UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 3-14 Tuesday: First Quarter Moon
- 3-20 Monday: Vernal Equinox
- 3-22 Wednesday: Full Moon
- 3-25 Saturday: Monthly meeting of the Society -- Joel Harris speaks on "The Eclipse of 1991."
- 3-30 Thursday: Society Board of Directors meeting, 7:00 p.m.
  Last Quarter Moon
- 4-1 Saturday: Star Party at Shooting Range Park
- 4-2 Sunday: Daylight Saving Time begins
- 4-6 Thursday: New Moon
- 4-8 Saturday: Dark Sky Night at Gran Quivira
- 4-12 Wednesday: First Quarter Moon
- 4-13 Thursday: Lecture (with demonstrations) on "Laser Probes of the Cosmos," by Dr. M.O. Scully at UNM's Regener Hall at 7:30 p.m.
- 4-21 Friday: Full Moon
- 4-22 Saturday: Monthly Meeting of the Society -- "Return to the Moon," lecture by Dr. Harrison Schmitt

THIS MONTH'S MEETING:

Are you ready for The Big One? On July 11, 1991, there will be the longest total solar eclipse until 2132, and many amateur astronomers already have made their plans to view this event. The eclipse will be visible from Mexico (including Baja California), Hawaii, and Brazil, and offers a period of totality lasting six minutes, 58 seconds.

Our guest speaker on Saturday, March 25, will be Joel Harris, an experienced eclipse-chaser from Pasadena, California. Mr. Harris will recount his experiences at several solar eclipses and give us a preview of what to expect for the one in 1991. He will also give us some information on package tours for those who wish to travel to see this event. The meeting will be at 7:30 p.m., in UNM's Regener Hall.

DR. HARRISON SCHMITT, APOLLO 17 ASTRONAUT, WILL SPEAK TO US IN APRIL:

Our regular monthly meeting in April will be anything but routine! The meeting, on April 22, will feature as guest speaker Dr. Harrison Schmitt, who as Lunar Module Pilot on Apollo 17, was the last human to step foot on the moon. Dr. Schmitt, who resides in Albuquerque, will lecture on the topic of "Back to the Moon."

You'll want to mark your calendar for this one -- and tell your friends and co-workers. The meeting will be at Regener Hall at 7:30 p.m. We'll have more details about this exciting program in the April Sidereal Times.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING:

Our February focus on Astronomical Computing was a successful event, with a vigorous exchange of information about computers and how they can enhance the enjoyment of amateur astronomy. After an introduction in which AAS President Dave Finley pointed out that astronomy has been a part of computer development since ancient times, we had several people present information about machines and software. Our thanks go to: Mike Fisk, software coordinator; Mac Morgan, who uses his computer in occultation work; Art Jacobs; John Prentice; and Tom Holtman of Southwest Astronomy, for their interesting presentations.

Following the formal presentations, many people took advantage of the opportunity to look at the software demonstrated on the computers present and to exchange ideas about astronomical applications of computing. Now, let's keep this dialogue going and support the advancement of astronomical computing.
SUMMARY OF THE FEBRUARY 23RD 1989 BOARD MEETING:

A great deal of business was covered during this last board meeting. Leo Wellner discussed the possibility of placing money from the observatory fund in $1000 increments into a three month C.D. or money market. No motion or action was taken on this matter other than to leave this money in the present account, unless our Society receives substantial contributions. Fluidity of funds may be needed to raise more funds from large donation sources at this time. Mac Morgan made the motion to take an unspecified amount of funds to be determined by the operating budget from the general fund and then to draw from the observatory fund for a total amount not to exceed $500.00. This motion was passed by a vote of 7 for and 4 against.

Daleia Reno requested the accounting of the Society's assets in order to help set up the Society's bookkeeping procedures. It was noted that our lawyer's secretary has the record of our assets. George Pellegrino mentioned that the value of Bill Isengard's donated telescope was appraised for tax purposes.

The status and plans of the observatory project were discussed in detail. George Pellegrino indicated that he had filed the land deed on pages 801 and 802 of Book 422 with Socorro County on February 10, 1989 at 10:27 a.m. George also showed us a plat map with the location of our donated land. Surveying, site testing, architectural design, phases of construction, cost of materials, and publicity and solicitation marketing expenses were items that were covered. The Society received a letter of recognition and encouragement for the building of the observatory from New Mexico's Economic Development and Tourism Department.

