"...Logo or No Go!"

by George Pellegrino

In the month of April, 1987, a little over twelve years ago, a proposal was made to change the name of the Albuquerque Astronomers. Since its inception on August 12th, 1959, this was the name of our society. The change was part of a five-year plan that began the year before. It was a plan to build an organization that would be on the cutting edge of amateur astronomy.

The plan included, among other things, reorganization as a nonprofit corporation; institutionalizing our educational outreach to schools and the to public; soliciting for major donations including land, building materials, money, etc.; building our library and adding to our loaner ‘scope program and the building of an observatory.

At the meeting held on May 15th, 1987, the hotly debated issue of changing the name of our organization and the adoption of a logo was decided. Although there were four submissions for a vote, only one contained the hand-lettered words “Albuquerque Astronomical Society” and a logo with an eclipsed Zia symbol with three stars. (See insert – as published in the April ‘87 Sidereal Times). The proposal was a package deal. The new name and the proposed logo had to be voted on as a whole . . . “The name and logo or no go!”

I remember when the logo was created. A long time member and good friend of mine named Cal Currier . . .

Continued on page 14

What about “THE”

As for the name with the word “The”: On April 9th, 1988, one hundred ten members of the “Albuquerque Astronomical Society” (a record at that time) attended a meeting held at the Career Enrichment Center and voted on and unanimously approved adoption of the articles of incorporation under the name of “The Albuquerque Astronomical Society” as it appears in Article 1. The document was filed with the corporation commission on April 21st.

For a short time there was a little confusion (on my part) as to weather the “The” was part of our name or not. It was correctly pointed out that the members voted on and approved the name with the word “The” and it indeed became part of our name legally and without reservation.
**PRESIDENT’S UPDATE**

by David Nelson Blair

The rocket stood in the cold winter morning, making summer with every breath of its mighty exhausts. The rocket made climates, and summer lay for a brief moment upon the land.

The words are from “January 1999: Rocket Summer,” the first chapter of the Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*. Written in 1958, it had us on Mars in 1999.

Oops. How the future changes, as they say.

And oh! Don’t forget the Eugenics Wars of the mid 1990s, which we learned about from the history banks aboard the Starship Enterprise. (I could never figure out why *Star Trek* was so often called an optimistic vision of the future.)

From the nonfiction side, I vaguely remember reading, circa 1970, that a manned fly-by of Mars might well take place as early 1986.

My favorite future from the past came from a quirky TV series called *Space 1999*. I haven’t seen it in decades, but I’ve always remembered the premise.

Martin Landau and Barbara Bain, recently retired from the original *Mission Impossible* series, played the leaders of a lunar colony happily going about their business, which seemed to have had something to do with disposing of nuclear wastes, which had been going on up there on the moon for decades.

But one day the waste dump exploded, blasting the moon out of orbit and across the galaxy—facilitating numerous adventures for our heroes.

The date of that great explosion, if I recall correctly, was September 13, 1999. I wonder if TAAS should schedule a vigil that day. Wouldn’t it be fun to thumb our noses at the mother of all light polluters as she’s blasted to kingdom come?

But, alas, Martin Landau and Barbara Bain never made it to the moon, and we’re way behind our nuclear-waste dumping schedule.

Still, we can always hope that the WIPP site will reach critical mass, flinging New Mexico into the firmament. Imagine the images we’d get as we shot through the Trapezium! Now that’s an optimistic view of the future.

**BOARD MEETING**

by Sammy Lockwood

The June 24, 1999 Executive Board Meeting was called to order at 7pm by President David Blair. Attending were George Pellegrino, Robert Williams, Gordon Pegue, Robert Ortega, Kevin McKeown, Carl Frisch, Bruce Levin, Nancy Dodge, Beth Fernandez, and Sammy Lockwood. Observers included Mike Pendley, Barry Gordon, Lisa Wood, and Rose Fernandez.

Sam read the minutes from the May 27th board meeting which were accepted.

Robert Williams distributed and read the Treasurer’s Report to the board. Education Funds on deposit were $1581.96. Observatory Funds on deposit were $4126.47. General Funds on deposit were $53.45. Total Funds on deposit were $5761.88. Robert also explained that he had mistakenly spend $335 from the GNTO fund that should have been spent from the General Fund for the purchase of a video teaching set. The correction will be made in the next treasurers report.

**Committees**

**Asset Committee**—Carl and Robert O. displayed a list of new additions to the inventory, and suggested that the list was still growing. Sam motioned and the board approved, that a new deadline of 8/26 should be set for late additions to the inventory, which would then be re-presented to the board on that date, and any new addition would be handled according to TAAS bylaws on donations. There was discussions on the importance of a “bottom line” dollar value to the inventory, that Sam will add to the inventory. The inventory can be inspected at http://members.aol.com/abqsammy/99inv.html.

**Lodestar**—David met with David Beining of Lodestar on 6/15. Lodestar is discussing adding a lighting demonstration to the Natural History Museum, and a radio telescope to the project. There is also discussion of adding a TAAS member (Dee Friesen) as an observer to the Lodestar board.

**GNTO**—Robert O announced a work party for 6/25 to improve the parking lot and add T&G flooring to the observation deck. Plans are coming together for the TAAS picnic at GNTO on 7/10. There will be a hike to the Rio Puerco at 8am and a star party that night. Carl passed a sign-up sheet around for picnic essentials. A new observing platform for the astrophysics scope will be built east of the main dome. The new $120 motor for the Astrophysics scope seems to be working well, but the controller may be bad. Bill Tondreau has replaced the Isengard motor. The next meeting for the GNTO Committee has been changed to 7/20, and will discuss the priorities list and the future of the “Sleeping Giant” (future guesthouse).

