## Sidereal Times

**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ALBUQUERQUE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**  
P.O. BOX 54072, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87153

**MARCH 1994**

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**MARCH**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>3-12</td>
<td>Saturday: New moon–Dark Sky Night at Twining Observatory/Messier Marathon call 821-8516 to verify</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>Sunday: First Quarter moon–Vernal Equinox at 20:27 UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-19</td>
<td>Saturday: General meeting of the Society–7:00 p.m. at Regener Hall on UNM campus–see map on back of newsletter (see article below)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-23</td>
<td>Wednesday: Board meets at 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>3-27</td>
<td>Sunday: Full moon 11:10 UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-31</td>
<td>Thursday: Anniversary of the 1990 groundbreaking for the General Nathan Twining Observatory</td>
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**APRIL**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>Saturday: Observing at Twining Observatory—call 821-8516 to verify</td>
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<td>4-3</td>
<td>Sunday: Last quarter moon 2:55 UT (Daylight savings begins)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-9</td>
<td>Saturday: Dark Sky Night at Twining Observatory call 821-8516 to verify (Backup date for Messier Marathon)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-11</td>
<td>Monday: New moon 0:18 UT</td>
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<td>4-19</td>
<td>Tuesday: First quarter moon 2:34 UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>Friday: Lyrid meteor shower–peaks at 9:00 UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-23</td>
<td>Saturday: General meeting of the Society–7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-25</td>
<td>Monday: Full moon 19:45 UT</td>
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<td>4-27</td>
<td>Wednesday: Board meets 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-30</td>
<td>Saturday: ASTRONOMY DAY at Coronado Mall–Public observing at sunset</td>
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### JOHN DOBSON SLEPT HERE

I remember my first star party. It was during the night of January 11, 1986. I had a brand new telescope. So new in fact that there were still little white beads of Styrofoam here and there on the tube and mount from the packing materials.

I knew nothing at all about amateur astronomy back then. I spent that night listening very attentively to anything that anybody said that sounded like something I ought to know about.

There were three fellows standing by a telescope behind me. They were discussing the virtues of the different kinds of instruments they had looked through.


So I did. The answer I got was more of a biography than a technical dissertation. It seems that there was this "old guy" in San Francisco named John Dobson who started this group called the Sidewalk Astronomers.

They had these real simple telescope mounts, named after him, with large aperture Newtonian scopes on them. As the group's name implied, they set these "light buckets" up on the sidewalk and invited passers by to look through them for free.

"What a wonderful idea," I said. "I was sure that some day I too would like to do something like that. "Boy, wouldn't that be fun...giving people a chance to meet their universe. An opportunity to give ordinary folks a peek at the worlds that lie just beyond the reach of their eye."

Over the years since that night, my enjoyment of astronomy has been greatly enhanced by my ability to share it with others. To see the face of a child light up when the image of Saturn finally...
appears out of the darkness of an eyepiece is sometimes overwhelming. Young and old, people are so fascinated with the view of a galaxy...or the moons of Jupiter.

I have often wondered how this "old guy", John Dobson, that I heard about would have done this or that when teaching astronomy to the "general public." I'd heard that he used simple analogies and avoided big "mind boggling" numbers.

I never thought I'd ever meet him, "But," I thought, "if I ever did, I have at least a million questions I'd like to ask him." I wondered, for instance, what he would say about the 6 year old girl who taught me the correct name for the ring nebula.

Yesterday, as I sat by John's side on a piano bench in my living room, we sang songs together while he played. I couldn't think of one single question I wanted to ask him. Somehow, listening to him sing about children playing and life going by, I knew the answers.

George Pellegrino, President

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

What's it like to meet a legend? About 200 people found out for themselves on Saturday night when they attended our February meeting.

Greeted with a standing ovation, John Dobson, chemist, philosopher, amateur astronomer, former monk and more, spoke for more than an hour to members and guests. He told us the story behind his expulsion from the Vedantic Monastery where he studied and meditated for twenty three years.

He showed slides and did what he loves to do most of all...teach astronomy. His inimitable expressions and home grown analogies conveyed his most complex concepts on a level that all could comprehend and enjoy.

John was honored with an award given to him by Robin Marshment on behalf of the members of the society. This award, which bears his name, will be awarded annually and will be known as "The John Dobson Award for Excellence in Public Education." (Guidelines for choosing a recipient of this award will be published in the next issue of the Sidereal Times).