The public education events schedule, documentation procedure, and future plans and projects were covered by Art Jacobs. The Society is gathering materials to aid members in putting on displays and presentations for the public and schools. Several of our members are helping in this endeavor. Projects with Bandalier State Park, Hoover Middle School, the YMCA, and the 4-H Club are underway. David Finley made arrangements with the Career Enrichment Center at public schools, and the local television stations to observe the partial solar eclipse at the Vi Heffernan Planetarium adjacent to Albuquerque High School on March 7th. Dave also solicited the help of Safeway Stores to distribute boxes and instruction sheets to build a pin-hole projection camera.

PARTIAL SOLAR ECLIPSE EVENT A SUCCESS:
The eclipse event at the Career Enrichment Center Vi Heffernan Planetarium turned out to be a great success! Jerry Goff showed many students the partial eclipse through his solar filtered telescope. Pin-hole projection cameras were also used to show the moon eclipse the sun by a maximum of 20% in Albuquerque. The Eclipse started at 10:21 a.m. and ended at 1:52 a.m. Dave and Jerry made appearances on KOB TV-13 news informing the public about eclipses and giving the Albuquerque Astronomical Society more publicity. David Finley was interviewed on KOB TV-4's early morning news. Safeway Stores and our Society also received news coverage on the T.V. stations with the pin-hole cameras.

ASTRONOMY DAY '89 BEING PLANNED:

George Pellegrino is working hard to make Astronomy Day a success and will be needing the help of many volunteers. This event is being held on Saturday, May 27th '89 at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History located at 1801 Mountain Road NW from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Public night observing will be held across the street at Tijeras Park. Please call George at 821-8516 if you have displays and/or ideas for Astronomy Day '89.

SECOND ANNUAL SOCIETY MESSIER MARATHON:

Do not miss this fun and challenging night at Bran Quivira! Come and participate at our next Dark Sky Night from Saturday evening to Sunday morning on April 8th and 9th. Forms with all the Messier Objects in order of viewing and chart information will be handed out at the observing site. Contact Lee Mesiob at 292-1249 if you are interested.

UNM LECTURE SERIES CORRECTION:
The originally scheduled lecture by Dr. Murray Gell-Mann as published in last month's issue of the Sidereal Times for March 13th was incorrect. Dr. Gell-Mann presented his lecture about unification in the universe last month on February 13th.

THE 1989 TEXAS STAR PARTY:

This year's Texas Star Party, sponsored by the Southwest Region of the Astronomical League, is scheduled from May 29th through June 3rd at the Prude Ranch in the Davis Mountains of West Texas. The site is located between McDonald Observatory and the town of Fort Davis. Many avid amateur and some professional astronomers across the nation and a few astronomers from other countries attend this annual event. Many people camp out, however, bunk houses are available at the ranch. There are many interesting astronomical talks and presentations during the afternoon, recreational activities throughout the day, and excellent observing and astrophotography during the night. A meal plan is available on the ranch; however, bunks are available at the ranch. Additional daily fees are charged by the Prude Ranch for the use of the ranch facilities and camping. This is a great week of fun and sharing.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE:
The Society wishes to welcome two new members from the last meeting—Philip Solosky (an old member of the past, who has rejoined) and James M. Oliver. We presently have about 150 general members, about 50 family members, and 5 honorary members. Thank you to those of you who have renewed! See you at the March meeting!
VISUAL DISCOVERY OF SUPERNova 1989A IN NGC 3627: (By Rev. Robert Evans)

Despite the continued presence of SN 1987A in the southern sky, and two dozen faint supernovae found by professionals, 1988 was a very poor year for visual supernovae. The brightest was SN 1988A in M82 at mag. 14.5. This was the only new supernova I saw all year.

1989 started off differently, with two bright supernovae found during January.

SN 1989A was found in NGC 3687 by the Berkeley automatic search team, led by Dr. Carl Pennykacker. At discovery, the supernova was mag. 15.3, but later rose to 13.9, and proved to be of Type Ia. It was found on January 14, just before the full moon. This galaxy was not on my observing list, and has not been observed by me.

SN 1989A appeared in NGC 3357 (Messier 66). It was first seen by an English amateur on Jan. 27.1 UT, who wrote a letter to his contact person about it. The letter did not arrive at its destination for several days.

My first sighting of the supernova was on Jan. 30.5 UT, when it was around mag. 13.0. The supernova was immediately obvious with 200x in the DX16. It could even be seen with low power, although the galaxy was still fairly low in the sky (from 34 degrees south). After checking Gregg Thompson’s chart, and estimating the offset of the supernova from the nucleus of the galaxy (15° west and 50° north) with a measuring rule, I rang Rob McNaught to see if there already existed any telegrams about it, and to start planning verification.