The meetings will probably be moved from the 66 Dinner, call Robert O for details. George Pellegrino presented the Cave Catalog that came with the Isengard to the board to be kept at GNTO. Carl said that he is working with NM State Parks on their purchase of a telescope, and explained that any member who holds public viewing at a State Park will likely have camping fees waved.

**EPPC**—George presented the board with the following proposal to change the TAAS bylaws:
Past Events

Chaco Canyon 6/12 – Bruce said everyone had a good time at Chaco. Elephant Butte 6/12 – Carl explained that only a couple TAAS members attended, and although there was good viewing for the public, there were clouds when the Boy Scouts arrived. Oak Flat 6/19 – 60-70 people attended, despite bad weather early. The field was muddy so viewing was done from the parking lot. Despite the weather, mud and moon, the event was considered a success.

Future Events

General Meetings—The June meeting is reserved for presentations by TAAS members. Jim Wren from Los Alamos will speak in July on Gamma Ray Bursters. There will be a presentation on the TAAS 200 at the August meeting.

ATM SIG – First meeting is Wednesday, June 30, at Valley High School.

TAAS Picnic—7/10 at GNTO.

Special Board Meeting—7/18, 1-4pm, George Pellegrino’s house.

Bluewater Lake—8/7, Robert is finalizing plans for a star party there.

Old Business

TAAS Logo—George presented a letter to the board explaining his strong feelings on using the correct TAAS logo.

Membership Roster—Robert Williams received 30 lashes for violating TAAS bylaws Article 13, sec 5, spelling out the “for official use only” wording to be used on our rosters.

Insurance—Robert W. explained that our Starlab is now covered, and our premiums actually went down.

Video Course—Gordon explained that our new video course has arrived, and copies made, but needed an additional $9.27 to cover ordering a new set of literature for the copied tapes. The board approved the amount.

New Business

New Archivist—Longtime TAAS Archivist, Jaclyn Fuller Lane, has resigned. Nancy Dodge has volunteered to fill the post, and was welcomed by the board.

Astronomy 101—Robert is planning a 101 geared toward Educational Docents for sometime in August or September.

Hyde State Park—The Girl Scouts have asked TAAS to consider a star party at Hyde State Park near Santa Fe on either 6/25, 7/16, or 7/30.

Newsletter assignments were handed out, and the meeting adjourned at 9:09pm.
## August 1999

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<td>• Lammas, a cross quarter day. Half way between Summer and Fall</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>• Last quarter 11:27 am</td>
<td>• Mercury stationary in RA 10 am. End retrograde motion</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>• Moon ~4° S of Saturn</td>
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<td>• UNM (call to confirm)</td>
<td>• Mercury at greatest elongation west (18.8°)</td>
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<td>• UNM? (call to confirm)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>• GNTO • Bluewater Star Party • Uranus @ opp. • Moon at perigee. 57.5 Earth-radii</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>• Saturn at west quadrature</td>
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<td>• UNM? (call to confirm)</td>
<td>• Oak Flat • Mercury at greatest elongation west (18.8°)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>• Venus at aphelion, 0.7282 au from Sun at 10 am. • Sun enters Leo</td>
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<td>• UNM? (call to confirm)</td>
<td>• Oak Flat • Mercury at greatest elongation west (18.8°)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>• New Moon 5:09 am</td>
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<td>• UNM? (call to confirm)</td>
<td>• Oak Flat • Mercury at greatest elongation west (18.8°)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>• Moon ~1° N of Regulus</td>
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<td>• Oak Flat • Mercury at greatest elongation west (18.8°)</td>
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<td>• UNM? (call to confirm)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>• GNTO Mtg. • UNM? (call to confirm) • Venus at apogee. 63.4 Earth-radii at 6 pm • Pluto stationary in RA at 9 pm</td>
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<td>• UNM? (call to confirm)</td>
<td>• Oak Flat • Mercury at greatest elongation west (18.8°)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>• Saturn stationary in RA. Begin retrograde motion</td>
<td>• First quarter 7:47 pm</td>
<td>• ATM Workshop 7pm, Valley HS</td>
<td>• Full Moon 5:49 pm. • Board Mtg. (7pm @ PandA building)</td>
<td>• UNM? (call to confirm) • Mercury -9.8° NNE of Venus (morning sky)</td>
<td>• General Meeting, 7 pm, Regener Hall</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>• Mercury at perihelion. 0.3075 au from Sun at 2 pm</td>
<td>• Moon ~0.75° N of Neptune</td>
<td>• Jupiter stationary in RA 6 am. Begin retrograde motion</td>
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### Sunrise/Sunset
- 08/01: 6:16/20:10
- 08/15: 6:26/19:55
- 08/31: 6:38/19:35

### Planet Rise / Set (8/15/1999)
- Mercury: 05:00/18:45
- Venus: 07:15/19:45
- Mars: 13:30/23:45
- Jupiter: 23:15/12:15
- Saturn: 23:45/13:15

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**Astrophotographer David Malin to Lecture in Socorro**

(NARO Press Release)

The world’s most famous astronomical photographer will present a free public lecture on “A Universe of Color” on Monday, July 26, at 7:00 pm in Macey Center on the New Mexico Tech campus in Socorro. The lecture is sponsored by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory and the New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club.

David Malin, of the Anglo-Australian Observatory, recognized as the world’s leading expert on astronomical photography, author or co-author of five books and numerous papers and articles, and recipient of awards from around the world, will illustrate his talk with many of his photographs.