The meeting concluded with the usual cookies and coffee social.

George Pellegrino, President

THE MARCH MEETING

Our March meeting will feature Dr. Elias Brinks of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) in Socorro, who will present a lecture entitled Small is beautiful...Dwarf Galaxies and their Companions. The meeting will be on Saturday, March 19, at 7:00 p.m., in Regener Hall on the UNM campus (please see map on back page).

Dwarf galaxies have been largely neglected by astronomers who instead tend to focus on the larger and brighter spiral and elliptical galaxies. However, much can be learned from dwarf galaxies. Dr. Brinks argues that it makes sense to first try to understand the supposedly simpler dwarfs before attempting to go for the big ones...and that one should always be prepared for surprises!

Dr. Elias Brinks was born and grew up in the Netherlands in the university town of Leiden. There he studied astronomy and was impressed by people like Prof. Jan Oort, Adriaan Blauw and Henk van de Hulst. He received his Ph.D. in 1984 with a thesis entitled "A High Resolution Hydrogen Line Survey of Messier 31," (a big galaxy). After graduating, he spent almost three years at the European Southern Observatory at Garching near Munich, Germany, and another three years at the Royal Greenwich Observatory in Herstmonceux, England. Since September 1989, he has been a staff member of the NRAO at its Array Operations Center in Socorro, currently an Associate Scientist. His favorite subjects for study are galaxies in general and dwarf galaxies in particular.

SUMMARY OF THE WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1994 BOARD MEETING

After the meeting was called to order, the customary Secretary, Treasurer, and President reports were given. The respective Observatory and General funds on deposit were $1759.23 and $615.57. George Pellegrino showed the board the special plaque to be given to John Dobson and known as "The John Dobson Award For Excellence in Public Education."

Bob Stetz followed with the Observatory report. Bob mentioned several loose end items and wish items that need to be done or obtained to enhance the observatory.
**WISH LIST FOR OBSERVATORY**

*Stronger mount suited for computer control*

*More accurate drive with computer control*

**CCD Camera**

*Computer with 2 gigabyte memory*

*Solar panels and inverter (10 kW)*

**Filar micrometer**

*Eye piece image intensifier*

**Collimation tool**

*Eye pieces and filters*

**Concrete building to house a telescope**

**Dormitory building**

**Security system**

**Crusher-fine and Concrete**

**Funding for expansion and operations**

These are a few things that we need at the observatory. It would be very expensive for us to purchase these items; however, there may be someone out there who would be willing to donate an item or two. If you think of anything else that should be on this list or if you have any of these items and wish to donate them, please contact one of the society officers whose telephone numbers are listed on the back of this newsletter. Thank you!!!

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Brad Hamlin will check on the generator battery and replace it if it cannot be recharged. Crusher fine gravel will need to be spread out to control and stop future erosion from rain and wind. Native grass seed will also be needed.

Astronomy Day '94 was the next agenda item. Coronado Mall is available for a two day event. Full participation will be required from Society members to make this a success. The Society would also like to enlist other community astronomical entities to participate in order to show the public the widespread resources the state has in astronomy.

George then talked about John Dobson's upcoming visit to New Mexico and to Albuquerque in particular. In addition to being our honored guest speaker at the February meeting, John will have a whirlwind visit to the Career Enrichment Center, many Albuquerque schools, the UNM Campus Observatory, and the General Nathan Twinning Observatory before heading north to visit the Pajarito Astronomers in Los Alamos. Barry Gordon submitted a letter he wrote to John Dobson with John's reply and a brochure from the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers.

Lisa Wood gave the Library report. New books have been purchased and all the books have been put up on shelves at her house for members to check out. Lisa is presently working on completing the book list for the membership packet and for distribution to members. The Society is also looking to archive a lot of its records and material collected over the years at a central location.

The Society will also have a couple of members judging at the 34th Annual Northwestern New Mexico Regional Science and Engineering Fair to be held on Friday afternoon on March 18th at University of New Mexico's Johnson Gymnasium. The Society can award up to two first place $25.00 awards with annual memberships in the Society for the Junior and Senior divisions and one year memberships for any second place awards in astronomy.

