview people, then come back to take another look through the scope or the box. He was on-duty as a reporter, but he was also experiencing firsthand the simple pleasure of the eclipse unfolding.

Joseph and I counted down the minutes to First Contact and he engineered a way to position the box with one end on the ground and the other resting on a step ladder. With minor adjustments he followed the whole eclipse this way and had grownups lying on the ground to peer through the portal. One woman snapped a picture from there, and soon others were following her lead. Every few minutes Joseph would jump up and look through the refractor to confirm the eclipse progress he was seeing in the box.

When the ring of fire appeared there was a gasp across the field then ecstatic yells, whoops, and clapping. The celestial drama unfolded exactly as expected. However, no one seemed to have predicted the sheer joy, awe, and wonder experienced by the observers.

These are the moments that make me glow. When someone recognizes the absolute beauty of the universe and glimpses their place in it, I beam like our daystar.

I shared the eclipse with a delightful pot luck of people: my extended Albuquerque family, teenage guys with baggy pants, preschoolers with messy fingers, elderly couples appreciative of TAAS’s outreach, young couples, single mothers, children of all ages and heights, a firefighter, an Amish family, a biologist, a tradesman, visitors from Japan, California, and Canada. All the things that separate us as people, whether it is economic class, religion, ethnicity, gender, nationality, citizenship, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or degree of education, were unimportant under the Moon and Sun. We were all simply earthlings looking up.

Thank you to all the TAAS members, especially Dee and Roger, for the endless hours you put into making this event a success.
### June 2012

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<td>15 <strong>Sidereal Times Deadline</strong></td>
<td>16 TAAS in Sci-Tech Pavilion at Summerfest GNTO NM</td>
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<td>30 TAAS General Meeting</td>
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### Eclipse at Area Sites, continued from page 5

*As Seen From the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum*
**TAAS General Meeting**

**Saturday, May 5, 2012, 7:00 P.M.**

Regener Hall  
University of New Mexico  
(See map, back page)

**Relativity for Poets**  
**Dave Thomas**

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**July 2012**

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**Notes**

TAAS = The Albuquerque Astronomical Society  
Hotline 254-TAAS (8227).

GNTO = General Nathan Twining Observatory  
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  
= School Star Party  
SIG = Special Interest Group  
TBA = to be announced  
Blue Italics = Non-TAAS events
The Night Sky Network and TAAS

by Bob Havlen

IF YOU are one of the few TAAS members unaware that our club is a member of the Night Sky Network (NSN), I urge you to visit the NSN website to discover a gateway into the Internet world of amateur astronomy: http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov. As the TAAS Coordinator for NSN, it is my job to post our outreach events on the NSN. Other member clubs do the same, making it easy for the public to attend astronomy events anywhere across the US. These include the famous star parties such as Okie-Tex, Texas Star Party, Enchanted Skies, and Riverside Telescope Makers, to name only a few. Occasionally NSN filters recent NM residents to learn more about TAAS, attend our events, and join our club.

The Night Sky Planner on the NSN website is useful for preparing your next observing session, whether it be the phase of the Moon, star charts, the times of sunset and sunrise, or the clear sky forecast for your specific location. You can even find the times of passage of the International Space Station.

NASA maintains numerous Web sites that showcase astronomy for public consumption and these are all linked under the Amateur Resources section of the NSN Web site. Check them out to discover which ones interest you. NASA particularly like the Astronomy Picture of the Day, but maybe that's just me. NSN regularly e-mails individuals in its membership about upcoming teleconferences on topics of current interest. The latest one was by Prof. Anthony F. Aveni about his book titled The Maya Mystery of 2012. Just let me know if you want to be on the e-mail list for future telecon notifications.

By far the most outstanding feature of the NSN is the array of toolkits developed in cooperation with the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. So far there are ten toolkits, covering topics from black holes to life in the universe. These are ready-made presentations and activities designed to be used by amateurs and educators when demonstrating astronomy topics to students and the public. They are even useful for informing club members themselves about the topics at hand. "How does my telescope work?" "Where are the stars with known exoplanets in the sky?" "How can I make a pocket solar system?" These are all common questions answered in the various toolkits. And finding the answers is as easy as clicking on the Astronomy Activities section of the NSN Web site and querying the Toolkit category. You can spend hours perusing this goldmine of information. To top it off, everything is downloadable, including manuals, charts, videos, and PowerPoint presentations. Wow! Member clubs also receive toolkit boxes that include some useful demonstration items such as Styrofoam balls, modeling clay, and flashlights.

With our history of enthusiastic public outreach, TAAS and the NSN are definitely a match made in the heavens! Observe, Educate, and Have Fun.

CALL FOR SOLAR TELESCOPES AND SOLAR ACTIVITY PRESENTERS

by Roger Kennedy

JUNE is a busy month for TAAS Solar Outreach with the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County (ABC) Libraries. We have 14 solar events scheduled and will support the activities of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) at several branches. The calendar is linked on the TAAS Web site as well as the library site at http://library.cabq.gov/CSC.

At each library branch we need dedicated solar telescopes, regular telescopes with solar filters, and presenter/educators for Our Magnetic Sun activities and other solar related demonstrations. Most events last one to two hours.