“Like most aspects of the natural world, the distant universe is both mysterious and beautiful,” Malin said. “Astronomers spend much time unraveling the mysteries, but the beauty is harder to behold. In my profusely illustrated, non-technical talk I will show how modern photographic techniques, designed to reveal the faintest objects, also uncover a world of spectacular color and eye-catching form among the stars and galaxies.”

A photographic scientist-astronomer at the Anglo-Australian Observatory since 1975, Malin also is an adjunct professor of scientific photography at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. A native of England, Malin moved to Australia to turn to astronomy and make images of very large objects.

In addition to his books, Malin has published more than 120 scientific papers and an equal number of popular articles on astronomy and photography since moving to Australia. He has received awards from the Royal Photographic Society, the American Astronomical Society, the Royal Astronomical Society, the Photographic Society of America, and the International Academy of Astronautics, among others.

Contact Dave Finley for more information at dfinley@nrao.edu
## September 1999

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<td><strong>Planet Rise / Set (9/15/1999)</strong></td>
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<td>Mercury 07:15/19:30</td>
<td>Uranus 17:30/03:30</td>
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<td>Venus 04:15/17:15</td>
<td>Neptune 16:45/02:30</td>
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<td>Mars 13:15/22:30</td>
<td>Pluto 12:30/23:15</td>
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<td>Jupiter 21:00/10:15</td>
<td>Saturn 21:30/11:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAAS = The Albuquerque Astronomical Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNTO = General Nathan Twinning Observatory. Call Gordon Pegue @ 332-2591 to confirm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNM = University of New Mexico Observatory. Call the TAAS hotline @ 296-0549, or the UNM hotline @ 277-1446 to confirm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATM = Amateur Telescope Making. Call Michael Pendley for information @ 296-0549.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PandA = UNM Physics and Astronomy. Corner of Lomas and Yale.</td>
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### What’s Up For August

*by Kevin McKeown*

With the moon at new on August 11th, ideal conditions exist for extended observations of the Perseid meteor shower. The best rates will likely occur on the mornings of August 9th to 14th. The morning of August 12th is the maximum, and the observer who makes an individual hourly count should see around 40 to 50. By August 16, it’s all over! The usual caveat: make your own count/hour! If you combine counts with fellow observers, or attempt all sky counts, you’ve gathered data that is of no use to anyone. On the peak night, a few Perseids can be seen at nightfall, and rates get better by midnight. Best rates are in the two hours before dawn. Perseids are very swift, yellow to orange, typically trained meteors. They trace back to near the Double Cluster.

Another meteor shower in August, to mid September, that many observers detect is the kappa Cygnids which peak on August 19th, or so. While sparse, kappa Cygs can be very bright! Also, the planet Mercury has a fair morning apparition from about August 7th to August 24th. Lastly, a partial solar eclipse can be seen in the northeast USA at sunrise August 11th.
August Musings

One of the constellations we associate with August is Aquila, the Eagle. Aquila is a distinct, intriguing star pattern, and under black skies, its stars curiously seem to offer a geometry lesson: the eye naturally forms angles, lines, and triangles. While it seems that every civilization has identified these stars as a bird, just how one figures the Eagle isn’t so clear. From antiquity, and old star maps, the Eagle is always pictured facing, or flying to the east. The star theta Aquilae always marks his beak. Altair lies on the Eagle’s back, about where a wing attaches, and the stars zeta and epsilon Aquilae mark the end of his tail. They both share the name “Deneb”, for tail, or “end”. However, other points on the Eagle are uncertain. According to Arabic astronomers, beta Aquilae marks the neck (of the raven). But just how the neck ties in with other points on the star picture isn’t clear to me, especially if theta is the tip of the beak. And then the stars alpha and beta Sagittae, (the Arrow) are sometimes borrowed to mark the northern wing tip. Lambda Aquilae, on the edge of the Scutum starcloud, seems to mark the southern wing tip. But keep in mind that when you form a constellation from a group of stars, it is not necessary to rigidly fit the picture to specific stars: don’t create stick figures.

However, as a high school stargazer, I pictured Aquila much differently (having then not biased myself with research!). Here’s perhaps a better Eagle. Lambda marks his beak, and Altair, along with beta and gamma, form his tail. Zeta marks one wing tip, and theta Aquilae, the other. This Eagle is analogous to Cygnus, the Swan. He flies southwest along the Milky Way, ala Cygnus. Like Cygnus, his tail is marked by a bright star (Altair). Check it out.

Strangely, author H. A. Rey in “The Stars” sees neither of these two forms. His Aquila has beta, alpha (Altair), and gamma for its head. Beta marks the tip of the beak. Lambda marks the Eagle’s tail. Theta marks one wing tip, and zeta another. Rey’s Aquila always seemed contrived to me. Was he just trying to be different? That he could not, or chose not see neither the conventional Eagle of antiquity, nor the unbiased Eagle formed though the eyes of a child, comments on his curious work.

Lastly, here’s a few notes for stargazing in Aquila. Aquila is best known for its many planetary nebulae, the best of which is the suberb NGC 6781. Some call it the “Ghost of the Moon” nebula. It’s a lot like the Owl (Messier 97) in Ursa Major. Also, the star pi Aquilae is a suberb double that consists of two white stars of magnitudes 6.0 and 6.8, seperated by a close 1.4 arcseconds. Lastly, keep an eye on the Cepheid variable eta Aquilae, one of the first identified variable stars. It will surprise you with its brightness changes. Anyway, share with us your version of the starry Eagle.

