A First for TAAS: Ramotowski Certified Master Observer

BECKY RAMOTOWSKI is the first TAAS member to be awarded the Astronomical League’s Master Observer certificate. To earn the award, Becky completed ten of the League’s observing lists. She has expressed an interest in assisting TAAS members in completing the observing lists. Becky will give short presentations at the general meetings on how to complete the lists.

Award Winners Announced at Annual Banquet

Isengard Award

Lynne Olson

Lifetime TAAS Chief Scientist

Dr. Barry Spletzer

More awards on page 2 . . .

Sandia Scientist to Present Climate Change Update

GENERAL MEETING - SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, at 7:00 P.M.
Regener Hall on the UNM Campus

THERE IS much controversy about climate change. TAAS will have an update on the subject from a scientist who has spent many years working in this field. The featured speaker is Dr. Bernard Zak, Arctic Climate Researcher, giving all a “Climate Change Update” on our planet, Earth.

AFTER three years at Lawrence Berkeley Lab in the Energy and Environment program, Dr. Zak came to Sandia Laboratories where he worked in atmospheric research areas. In 1991, he became the founding Site Program Manager for a planned Department of Energy (DOE) high-latitude climate research facility which was realized in 1998 as the North Slope of Alaska and Adjacent Arctic Ocean Atmospheric Radiation Measurement Climate Research Facility (NSA/AAO) site. In 2003, this became a DOE National User Facility, which continued on page 4 . . .

TAAS Officers for 2013 Elected at the Perihelion Banquet

President
Dee Friesen

Vice President
Dick Fate

Secretary
Pamela Wilson

Treasurer
Dan Clark

2.......President’s Message
3.......GNTO News & Views
3.......Astrophoto: M42 Revisited
4.......Telescope Tune-Up Day
4–5...Calendars
6.......Photos: 2013 Perihelion Banquet
7.......Starry Saturday Nights
8.......Open Space Visitor Center SP
9.......Love Under the Stars
9.......Astronomy Trivia Challenge
10.......TAAS Reports & Notices
11.......TAAS Directors, Staff
Cold, Dark, and Wet

IT IS COLD, it is dark, it is wet, and it is London. I am here in the United Kingdom attending the 2013 AstroFest. The British astronomy magazine Astronomy Now puts on this event for amateur astronomers every year. It features a very informative schedule of lectures on all subjects of astronomy as well as exhibit space from about thirty vendors. This is my sixth time to attend the event.

What impresses me is the enthusiasm the attendees have for astronomy, given that they very seldom have good viewing conditions. They are challenged by weather, lights, congestion of the community, and a new feature to us in New Mexico, dew. I was examining a telescope and noticed a round cover fitted on the end of the instrument. I asked the vendor what it was and he said it was a dew cover. I laughed and said I was not sure many, if any, members of our society had dew covers. As I speak with the other astronomers in attendance, I continue to be thankful for the wonderful clear and dry skies we have in our desert environment. I am also in great admiration of the accomplishments of William and Caroline Herschel.

There is a very active astronomy community in the U.K. and many of them are at AstroFest to showcase their educational outreach programs. There is a real emphasis on things that are developed, discovered, or created in Britain. I was here several years ago when the British Beagle spacecraft crashed on Mars. All the Brits were in a high state of mourning. At the same conference a representative of NASA presented a lecture on the success of the Martian Rovers. It was an interesting contrast.

The best part of AstroFest is visiting with other amateur astronomers. Even though we speak the same language differently, we have much in common. Just like TAAS members, their range of interests varies from planets to galaxies to double stars. Their interest in astrophotography is as great as ours.

In a few days I will leave England, fly across the Atlantic, and return to sunny New Mexico. I need to get back to prepare for the TAAS Messier Marathon in early April. When I asked my British friends if they had a Messier Marathon, I was told, “Yeah, I think a few years ago, maybe.” I will see you at GNTO for our event, just like last year.

... Award Winners, continued from page 1

John Dobson Awards

Trish Logan

Roger Kennedy

Supernova Award

Mike Molitor

Service Award

David Frizzell

Other Service Award winners with no picture available were:

Greetings!