The kickoff event is this Saturday, June 2, at Hillerman Library (formerly Wyoming Library), behind Hoffmiantown Shopping Center, 8205 Apache NE. The event starts at 10:00 a.m. and runs until 5:00 p.m. Any block of time that you would like to be involved would be appreciated. Linda and I will be there for the entire event with the new 80mm Lunt solar telescope. Bob Havlen will present and train others on the Our Magnetic Sun activities from 10:00 until noon; Mike Molitor will give a presentation on the Venus Transit at 2:00; a team from the UNM Meteoritics Department will be doing demonstrations from 10:00 until 2:00; and I will present Stellarium/Star Wheel lessons at 11:30 and 3:00.

I hope you can find some time in June to promote our TAAS solar outreach programs. We won the Astronomy Magazine 2011 Out of This World award for our efforts . . . let’s keep the excitement going.
Welcome to New or Returning TAAS Members

Paul Beck
John Haynes
Thadius Love
Jay Macherla
David Ochadlik
Stephen Quigley
Dave Walz-Burkett
Jonathan Wheeler

Monthly Membership Report
March 2012

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Donations to TAAS

GENERAL
Darrell Eidson
John Sochinski

EDUCATION
Chuck Wiggins

GNTO
Darrell Eidson
Chuck Wiggins

DARK SKY
Dee Friesen
Joseph Kehr
David Penasa

Location, Location, Location

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

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

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

For security reasons, GNTO location is available by request only, so please contact Pete Eschman or Steve Welch for GNTO information.

Explanation of Dues and Membership Renewal Date

New memberships will be posted as beginning the first day of the month regardless of what day during that month the check is received. Notice of renewal will be sent out the month before the due date. You will have until the end of the month after your renewal date to send your membership check.

If you fail to pay and renew at that time, your membership will lapse. When you pay on a lapsed membership you will be reinstated in the month that the membership was originally due. (If dues were due in March and you did not renew until May or June or July, etc., the date of your renewal will be in March. If your dues are due in April and you pay in March, your membership will still be renewed in April.)

In a nutshell, if you pay late or early your membership date stays the same and your next year’s dues will be due on that date next year.

—Dan Clark

Membership Services

for:
• Membership Inquiries
• Events Information
• Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Bill Firth at membership@taas.org

for:
• Membership Dues
• Magazine Subscriptions
• Address/e-mail changes

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581
Albuquerque, NM 87181

Editor’s Note

The deadline for the next issue of The Sidereal Times is Friday, June 15. The newsletter editor’s e-mail address is editor@taas.org.

Text: E-mail text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word or compatible format.

Photos: Caption and credit needed. Attach photos or graphics in separate graphics files. Photos or graphics in Word files are no longer acceptable.

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GREAT SEASON OF OUTREACH EVENTS

by Roger Kennedy

Past events

11 April at Hillerman Library: Solar telescopes and solar activities; around 325 participants
23 April Whittier ES at NMMNH&S: Solar telescopes and eclipse activities; 62 participants
24 April at Volcano Vista HS: Level 1 Star Party; over 650 participants
27 April at Madison MS: Telescopes only; part of a community night, 115 participants
28 April at Petroglyphs NM/NPS: Solar telescopes and eclipse activities: over 60 participants
8 May at Van Buren MS: Level 1 Star Party; around 75 participants
25 April & 11 May South Mountain ES: Telescopes and eclipse activities, Mars lesson; over 125 participants
12 May at Oak Flat: Telescopes; 12 members and 18 participants
13 May Solar Sunday at NMMNH&S: Solar telescopes and activities; eclipse activities; 156 participants
16 May Sandia/LMC employee Spring Fling: Solar Telescopes and eclipse activities: 300 participants
Total number served since the last newsletter: approximately 1,886

18 May at Ernie Pyle MS
20 May Eclipse events at National Nuclear Museum, International Balloon Museum, ABQ Kids with Cancer @ Cliff’s Amusement Park, Mesa del Sol and ABQ Eastside Open Space.
21 May Jefferson MS, telescope for teachers donation, and local Dine’ cultural educators in Gallup
23 May La Vida Llena Assisted Living Facility

Future Events

3 June Venus Transit programs at NMMNH&S and Sandia Mountain NH Center First Sunday event
5 June Venus Transit programs at International Balloon Museum and NMMNH&S
June/July ABC Library System Summer Reading Program events at 15 libraries
16 June CABQ Summer Fiesta

Special acknowledgement of appreciation for participating in these outreach events goes to:

Bob Havlen
Dave Ray
Anthony Martinez
Robert Katz
Linda Kennedy
John Laning
Barry Speltzer
Tom Grzybowski
Bob Hufnagle
Mike Molitor
Doug Ray
Bob Amdahl
Becky Ramotowski
Joanna Berman
Kevin McKeown
Trish Logan
Steve Riegel
Gordon Pegue
Shane Ramotowski

First Light for the New Solar Scope

The new Lunt Solar Scope will see first light at the Summer Reading Program (SRP), 2012 Kickoff event at the Tony Hillerman Library on Saturday, June 2, 10 a.m.—5 p.m. The scope was donated by Lockheed Martin Corporation and Sandia National Laboratories to provide solar education programs to Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Libraries. This year’s SRP theme, Dream Big, Read! provided the perfect opportunity to focus on the sky. Members of TAAS and the staff from the VLA (Very Large Array Radio Telescope Observatory) will be taking the scope to libraries all summer. Check out the article elsewhere in this issue to see how you can get involved.

Photo: Barry Spletzer
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Arthur VanDereedt  
Secretary / Librarian  

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Director  

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Director  

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