A Trip For Two

This past June 11th, I traveled to west Texas with the primary intent to observe two far southerly objects: open cluster NGC 6067 in Norma, and globular cluster NGC 6397, in Ara. Since both lie at a declination of about minus 54, from Big Bend National Park they would stand some 6 degrees high above the horizon, at culmination. Here they are much less affected by horizon murk. While I’ve seen a diminished version NGC 6397 from GNTO many times, I had never observed NGC 6067.

I actually had my first look at NGC 6067 from the rest stop near Valentine, Texas. While skies were very clean, and cloud free through Van Horn, Texas, I stopped short of Big Bend because it was apparent the atmosphere was becoming more and more obscured near the horizon as I drove south. From Valentine, skies were excellent down to about 4 degrees of altitude. Then nothing, so thick was the low level obscuration. Never the less, I had a good look at NGC 6067. Since this open cluster is described by some as the finest open of the night sky, it was quite a find. The next night, skies of good to excellent horizon transpar-
ency graced Sotol Vista, in Big Bend NP. Then the full grandeur of NGC 6067 shone forth. This cluster is large, very rich, and slightly oval. It consists of about a dozen bright stars set in a very rich background of star dust. It’s splendid. Perhaps NGC 6067 is most similar to Messier 35, but it is bigger, and brighter than M 35. Overall, NGC 6067 is much larger than Messier 11. Centrally located in the heart of the great Norma star cloud, it is the highlight object of this star cloud. BTW, the Norma cloud was an easy naked eye object from Sotol! Certainly, NGC 6067 is one of the best 5 or so opens of the Heavens, but how can you pick between Messier 11, Messier 35, Messier 7, the Jewel box of Crux, NGC 3324 (Carina), NGC 3532 (Carina), NGC 2477 (Puppis), the Double Cluster, and perhaps the Pleiades! A couple of hours later, NGC 6397 culminated. Wow!!! This cluster is truly large, and brilliant. It is at least as good as Messier 4 in Scorpius. NGC 6397 is a beautiful round star ball with a large out outlier haze. It seems more condensed than M 4, a bit richer, and brighter. NGC 6397 is resolved to the core in the 10 inch Newtonian. It is also a conspicuous binocular object—perhaps even more so than Messier 13, and sits just off the Milky Way of Ara, the Altar.

**Updates**

Bruce Levin reports greatly increased sunspot activity, along with a few flares in late June. He estimated there were some 150 sunspots visible around the 20th of June! On June 12th, Carl Frisch and I CCD imaged the famous variable SS Cygni a few days after an outburst. Be watching this star for an outburst around mid July. Lastly, I did not see any June Bootid/Draconid activity on the night of June 27. However, a full moon may have overwhelmed these faint meteors.

**Mars and Spica, 1999**

It is not often that a conspicuous planet becomes stationary so close to a bright star, and 1999 will be remembered for the remarkable pairing of Mars and Spica. Offhand, I can’t even recall such an event prior to Mars-Spica: testimony to the rarity of such a phenomenon! Indeed, on June 5th, Mars became stationary right alongside Spica, and they were spaced some 1.6 degrees apart. From late May to mid June, we were treated to a curious bright, “double star” formed of Mars and Spica. Closest approach probably came on June 11th. Unlike a planet simply sweeping past a star, Mars anchored alongside Spica for many days, and this forged a lasting impression. The many comments from the public suggest the event was widely noticed.

Initially, I took the Mars-Spica pairing for granted. But by June 3rd or so, important aspects of the event became apparent. In RFT’s, both Mars and Spica easily fit in the same field. Certainly, the striking color contrast between orangish Mars, and richly bluish Spica was obvious, if not so to the unaided eye. Is there another planet-star pairing with such rich colors? And at nightfall, on June 7th, from GNTO, Pete Eschman and I admired the close “double” formed by Mars-Spica. However, hours later, as they nudged the western horizon, the two looked wide and less impressive! Just as the full moon appears larger when near the horizon, the Mars-Spica “gap” seemed bigger!

Another curious aspect of the pairing— as I saw it with the unaided eye—was that Mars always looked sharp, whereas Spica looked like a bluish blur, or disc. Spica was out of focus! The only explanation I can offer is this. Since my night vision is slightly myopic, this means that the image plane formed from my eye’s lens lies slightly above, or in front of the retina. However, recall that the eye is not achromatic: blue to violet rays, with their shorter focal lengths, focus closer to the lens than the red rays. For persons with myopia, the red rays actually focus closer to the retina than the blue rays, and red stars should look sharper than blue stars. Thus, reddish Mars should look more focused than bluish Spica for persons with myopia! How did you see it? Let us know! But then, perhaps Spica was blurry because of its lesser brilliance.

Because this Mars-Spica pair-up was so remarkable, I decided to research previous pair-ups of the two. First, for every opposition, Mars drifts retrograde (westwards) in the Zodiac, and it is roughly in the middle of this retrograde period that opposition occurs. Defining this retrograde period are two points where Mars becomes stationary. The first point could be called “eastern stationary”. Some three months of retrograde drift later, “western stationary” occurs. So how do these stationary points tie in with Spica to form a pair-up? Well, it turns out (because of orbital geometry, and viewing angles) that an eastern stationary pair-up is never very impressive, because Mars lies well north of the ecliptic, and the minimum gap from Spica is a full 5 degrees. Note: Spica lies 2 degrees south of the ecliptic plane. Eastern stationary Mars-Spica pair-ups can only occur in late February, in association with an opposition on or about April 8th. The best? February 19, 1935, when Mars lay . . . 5 degrees above Spica.