DURING JANUARY we had two events scheduled at GNTO. The first was a very cold but clear night on January 5. I got a nice picture of the Rosette Nebula using the GNTO imaging setup and Mike Molitor took some pictures of M42 and the Horsehead and Veil nebulas with his own setup. The pictures appeared in last month’s Sidereal Times. Ten people braved the cold to take advantage of the skies. The January 12 event was clouded out.

On our February 2 event, the sky was ambivalent but was clear enough for Mike Molitor to get a nice image of M42 through the Isengard telescope. There were four members at this event. Presumably, the sky conditions discouraged some from attending.

Future GNTO events include the following:
March 9: A new moon event, featuring Will Ferrell’s TAAS 200 scavenger hunt.
March 16: Spring cleanup. In this semiannual event, the GNTO committee sponsors a work party to spruce up the facility. The general membership is also invited to take part, since it is your observatory, too.
March 23: The Spring Equinox Picnic/Open House/Training. The GNTO committee hosts an event to show off GNTO to members. We have a picnic (potluck with hamburgers and hot-dogs provided) and we provide training on equipment and observing. Fun is had by all, plus you get to know your observatory. If you have not attended before, please think about attending.

As usual, we encourage TAAS members to become involved in running the observatory. There are things to do for people of all levels and types of expertise. Even rank beginners are welcome, and we can guarantee that you’ll learn a lot about astronomy and telescopes while having a lot of fun and doing some work. The more people to share the load with the GNTO Committee, the easier it is on all of us and the better our observatory will be.

OUR NEXT GNTO committee meeting is February 13 in Albuquerque. Call or e-mail me and I’ll put you on the list of people to be notified for the next meeting. Attending GNTO Committee meetings is a super way to become involved with running your observatory (plus, there’s free food!). We need all the help we can get, since it does indeed take a village to run an observatory.

GNTO is open to all TAAS members and their guests. We have at least one or two official observing-night gatherings every month, weather permitting. We are also having increasing numbers of unofficial flash observing events hosted by GNTO key holders like Will Ferrell. I am planning on announcing special short-notice clear-sky alert CCD imaging nights, too—keep your eyes open on TAAS-L! You, as a member, can host your own event. Please contact me if you need a key-holder to assist you.

YOU WILL appreciate the warm and comfortable Robert O. Ortega building (the ROOst). Our 16” Isengard scope in the big dome, the Big Glass that the club’s “Old Guard” often bring to these observing nights, our new CCD astrophotography setup, and our four loaner Dobsonian scopes (you can use a 16” Dob all to yourself—first come, first served!) are just a few of the pieces of astronomical 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 Bill Wallace (505-710-5172). E-mail: gnto@taas.org.
**Telescope Tune-Up Day Aims to Bring Scopes Out of Mothballs**

by Lynne Olson

ON SATURDAY, March 2, from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., Explora Science Center and TAAS will collaborate to assist the telescope owner who has perhaps had the scope in a box for years, needs help with how to use it and general information on the possibilities that haven’t been explored, or maybe even needs minor tweaking done. This is a fine opportunity to meet with the Explora staff and TAAS volunteers and get that scope out and gaze at planets, nebulae, and the upcoming comets.

This event is open to the public, so please bring your telescopes—or at least your questions—to Explora. While there, you can also look over the scopes and astronomy items offered in the gift shop and perhaps find a new way to look at the stars. TAAS members are encouraged to volunteer and share their knowledge. Please contact taas@taas.org if you wish to help with this event. A map to Explora can be found on www.taas.org.
## TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, February 23, 2013, 7:00 P.M.**  
Regener Hall  
University of New Mexico  
(See map, back page)

**Climate Change Update**  
Dr. Bernard Zak  
Arctic Climate Scientist

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**Notes**  
Hotline 505-254-TAAS (8227).  
= School Star Party  
ATM = Amateur Telescope Making. Call Michael Pendley for information at 296-0549, or e-mail atm@taas.org.  
GNTO = General Nathan Twining Observatory  
GNTO Training = GNTO Observing and Training  
GNTO NM = New Moon Premium Observing Night  
NMMNH&S = New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science  
UNM = University of New Mexico Observatory. Call the TAAS hotline at 254-8227, or the UNM hotline at 277-1446 to confirm, or e-mail unm_coordinator@taas.org.  
P & A = UNM Physics and Astronomy Building, Corner of Lomas and Yale  
SIG = Special Interest Group  
STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics  
TBA = To Be Announced
The TAAS 2013 Perihelion Banquet

all photos by Dave Olson

TAAS ladies Joanna Berman and Carol Miller

Jody Heddrig director of the Albuquerque Open Space Visitor Center and Lynne Olson