Knowing that M66 had, at least in the past, been on the top priority observing list of the Berkeley automatic search, it was clear to me that verification would have to be very speedy if I was to have much chance of landing this discovery. Also, such a prominent northern galaxy would be observed by many other astronomers within a short time.

Rob went to the nearby Uppsala southern schmidt, at Siding Spring, to expose a film of the galaxy, and develop it. While this was happening, I tried to find an asteroid-galaxy all-sky list in my office--but no current one was found. So, I rang Dr. Marsden at the Central Bureau in Boston to check their computer files for an asteroid near M66. No such asteroids were listed, and there had been no previous reports of the supernova.

An hour later, Rob rang to say that his effort to photograph the supernova had failed. The photo had to be taken without him being able to see the object in question, and he had missed the target. Also, the sky had clouded over. He hoped that the sky might clear a little before dawn, about four hours away. All I could do was to ring the observers on the 2.3 meter telescope at Siding Spring, who were, of course, also clouded out, and I left a message on Carl Pennykacker’s office answering machine in Berkeley, California, asking for help. Then I went to bed.

Rob had notified Dr. Marsden about his useless film, and the cloud situation, so a few phone calls were made from Boston to alert interested people about the possible discovery.

Just as dawn was breaking at Siding Spring, the sky cleared a little, and Rob managed to make a one-minute exposure with the schmidt and a visual observation with his own telescope. With this second file he measured an exact position for the supernova, and then he reported confirmation of the discovery to the Central Bureau.

I had received a successful confirmation at breakfast time, when Carl rang in from Berkeley, having just heard of the confirmation directly from Boston. The automatic search had been busy at work, as usual, but had not observed M66 since January 21, before the supernova was obvious enough to be noticed.

An hour later, Rob rang in to tell the story of his success at making the verification, and how it had been possible at the very last moment.

The next day we heard that spectral studies had revealed the supernova to be of the classical Type Ia, and still approaching maximum light. In due course, we also heard that an Italian amateur had made an independent discovery of the supernova about six hours after my discovery. News of this Italian discovery had, however, been too late for the official discovery notice, and it would not be officially listed.

Rob’s exact position: 11h 17m 37.4s 40.0s RA and +13° 16′ 45.4″ DEC, with an offset of 15°.4 west and 50°.3 north.

(Editor’s note: Rev. Robert Evans resides in N.S.W., Australia and is a prolific supernova hunter as an amateur astronomer. We are grateful to Rev. Evans for sending us this article specifically for our Newsletter. We were also fortunate to have Rob Evans attend one of our star parties out at Shooting Range Park a few months ago upon invitation from Cal Currier when he made a brief visit to New Mexico and New Mexico Tech in Socorro. Rev. Evans has lectured about his supernova pursuits and has had articles published in Sky and Telescope.)

SOCIETY COMPUTER BULLETIN BOARD SERVICE:

Many of you expressed interest in the computer bulletin board service I offered free of charge for society use. Unfortunately, I could not maintain this service, and took the board down in September. Due to this interest, I have been arranging with Dan Rancisco, the sysop (system operator) for us to use his BBS. He has set up an astronomy message area to add to the astronomy file area that already exists. We can use the BBS for discussion, announcements, and the transfer of files in our software library. We will probably also be able to submit newsletter articles in the near future. Dan’s BBS is called “Another BBS?” and operates 24 hours a day at 255-3623. Give it a call.

Michael Fisk, Software Coordinator

AAS PUBLIC EDUCATION FACT SHEET:

Are you giving a presentation on astronomy to a school science class, or the Boy Scouts, or any other group? If so, we would like to hear from you! Jot down information on the date of the presentation, its purpose, how many attended, and their approximate ages or grade level. Call me with the information at 299-6311, and I will incorporate it into an AAS public education “fact sheet.” The fact sheet will provide a source of extremely valuable publicity on the Society’s outstanding record of accomplishment in public education. The information will be used for television spots, newspaper articles, etc., and in our efforts to solicit funds from individuals and corporations for our observatory project.

-- Art Jacobs, Event Coordinator
**OCCULTATION UPDATE:**

The U.S. Naval Observatory has sent us the specially computed total occultation predictions for the end of March through the middle of April for our Society! Three sites are computed for us: Gran Quivira, Shooting Range Park, and my backyard. Furthermore, they have provided us with the formula for converting the event-times from any of these sites to your own favorite site!

**Total Occultations:** (Please refer to the key for column headings.)

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Mac's Backyard: Call Mac for corrected times for your site.