However, a western stationary Mars-Spica pair-up is much more impressive! Because Mars lies just south of the ecliptic for an early June western stationary point, it can approach to within 1.5 degrees of Spica. These occur around June 4th of the year, and are associated with a late April opposition. Prior to 1999, a pretty good western stationary pair-up occurred in June, 1873, and a better one occurred in late May, 1841, when Mars “parked” two degrees from Spica. However, as a consolation, in late June, 1841, Mars’ resumed eastward drift brought it to within 1.5 degrees of Spica- for one night only. But these were not as good as 1999. So ya’ missed Mars-Spica in 1997? Missed Halley’s Comet in 1986? Well, 2078 offers the next best stationary Mars-Spica pair-up, and you have to wait until 2283 for a nearly exact replay of 1999.
Bluewater State Park
by Robert Williams

It has been a busy summer for many TAAS members, well maybe a busy year all around. With Chaco Canyon, Elephant Butte, Oak Flat and all the GNTO nights I know I am getting worn out, but I am just as enthusiastic as ever when I do attend any of the TAAS events. I love to share the night sky and I love to be stingy at times and just take it all in for myself. Now that TAAS is growing and being approached by more people to host star parties we are doing more out of town events than ever before.

The nice thing about all the out of town events is that it gets us away from the city lights and out to some really great skies. I was contacted by the New Mexico State Parks and asked if TAAS could host 4 or 5 State Park star parties this year. Since the TAAS calendar was fairly full I suggested we start with one this year and begin to book some early next year. It was decided to do a star party at Bluewater State Park near Grants first since it was the closest of the three parks given. We have scheduled it for Saturday, August 7, 1999.

I am very excited for this event, I met with the officials at Bluewater on Friday, June 25th and they are just as excited to have us there. We drove around the campsite and checked out both group shelters. I was allowed to stay the night at the group shelter we chose to use, and see what the sky was like, despite a large moon there were some great skies. We have a shelter that will accommodate around 100 people and lots of room for camping and parking. There is power available at the shelter and there are showers in the bathrooms only a few hundred feet away. We also have water available in the campsite. I am planing on heading out the Thursday before and staying until Sunday. If anyone would like to come and spend a few days there you are more then welcome to.

This should prove to be a very successful star party for TAAS and The New Mexico State Parks and could lead to many more around the state in the years to come. The park is going to waive any camping fees for TAAS members as long as you stay in the group area, and since this is the way that the parks can pay us for doing these events we can expect the same at other parks that TAAS decides to work with in the future. This is one of the perks for being a TAAS member and helping with star parties.

To get to Bluewater State Park take I-40 west to the Prewitt exit about 20 miles west of Grants, head south for 7 miles and you will be there, look for group shelter #1, behind the ranger station.

I am going to plan a cookout for that Saturday of the star party so if you are interested in going and would like to bring some food for the cookout please call me or e-mail me and we can discuss the details. My phone number is 505-839-2840 and my e-mail is rawilliams1@compuserve.com. I hope to see many TAAS members out at Bluewater.

New Astronomy Video Course Available
by Gordon Pegue

The mission of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society is public education through astronomy. Our public education mission also includes the unwritten mandate to provide our own Society members with the means to increase their understanding of astronomy. To this end, the Society has and maintains an extensive library of both written and video materials available to members for checkout. Our librarian is Lisa Wood and she can provide more details on what is available. Please refer to the back of this newsletter for her phone number.

Recently, Alejandra and I discovered something that we thought would be of great value to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society and its mission. How would you like to have a private astronomy class in the comfort of your own living room delivered by one of the most outstanding teachers in the country? This would be possible if we expand our library with a high quality, college level astronomy video course like “Understanding The Universe: An Introduction To Astronomy” by Alex Filipenko, Ph.D. Dr. Filipenko is professor of astronomy at the University of California at Berkeley.

This visually rich course is designed to provide a non-technical description of modern astronomy, including the structure and evolution of planets, stars and galaxies, and the universe as a whole. Astronomical objects are explored with beautiful images obtained by the Hubble Space Telescope, planetary probes, and other modern instruments. Exotic objects like exploding stars, neutron stars, black holes, and quasars are considered as well as recent newsworthy topics like the tentative evidence for life on Mars, and the existence of planets in orbit around other stars.

The course series consists of 10 VHS videotapes; each tape contains 45 minute lectures. Along with the tapes, there are written course guides, which provide additional narrative material. That’s 30 hours of educational materials presented in a way that makes it easy for those who have busy schedules to enrich their understanding of the cosmos! After all, it was Albert Einstein who once observed that “the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.”

Including this astronomy course in our library will allow us to meet our educational mission by giving all of our members the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of astronomy in a way that is convenient and time-saving. The course will also provide the graduates of our highly successful Astronomy 101 events with follow up educational materials.

It is with great pleasure that I, on behalf of the Board of Directors of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society, am able to announce that we have purchased the course and are adding it to

Continued on page 15
Why do solar eclipses not occur on each new moon and lunar eclipses not occur on each full moon?

Solar eclipses do not occur on each new moon because the moon does not line up between the earth and sun with each new moon. Likewise, lunar eclipses do not occur on each full moon because the earth does not line up between the sun and earth with each full moon. Of course, when the new moon or full moon alignment does occur, with the earth and the sun, then there will be the respective solar or lunar eclipse. The alignment is infrequent because the plane about which the earth and moon go around each other is not on the same plane about which the earth travels around the sun.