New business items discussed were future public educational awards, program suggestions for future monthly Society meetings, a membership and hospitality committee for membership outreach, and getting additional volunteers for the Society newsletter folding party. Newsletter articles were discussed followed by the meeting adjournment.

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**ASTRONOMY DAY**

On April 30th, the Albuquerque Astronomical Society will be celebrating Astronomy Day at Coronado Mall. This year, I am inviting the Physics and Astronomy Department at UNM to join us. I am also extending a special invitation to all the other astronomy club presidents and their members throughout the state.

Aside from being a lot of work and a lot of fun, Astronomy Day is a very important event. It's an opportunity to share what we enjoy with the community we live in. It's a chance for people who want to learn more about astronomy to find out about us.

It's no coincidence that our society has grown in both membership and in tangible assets with the increase in public education opportunities we have presented. Our society, as a member of a community of organizations and institutions, receives in direct proportion to what we give.

_Sidereal Times/March, 1994_
In the next few weeks, a fellow member will be calling on you and asking for your help. Please pitch in and make this Astronomy Day a successful one.

Thank you,
George Pellegrino, President

TELESCOPE CURATOR REPORT

I am in need of 1.25" eyepieces for the Society's member telescopes. My name is Brad Hamlin, and I'm just been appointed curator of two telescopes, an eight inch and a ten inch, but I've only got two eyepieces. If by any chance you happen to have an old, fairly good eyepiece or pieces, would you consider donating them to the society? These telescopes are for the use of all members of the society, and I'd like to be able to get them ready for your use, but I need your help.

Thank you,
Brad Hamlin, Telescope Curator
(343-8943)

NEWSLETTER NEWS

What's black and blue and red all over? No, not an embarrassed pugilist or even Nancy Kerrigan with a sunburn. It's your monthly missive, the Sidereal Times. We are looking for members who can donate a couple of hours a month to fold and staple the newsletter. A few ever-faithful members have been doing this for years and would greatly appreciate your help. Stapling "parties" are usually held one weekday evening a month. Please call Bruce Levin at 299-0891 if you would like to help out.

Many thanks, the Librarian.

OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

Unsung Heroes

Did you know that the UNM campus observatory was open to the public on Friday nights while UNM is in session? Have you ever been there on a Friday night? If you have, you may have been treated to celestial views and wonders through the use of different size telescopes and some fine slide shows and video tape presentations.

Did you happen to ask the people who were there what their names were or did you just assume that they were graduate students at UNM? There have been many UNM students who have shared their knowledge and time over the years, but there has also been a hard core of volunteers from our society there as well.

In 1988 Dr. Bel Campbell and Bruce Levin got together and decided that it would benefit public education if members of the society would help man the UNM observatory. Bruce headed our delegation for a while and then turned coordinator duties over to John Hockemeier, who has performed this function ever since. The three mainstays over the years have been John Hockemeier, Roger Fiegel, and Jim Pickett. They have been "hanging around" the UNM observatory on Friday nights since 1987!

If you need something to do on Friday nights, why don't you join them at the observatory? Bring along your telescope or computer as Brock Parker does and have some fun. See you there!!!

Observing at the General Nathan Twinning Observatory

For those of you who have never been to the Nathan Twinning Observatory, you surely can't know what you've been missing. The observatory project began as a dream back in 1986 and for the past year and a half or so, it's been a dream come true.

This past Dark Sky Night, I had the pleasure of sharing that dream with about thirty-five other people, a record crowd for a February night at the N.T.O. Most of the people who showed up at the site were not even members. Some had never looked through a scope before in their lives. What a night they picked.

Although there was a slight breeze, the temperature was acceptable even with only two layers of winter weight clothes on. The sky was crystal clear and very steady. The scope...well what can I say? A 16" Cave Newtonian with a f6 focal ratio, a box full of good quality eyepieces and a sky full of stars...I was ready!

Although we looked at the old favorites (M41—Open Cluster in Canis Major; M42—Great Orion Nebula) we also enjoyed a variety of other objects.

NGC 1851, a 7.3 magnitude globular cluster in the constellation Columba made a nice target for a while. When it came to galactic wonders, M81 at magnitude 6.9 and M82 at magnitude 8.4 put on a good show.

The trip to these two optical delights was not without a detour. A "pit stop," NGC 3077, an elongated galaxy about a degree or so away from M81 served up some nice detail even at magnitude 9.9.