We322 231250 R 1815 9 7 4.8 99- 42 150 60N
Mo327 040005 R 2276 9 7 5 6 4 8 7 3 75- 29 185 73S
Mo327 042551 R 2277 9 7 5 6 5 6 6 3 75- 27 191 21S
Th330 040831 R 2277 9 7 8 7 7 5 0 6 2 19 149 28S
Fr331 045831 R X27549 7 7 7 8 7 5 39- 12 21 147 45S
Fr407 191432 D X03655 9 5 9 0 6+ 9 18 284 33N
Fr407 192854 D X03684 8 7 7 8 0 6+ 15 285 40S
Sa408 182728 D G338 5 5 5 5 6 12+ 1 41 274 66S
Sa418 192141 D X0491 5 6 6 4 12- 10 30 291 51S
Sa408 194271 R 0555 5 8 6 6 12+ 25 284 82S
Sa408 204458 R 0555 5 8 6 6 12+ 14 291 70N
Sa411 211109 D 0571 5 8 6 6 13+ 10 294 71N
Sa408 212723 D 0574 5 7 6 8 13+ 7 296 73N
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Mo410 230145 D 0906 3 8 6 8 32+ 13 295 13S
Mu401 230231 D 0909 1 9 6 1 32+ 13 295 81N
Tu411 223436 D 1061 1 9 6 1 42+ 28 284 43S
Tu418 191904 D X16301 9 4 7 7 96+ 8 27 121 25S

**Selected Grazing Occultations:**

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**Selected Asteroidal Occultations:** Call Mac for more details.

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<td>+4deg 54.4m</td>
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**GRAN QUIVERA UPDATE:**

For the past couple of years the AAS has used the Gran Quivira Unit of the Salinas National Monument south of Mountainair for its once monthly Dark Sky Nights. Anyone who has attended one of these knows that the skies there are spectacular (when it isn't cloudy)! Two of the most valuable features of the site, aside from the dark skies, are the availability of restrooms and a place to sleep indoors.

We recently learned from the rangers at Gran Quivira of the Park's intention to demolish the building that the members have used to sleep in overnight. The Park currently has no intention of replacing this building. The shelter provided by this "cabin" has been particularly important in the late Fall to early Spring when nighttime temperatures can dip well below freezing.

Concern over the loss of this building has resulted in the formation of a committee by the Board to identify a new Dark Sky Night site. The committee will be chaired by Cal Currier, and anyone having suggestions should contact him at 897-2451. Until a new site is identified our Dark Sky Nights will continue to be held at Gran Quivera. Watch for announcements in forthcoming issues of the Sidereal Times.

--Art Jacobs, Event Coordinator
EL CIELO ESTRELLADO

A "Winter" Constellation for Spring Viewing

The ancient constellation of Gemini is usually considered to be a feature of the winter sky; however, due to its location at the northeastern corner of the Winter Hexagon, this stellar grouping is well placed for evening viewing throughout the first half of spring. Even as late as mid-June, the two brightest stars in Gemini continue to hover over the western horizon at twilight. These stars represent the heads of the mythical twin brothers, Castor and Pollux. The other naked-eye stars in Gemini can be grouped into two stick figures that actually suggest twins strolling arm-in-arm across the sky. The feet of the Heavenly Twins are bathed in the winter Milky Way. As a result, Gemini offers the telescopic observer a fine selection of galactic treats such as open star clusters and planetary nebulae. A nice collection of multiple stars and a few isolated galaxies are also available for viewing.

The association of Alpha (α) and Beta (β) Gem with twin brothers clearly derives from their comparable brightness as well as the fact that they lie close together on the celestial sphere. Can you tell at a glance which one is which? Castor lies closer to the north celestial pole. Despite the fact that it is designated Alpha, it is also somewhat fainter (mag. 1.58 vs. mag. 1.14 for Pollux). Closer examination reveals that Castor and Pollux are anything but twin stars. Pollux is a yellow-orange (spectral type K0) giant which lies 11 parsecs away. Castor, on the other hand, is one of the most remarkable multiple stars in the heavens. A small telescope will resolve Alpha Gem into two bright, cream-white components (mag. 1.9 and mag. 2.9, respectively; both spectral type A0) and a wide mag. 8.8 red dwarf companion. At the present time, the two close components are becoming increasingly easier to split. Separated by only 1.8" in 1965, the angular distance between Castor A and B will approach 3.0" by 1990 and widen to 4.0" by the end of the century. Each of the three resolvable components of Alpha Gem is also a spectroscopic binary. Hence, the seemingly simple white star consists of an incredibly complex and dynamic six-sun system.