The earth-moon plane is inclined about 5.2° from the earth-sun, ecliptic, or orbital plane (figure 1). The moon actually passes through the earth’s orbital plane twice each month. These two points or moon crossing—where the earth-moon plane intersects with the ecliptic plane—are called the nodes of the orbit (figure 2). The plane of the earth-moon orbit stays fixed in space and the line through the nodes also keeps the fixed direction. It is only when the earth, moon, and sun are in line and near the nodal line (line of nodes) that an eclipse occurs. Because of the earth-moon orbital position around the sun, there are a few months out of the year when it is impossible for an eclipse to occur. Eclipse seasons occur semiannually for several months centered near the beginning and middle of each year.

There is a region near the nodal points where eclipses can occur where the shadow of the moon will fall on or be in alignment with the earth’s surface, or where the earth will block sunlight from reaching the moon’s surface. Of course, partial eclipses occur where only part of the sun’s rays are blocked from the moon’s or earth’s surface. Also, in order to be able to observe a total or annular solar eclipse, one needs to be somewhere within and along the path of totality or annularity during the time of the eclipse. If the earth-moon plane were on the same plane as the ecliptic plane, then there would be eclipses on each full and new moon!


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**Figure 1. Non-eclipse positions of the sun, earth, and moon**

**Figure 2. Intersection of earth and moon orbital planes along the Line of Nodes. A & B are the two nodes where the orbits intersect. The line joining points A & B is the Line of Nodes. Eclipses will occur when the full or new moon is within the eclipse regions (when the sun, moon, and earth are in alignment).**
Docent News

by Lisa Wood

We’re still all vacationing, so there’s not a lot of activity on this front. The star party booking process has begun for the 1999-2000 school year and should be completed by the time school starts up again. Please call me (see newsletter back) if you are interested in learning how to get a local school on the roster for upcoming year.

Oscar Night for the TAAS Stars!

The June meeting was Awards Night for the Docents. The following were honored for attending one or more of our twelve School Star Parties: Katherine Blankenburg, Charlie and Nancy Dodge, Carl Frisch, Barry Gordon, Jay Harden, Linda Hixon, Bruce Levin, Sam and Shayna Lockwood, Kevin McKeown, Robert Ortega, Jon, Mike, Stevie, Debbie and Ruth Pendley, Dan Richey, Barry Spletzer, Robert Williams, Chris Wilson, Elyse Wood, David Blair, Rick Zamorran, Jim Brockaway, GB Cornucopia, Hunter Mortley, Brock Parker and Bill Tondreau.

The following docents were awarded TAAS T-shirts in addition, for extra devotion to the cause: Carl Frisch, Sam and Shayna Lockwood, Robert Ortega, Jon, Ruth and Mike Pendley, Dan Richey, Robert Williams, Barry Spletzer and Elyse Wood.

The following docents got the Short End of the Stick, because I’m not very good at taking attendance in the dark: Gordon Peggue, Larry Cash, Nancy Davis, Anna Whitlow (Robert and I REMEMBER making yours up), and Kevin McKeown, who should have publicly received his T-shirt as well as certificate. My apologies!

Astronomy for Families (or advice no one likes)

Like many astronomy enthusiasts, I am sometimes asked by newcomers to the hobby what equipment I would recommend, especially for family enjoyment. Here is my recommendation for a family of 4:

- 4 cots
- 4 sleeping bags
- 4 pillows
- 1 good pair of lightweight binoculars. (7x50s are wonderful but too heavy for most kids)
- 1 package of Oreos to pass around

That’s it! No star atlases necessary. Maybe a nice tape player with some Pachelbel drifting softly about in the background if you want to go hi-tech.

Predictably, the resident family “Gear Head’s” heart has gone crashing to the floor at this point, so here’s my next recommendation:

An 8 or 10 inch Dobsonian reflector Telrad (essential in my book) Coupla eyepieces

Again, pretty simple, although a bit more pricey. It seems, oddly, that people resist purchasing a telescope that looks like a cannon, but I wince to think of a family buying anything that needs to be polar aligned or that sits upon a rickety tripod. Personally, I think automatic tracking and slewing are highly overrated for the casual observer, and may be responsible for thousands of unloved and unwanted scopes that are currently gathering dust in people’s closets as we speak.

Another piece of unpopular advice I offer is this: Resist the impulse to buy a telescope until you can point to and name 20 stars. If you don’t have enough enthusiasm for this amount of effort, you may be the next proud owner of a dusty, high-tech Tie Rack. Without some familiarity with the sky, your only targets will be planets, the moon, and other naked eye objects; possibly enthusiasm will soon flag and founder. I mean, Deep Sky is really where all the excitement’s at, and 20 stars will give you the reference points necessary to navigate the realm of the night.

Well, that’s it. Somehow, I think the most unpopular advice is usually the best, so I can only vindicate myself by saying I don’t make the news, I only report it! Hoping that you all have a wonderful experience with whatever equipment you choose to go with. Happy Observing!

Constellation TAAS

by David Blair

To keep TAAS members up to date on what is happening with OUR Stars.

I spent a very pleasant evening a few weeks ago, enjoying coffee and dessert with Jaclyn Fuller Lane and her husband Lyle. We talked about everything from TAAS to Latin American airports. (Trivia question: Why do pilots approaching El Alto Airport in Bolivia lower their landing gear as they descend to 13,000 feet? Answer: That’s where they find the runway.)

The occasion was the transfer of TAAS’s archives. After serving as archivist for many years, Jaclyn is retiring. Our new archivist is Nancy Dodge, a first year member of TAAS’s Board of Directors.

I want to thank both Jaclyn for her years of service to TAAS and Nancy for taking on new responsibilities. Their participation has made TAAS a stronger organization.

Random Acts of Kindness

Thanks to Bill Tondreau for contributing a motor for the Isengard telescope, a 100 Mhz computer, and an ink jet printer for use at the observatory.