The highlight of the evening...the real show stopper was Hubble's variable nebula. Even those of us who sometimes think we've seen it all kept going back to the eyepiece for seconds and thirds.

All and all, some truly vintage photons were enjoyed by all from sundown until around 1 a.m. It was quite a night from an observer's point of view.

Give me a call if you think you might wish to join us out there this month. If you don't know how to get there, you can follow me. Or, if there's room, you can ride along. If you don't have a scope, guess again! There's a 16" Cave out there that belongs to you.

One last note: when you arrive, if you don't have a heavy scope to carry, please park on the North side of the road just past the out house.

George Pellegrino, President

CALLING ALL ATM'S

Anyone interested in mirror making? Several people have asked me to get an ATM group started. If you have ever "ground your own" before or know something about it, please contact me at my home number (821-8516).

George Pellegrino, President

ASTRONOMICAL CLASSIFIEDS

12.5" Cave Optical Newtonian with an 80 mm guide scope with eyepieces. University grade telescope; refurbished with Donald Parker's specifications. Call Cal at 293-8528.
DUES: Please note the expiration date on your mailing label. If you are due for membership renewal, 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. Please include the membership application that is sent with your newsletter when it is time to renew. Discount subscriptions to Sky and Telescope ($20/12 issues), Astronomy ($18/12 issues) and Odyssey ($19.51/12 issues) magazines, and books through Sky Publishing Corporation are available at a reduced cost when purchased by The Albuquerque Astronomical Society members through our Society. Include any of the above magazine renewal mailers and subscription payment as part of your renewal check. Membership dues are $20.00 per year and $3.00 per additional family member. Membership Packets cost $1.75 each for new members or renewing members without the Packet. Contact the Treasurer for more information.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES: Personal astronomical classified advertisements and articles can be submitted within 5 days after the latest Society meeting in order to make it into the next newsletter. Business card size advertisements for businesses related to astronomy are accepted with the same deadline as articles and personal classified advertisements. Rates for business card size ads are $10/ad per issue of the Sidereal Times, $5/ad per issue for six continuous issues, and $5/ad per issue for twelve continuous issues. The Newsletter Editor reserves the right to include and/or edit any article or personal classified or business card size advertisement. Computer files in ASCII format are preferred. Contact the Newsletter Editor for more information.

TAAS LIBRARY: Please call the Librarian at the number below to check out a book.

**The Albuquerque Astronomical Society**

P.O. Box 54072
Albuquerque, NM 87153
Address Correction Requested

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- **Society Staff** -

**President:**
George Pellegrino
821-8516 (home)

**Vice President:**
Travis Allen
292-2199 (home)

**Secretary:**
Bruce Levin
299-0891 (home)

**Treasurer:**
Judie Pellegrino
821-8516 (home)

**Librarian:**
Lisa Wood
344-8308 (home)

**Membership Committee Chairman:**
Jeffrey Bender
293-4888 (home)

**Press Secretary:**
John Finley
1-835-1218 (home)

**Board Member:**
Barry Gordon
867-8424 (home)

**Board Member:**
Jonathan Spargo
1-835-1606 (home)

**Board Member:**
Bob Stetz
842-5281 (home)

**Education Coordinators:**
Dianne & Jim Pickett
873-2343 (home)

**Campus Observatory Coordinator:**
John Hockemeyer
293-5133 (home)

**Newsletter Editor:**
Steve Williams
898-4885 (home)

**Software Coordinator:**
Brock Parker
298-2792 (home)

**Telescope Curator:**
Brad Hamlin
343-8943 (home)

**Associate Board Member:**
Mike Fisk
1-835-6319

**Non-Board Members**

Dianne & Jim Pickett
873-2343 (home)

John Hockemeyer
293-5133 (home)

Steve Williams
898-4885 (home)

Brock Parker
298-2792 (home)

Brad Hamlin
343-8943 (home)

Mike Fisk
1-835-6319

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**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Note that the *Sidereal Times* is mailed out at non-profit bulk rate. The newsletter will not be forwarded to your new address if you move! Please provide the Secretary with your new mailing address to insure that you receive your newsletter.

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**Map To Regener Hall**

[Map Image]

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**Additional Services**

*Canoe 1800s*

*USA05*