Charlie Walter, Director of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science

Ted Spitzmiller, the speaker

Dr. Rich Rand, UNM Astronomy Professor

Carol and Ralph Thorman

Dr. Bob Havlen

TAAS VP Dick Fate

Alex Acerra

Tom Graham and Elaine Fordice

MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 7 . . .
The TAAS 2013 Perihelion Banquet, continued from page 6

Starry Saturday Nights
by Roger Kennedy

Starry Nights are back at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science on the third Saturday of every month!

Come Saturday, February 16, for a special planetarium show and live observing of the night sky. A variety of telescopes will be set up on the second floor deck of the museum, including our 16" observatory telescope. There will be family-oriented astronomy activities to help you learn about the night sky.

Every month we'll focus on the seasonal planets and celestial objects you'll be able to see. In April, we'll have the grand opening of our brand-new, state-of-the-art Constellation Hall Exhibit.

Observation will be open from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m. with planetarium shows every hour:

6:30 – Two Small Pieces of Glass – the Amazing Telescope

7:30 – Enchanted Skies – Learn more about what you'll be able to observe on the deck.

8:30 – Two Small Pieces of Glass

Come spend a Starry Saturday evening with us. TAAS members can set up outside by the entrance as we have in the past or set up on the observatory deck on the 2nd floor.

all photos by Dave Olson
Frigid but Clear Conditions Greet Inez Star Partiers

by Tom Graham

Wow! As you know space is cold, very cold; however, I think we set a record for viewing in cool, no cold, weather. Inez elementary students and families were out in force and, given the meteorological conditions, deserve a great shout-out! Not one TAAS volunteer or scope left until there were no more people left to view. That is dedication.

The good thing was, it was clear as a bell and well over a hundred people were able to see Jupiter and Uranus. Early birds got a quick look at Mars from Bob Hufnagel’s scope. Trish Logan was on the Moon like ugly on an ape. John Laning was all over the sky including showing Andromeda. Asis Carlos had his monster scope on the Orion Nebula and wowed the observers. Jim Fordice had the club’s loaner scope and a pair of binos on a tripod. I think he recruited a couple of new members when they heard the word “loan.” Barry, your garage may get more room soon. Ed Judo was able to bring his scope to view just about anything anyone wanted to see.

Joanna Berman and Bob Havlen ran the planetarium through five sessions with better timing than the bullet train in Japan. Tom Grzybowski with his comets and Dave Pitonzo’s information session had huge crowds inside for the classroom activities. A good night! Thank you to all those volunteers.

TAAS to Co-Host Open Space Visitor Center Star Party

by Lynne Olson

ON SATURDAY, March 2, the City of Albuquerque and The Albuquerque Astronomical Society will co-host a star party at the Open Space Visitor Center off Coors between Paseo del Norte and Montaño from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The event will begin with a welcome, followed by a lecture at 7:00 p.m. by Dr. Barry Spletzer on the basics of amateur astronomy. Dr. Spletzer will give a second talk at 8:00 p.m. on comets in general and on the two appearing in 2013: PANSTARRS in March and ISON in November. Indoor demonstrations will take place during the star party, presented by TAAS volunteers. There will be observing on the patio throughout the evening with a variety of telescopes, featuring a laser constellation tour by Kevin McKeown.

PLEASE join us for this celebration of varied aspects of astronomy. The star party is free and open to the public, and all are invited to enjoy the beautiful New Mexico night skies. TAAS members, bring your telescopes and help reveal the wonders of the universe to the visitors!

For more information, please see the TAAS webpage at [www.taas.org](http://www.taas.org) and direct any questions to taas@taas.org. For information from Open Space, call (505) 897-8831 or visit [www.cabq.gov/openspace](http://www.cabq.gov/openspace). The Open Space Visitor Center is located at 6500 Coors Blvd. NW at the end of Bosque Meadows Rd. between Paseo del Norte and Montaño Rd.
A TRADITIONAL highlight at the TAAS Perihelion Banquet is an astronomy trivia challenge. Here are some of this year’s questions, compiled by Gordon Pegue.