Delta (δ) Geminorum presents a different challenge for small scope owners. In this case, the primary and secondary components are separated by a comfortable 6.3". The difficulty lies in the wide magnitude difference between A and B (mag. 3.5 vs. mag. 8.2). Separated by only 1.4" in position angle 26°00′, the mag. 3.3 and mag. 8.8 components of Eta (ζ) Gem are even tougher to split. Struve 1035 (2000.0 Coordinates: R.A. 7 hr. 12.0′, Dec. 22° 17′) is a much easier target. The matched mag. 8.2 components of this attractive yellow pair are separated by 8.7" in position angle 41°. Other worthwhile double stars in Gemini include Struve 899 (6 hr. 22° 48′, 17° 34′), 20 Gem (6 hr. 32° 31′, 17° 47′), Struve 932 (6 hr. 14° 31′, 14° 44′), 38 Gem (6 hr. 54° 6′, 13° 11′), Struve 1093 (7 hr. 25° 6′, 20° 30′) and Struve 1116 (7 hr. 34° 5′, 12° 18′).

Just about every amateur observer would agree that the brilliant star cluster M35 (6 hr. 08° 9′, 24° 20′) is the premier deep-sky object in Gemini. Shining at an integrated magnitude of 5.1, this rich cluster consists of 200 stars in a diameter of 28′. Robert Burnham, Jr. points out that the astronomical literature is filled with glowing statements concerning M35 (Burnham's Celestial Handbook, Vol. 2, p. 936). Many of the stars in this cluster seem to form curving rows. This effect can provide the impression of a bursting sky rocket. The most prominent members of the cluster are B-type main sequence stars and G- and K-type giants. Can you pick out some of the brighter yellow and orange luminaries? Sky Catalogue 2000.0, Vol. 2 lists the distance to M35 at 870 parsecs. Two other open star clusters may be seen northwest of M35, NGC 2157 (6 hr. 05° 0′, 24° 18′) is a sparse group of 20 stars. While this object appears to be a companion of M35 on the celestial sphere, it actually lies some two and one-half times more distant. Another distance "leap" of two and one-half times is required to reach NGC 2158 (6 hr. 07° 5′, 24° 06′) at 4900 parsecs. At mag. 8.6, NGC 2158 is a fairly bright and rich cluster; however, individual members of the group are mag. 12.4 and fainter. As a result, moderate to large apertures are needed in order to begin to resolve this object. Several degrees east of Delta Gem lies another rich open cluster, NGC 2420 (7 hr. 38° 15′, 21° 34′). This grouping consists of 100 stars in a 180′ field. A night of star cluster observing can also include NGC 2129 (6 hr. 01° 0′, 23° 18′), NGC 2266 (6 hr. 43° 2′, 26° 58′), NGC 2304 (6 hr. 55° 0′, 18° 01′) and NGC 2355 (7 hr. 16° 9′, 13° 47′).

Planetary nebula fans will linger over NGC 2392, the " Eskimo Nebula" (7 hr. 29° 2′, 20° 59′). The small bluish-green disk appears much brighter than its photographic magnitude of 9.9 would suggest. This object also features a relatively bright central star (mag. 10.5). More challenging planetaries include the double-lobed NGC 2371/2 (7 hr. 25° 6′, 29° 29′) and 3900 (6 hr. 25° 9′, 17° 47′). Galaxy hunters will find that NGC 2339 (7 hr. 08° 3′, 18° 47′) is a rewarding object. This spiral shines at mag. 11.6 and measures 2.8′ x 2.1′. Other fairly bright targets include NGC 2341 (7 hr. 09° 3′, 20° 35′) and NGC 2342 (7 hr. 09° 4′, 20° 38′).

Wayne M. Trott

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due for membership renewal, you may send your dues by mail to:
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or give them to the treasurer at the next meeting. Please include the
membership application that is sent with your newsletter when it is time to
renew. Discount subscriptions to Sky & Telescope and Astronomy Magazine
publications are available through our Society. Include any publication
renewal mailers and subscription payment as part of your renewal check.
Membership dues are $10.00 per year and $2.00 per additional family
member. Membership Packets cost $1.75 each for new members or renewing
members without the Packet.

ARTICLES: If you would like to submit an article for the Sidereal Times,
contact Bruce Levin at the listed number below. Please submit articles
within two weeks after the latest Society meeting. Computer files in ASCII
format are preferred.

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President: Dave Finley 291-0402 (home)
Vice President: Stephan Snider 1-867-4804 (home)
Treasurer: Leo Wellner 292-0948 (home)
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Assoc Sec/Software Coord: Michael Fisk 268-4885 (home)
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Telescope Curator/ABM: Alan Trevor 275-2601 (home)
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