Thanks to EMS Printworks for giving TAAS a generous rate on the printing of our Membership applications / information brochures.

Thanks to Peter Eschman for the enormous amount of time and effort he’s put into preparing Observatory Committee priorities and backing up GNTO images to CDs.

Thanks to Robert Williams for spending so much time designing the recognition certificates for the TAAS Star Party Docs (see Docent News).

Thanks to Allen Green for contributing a dot matrix printer for use at the Observatory.

Thanks to Brad Hamlin for contributing a 200 Mb hard disk drive for use in the Observatory computers.

Thanks to the University of New Mexico for its long-standing and con-
New Members

TAAS membership now stands at 428 and after a slight dip is moving back toward the all-time high of 435. Please join me in extending a warm TAAS welcome to new members:

Roger Babcock
Lisa Bearly
Dylan Boynton
Sheryl Ives Boynton
Lewis O. Campbell
Paulette Christopher
Nathan Cole
Shawn K. Deasy
Michael Desjarlais
Terry Dunbar
Francette Fey
Jeffrey S. Goldmeer
James R. Hensley
Kathryn M. Hensley
Randall S. Hensley
John F. Milhollan
Judy Olsen Milhollan
Deborah Mart O’Laughlin
Tara Ransom
Franklin D. Robinson
Jacob Searcy
Ursula Searcy
Theodore J. Sharp
Ryan Sleeter
Jim Tolle
Guillermo P. Turhe-Bear
Jan Villescas
Ross Wimborne and family
Wyllis London Woods

UNM Campus Observatory

by Jay Harden,
Campus Observatory Coordinator

We had 3 nights with activity since the last report.

June 18

Fairly good viewing night. Some high, thin clouds with an estimated 50 - 60 guests. Since just Mike and I were there with telescopes we were quiet busy. Dave Crockett and guest came by.

June 25

Clouds again, though we did have quite a few docents—Mike Pendley, Brock Parker, Kevin McKeown, Tom Saunders, Bill Tondreau, and Jay Harden Not many viewers but we had a nice chat with the last of us going home well after 11.

July 2

It was cloudy on and off all afternoon and early evening. I finally decided to go but by the time I got there, the entire sky was cloudy. One lonesome guest stopped by. We had a nice talk but no viewing.

July 9

Rained out
And now, for the star of our show... TAAS Members

by George Pellegrino

Every year around this time, The Albuquerque Astronomical Society invites members to be the star of the show. At our June meeting, six members enjoyed their very own spotlight (with a red filter, of course).

One of this year’s Broline Award winners, Sengdhan Saint John, presented her award winning Southwest Regional Science Fair project entitled “The Solar Apex”. Using the known velocities of stars, she reduced the data that unveiled the direction in which stars seem to be moving toward us (the solar apex) and away from us (the antiplex).

Barry Gordon, author and astrophotographer, presented his usual wit and humor. Oh yes, he did it with some superb examples of his work including beautiful star fields, with and without the targeted meteor shower. He also shared a series of photographs of an occultation.

Brock Parker showed us his “latest and greatest”, a solar filter on a “dob stopper” along with an aiming device for a solar equipped telescope. I hope you enjoyed those Pop Tarts Brock.

Kevin McKeown, with overhead projector and a slide, delivered a fascinating presentation on Eta Carina. This long duration variable star in the southern sky is on the rise, so to speak. It’s getting brighter. Kevin gave us the history of this variable and a tour of its neighborhood.

Robert Ortega, our Observatory Director spoke about, what else—our observatory. Have you been down there lately? If you haven’t, you won’t believe what Robert and his crew have done! Now, there’s a parking area on the north side of the observatory. It’s for members and guests who go out to GNTO to use the scope under the dome or just want to hitch a ride around the galaxy on someone else’s scope.

Last but by no means least, our president David Blair put on a dramatic presentation, complete with props. In a performance worthy of an Academy Award, David told the story of a great big dob and its owner. I mean where talking big here. According to Dave, this thing was 69 inches in diameter! Did you know that Pyrex could crack at 40 degrees below zero? Well, don’t feel bad if you didn’t… neither did the owner of the scope in the story.

After the “show”, the legendary chocolate chip cookies and bite size cherry cheesecakes were devoured in record time. What more could you ask for?

Sevilleta Open House And Star Party, September 11

by David Siegel

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, the Sevilleta Refuge and the Community of La Joya will host an Open House Celebration on September 11, 1999. TAAS members are invited to attend and to participate in this event. There will be day-time activities and exhibits based at La Joya, with the evening and night-time devoted to a star party and (hopefully) astronomical speakers at the UNM/LTER/Sevilleta Refuge complex. La Joya and the LTER/Refuge complex are several miles apart, roughly 20 miles north of Socorro on I-25.

Encompassing four major biomes and extending from the Sierra Ladrones in the west to the Los Pinos Mountains in the east, the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge is one of the more diverse refuges in the United States, as well as one of the largest, ranking seventh among the lower 48 states. Closed to the public, the refuge will be open for organized tours only during this special event. This is a great opportunity for nature lovers to experience areas of the refuge not accessible the rest of the year.

In addition to refuge tours departing from La Joya, many exciting events and exhibits will be offered free of charge. Scheduled day-time events include a presentation outlining the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Program, a presentation about Hanta Virus Research, and geology tours. Exhibitors will include The Nature Conservancy, the Rio Grande Nature Center, and Friends of Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Refuge tours and events, though free of charge, will require registration, as space is limited. Contact the Socorro Chamber of Commerce at 505-835-0424 after August 1, 1999 to receive your Open House brochure. These brochures will also be available at the August TAAS General Meeting. The brochure contains tour descriptions and schedule, events and exhibitor listings, and a registration form. The brochure also has driving directions and information on tour and event locations. If you are interested in geology, plant life, birding, New Mexico’s natural history, (and, naturally, astronomy), this event is for you.