The Albuquerque Astronomical Society ☆ Annual Perihelion Banquet ☆ xix January MMXIII

Trivia Challenge

Category I: Easy Stuff

1. The uppermost region of the Sun is called the?
   (a) Ionosphere  (b) Photosphere  (c) Corona  (d) Chromosphere

2. What is the name of the largest moon in our solar system?
   (a) Our Moon  (b) Titan  (c) Ganymede  (d) Triton

3. Which of these constellations represents a goat?
   (a) Pegasus  (b) Taurus  (c) Lepus (d) Capricornus

4. What theory by Albert Einstein explains why all “observers” have their own separate measure of time because of the finite speed of light?
   (a) Expansion  (b) Relativity  (c) Inflation  (d) Gravitation

5. How many planets in our solar system are known to have ring systems?
   (a) Two  (b) Three  (c) Four (d) Five

Category II: People

6. Who first calibrated the Cepheid variable stars for use in determining distance?
   (a) Henrietta Leavitt  (b) Edwin Hubble  (c) Fritz Zwicky  (d) Harlow Shapley

7. Who first noticed that for Cepheid variable stars, there was a direct relation between the luminosity and the period of the variation in their brightness?
   (a) Henrietta Leavitt  (b) Edwin Hubble  (c) Fritz Zwicky  (d) Harlow Shapley

8. Who said “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence”?
   (a) Alan Sandage  (b) Albert Einstein  (c) Neil Tyson  (d) Carl Sagan

9. Who is credited with constructing the first radio telescope?
   (a) Karl Jansky  (b) J S Hey  (c) Grote Reber  (d) John Bolton

10. Which astronomer is best known for referring to comets as “dirty snowballs”?
    (a) William Herschel  (b) Fred Whipple  (c) Percival Lowell (d) Edwin Hubble

The right answers—and more questions—will appear in the next issue of the Sidereal Times.
Donations to TAAS

EDUCATION
Charles Mullen

GNTO
Milton Bock

Welcome to New or Returning TAAS Members

Christopher Beggio
Justin Holt-Bayette
Fred Kline
Janis Marston
Viola Sanchez
Marco Sandoval

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, Bill Wallace, or Steve Welch for GNTO information.

Courtesey Pete Eschman

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

Monthly Membership Report

January 2013

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Editor's Note

The deadline for the next issue of The Sidereal Times is **Friday, March 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.

The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
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<td><a href="mailto:president@taas.org">president@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Dick Fate</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vp@taas.org">vp@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Dan Clark</td>
<td><a href="mailto:treasurer@taas.org">treasurer@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Robert Anderson</td>
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<td>Director / Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>Amy Estelle</td>
<td><a href="mailto:adestelle2000@yahoo.com">adestelle2000@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>505-730-0025</td>
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<td>Ray Collins</td>
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<td>David Penasa</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:events_coordinator@taas.org">events_coordinator@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Barry Spletzer</td>
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<td>Arthur VanDereedt</td>
<td><a href="mailto:librarian@taas.org">librarian@taas.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:membership@taas.org">membership@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Newsletter Editor</td>
<td>Gary Cooper</td>
<td><a href="mailto:editor@taas.org">editor@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Observatory Director</td>
<td>Steve Welch</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gnto@taas.org">gnto@taas.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:pr@taas.org">pr@taas.org</a></td>
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<td>Barry Spletzer</td>
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<td>Will Ferrell</td>
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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, 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 Friday 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.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Note that the Sidereal Times is mailed at a first class mail rate. As a result, the newsletter may be forwarded to your new address should you move, or it may not!! Please provide the Treasurer (treasurer@taas.org) with your new mailing address or e-mail address to ensure that you receive your newsletter.

TAAS LIBRARY: Please contact the Librarian at librarian@taas.org or 890-8122 to check out a book or make a contribution.

TAAS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB: The TAAS Web site includes:

- Online Sidereal Times
- Educational Outreach
- Programs: TAAS 200, Equipment Trader, Telescope Loaner Program, and more
- SIGs
- Members Guide
- Links to Astronomy Resources and Members’ Blogs

E-mail: taas@taas.org