The Sevilleta Refuge Administrative Center and the UNM/LTER (Long Term Ecological Research) complex will be the venue for evening and night-time events including (hopefully) some astronomical talks, followed by a star party. The UNM/LTER complex will be the site for astronomical talks (these are currently tentative) and the star party. Depending on the turn out for the star party, an overflow area immediately adjacent to the LTER complex will be ready for more telescopes and visitors. Both areas are close (about 1/4 mile) to the Highway I-25, yet they are completely out of sight of passing vehicles. TAAS members who wish to participate are urged to arrive early in order to insure an optimum arrangement of their telescopes near the LTER. Maps to the LTER/Refuge complex will be available at the August TAAS General Meeting. For further information, contact TAAS member David Siegel at 505-248-7396.
Enchanting Skies at Chaco Canyon

by Bruce Levin

TAAS helped sponsor a fine weekend of public observing with the National Park Service at Chaco Cultural Center on the weekend of June 10th, just before the new moon. The trip from Albuquerque to Chaco is a two and a half-hour drive of scenic views on NM Hwy 44. The last dozen miles or so after the turn off and before the national park is on graded dirt road with some washboard sections.

A few of us went up to the center on Friday afternoon to help with evening viewing while the rest of the participants came up on Saturday. Cumulus clouds that scattered across the sky during the day on Friday gave way to clear skies in the evening. G. B. Cornucopia hosted the park visitors with an evening presentation on the Anasazi ruins, petroglyphs, and archaeoastronomy while the rest of us set up our telescopes. Then it was show time with a look at Mercury, Venus, Mars, galaxies, nebulae, globulars, and open clusters. John Sefick presented CCD images and astronomy presentations held Friday and Saturday evenings during the day. A group picture was taken Friday after lunch and a swap meet was held in the afternoon. Great Texas Giveaways (door prizes) were held Friday and Saturday evenings after keynote speaker talks and award presentations.

The TSP is a great time to see old friends and make new friends as well as seeing old objects and finding new celestial wonders.

Good Observing At The 1999 Annual Texas Star Party

by Bruce Levin

This year’s Texas Star Party was held during the middle of May. This turned out to be one of the better observing star parties as each night was clear. The farmers in Mexico had not yet started burning their old crops. Perhaps they learned from the previous year’s fires that impacted their country and at least the southern half of the United States.

Since holding the star party at Rio Frio two years ago, the last two events have been held back at the Prude Ranch between MacDonald Observatory and the town of Fort Davis in the Davis Mountains of west Texas. This is great for those of us from New Mexico. The ranch is approximately 500 miles from Albuquerque.

The locals always looked forward to the TSP, because it usually meant that there would be a goodly amount of afternoon and evening thundershowers mixed with wind for that week. Hot sunny days and a dust devil or two were usually part of the weekly routine. This area has been especially dry the last couple of years. Usually the chance of rain is directly proportional to the area of aperture at the observing site. However, this year was the exception. There also was less wind and no dust devils this time.

Astronomy presentations were given during the afternoon and vendors had astronomy products for sale during the day. A group picture was taken Friday after lunch and a swap meet was held in the afternoon. Great Texas Giveaways (door prizes) were held Friday and Saturday evenings after keynote speaker talks and award presentations.

The TSP is a great time to see old friends and make new friends as well as seeing old objects and finding new celestial wonders.

TAAS Assets On-line

by Sammy Lockwood

Over the past few months, TAAS has been compiling its first assessment of club assets, and although it’s not complete, the list is looking quite impressive. However, we need some help to ensure that we have included everything accurately. Newly found or remembered items have been “trickling in” for weeks, and our final deadline to finish the job is fast approaching.

Please review the TAAS inventory at http://members.aol.com/abqsammy/99inv.html, and report any missing or inaccurate items listed there to Sammy Lockwood. Our goal is to have a complete list to present to the board of directors by their August meeting.

Just a few years ago, TAAS had a handful of members, one loaner scope, and a few books. Today, the Society possesses: A top notch observatory on 4 remote acres valued at over $60,000; An impressive collection of 7 loaner telescopes and over 20 eye-pieces valued at over $6000; One of the most comprehensive collection of astronomical education materials in the state, valued at over $10,000; And a complete Astronomical Library with almost 100 books and videos. These items are not only available to TAAS members, but we are highly encouraged to use them.
offered to help design an entry. I went to his office one afternoon to discuss plans for observing at Gran Quivera that coming weekend. As I walked into his office he was crumpling a piece of paper. He tossed it into the waste paper basket to join a growing number of wadded up rejects. They were attempts to create a logo.

I reached into the trash and pulled out the newly added discard and began to uncompress it. As I began to undo his expression of frustration he remarked, “It’s just not right. It needs something.” As I gazed at the wrinkled page, I saw an elongated Zia symbol extending across the top of the page and down the left side. There was an eclipsing moon to the lower left of the sun symbol at a 45-degree angle. He was right, there was something missing.

I picked up a pen from his desk and drew three stars. Two were to the upper left of the eclipsed sun and one below to the right. We both stood there in silence for a moment. He looked up from the page and said, “That’s it!” At that moment, our logo was born.

During the debate at the meeting, the details of the logos’ origin were not revealed. In fact, the story was only known by a handful of members until now. Could you imagine soliciting votes for something that was retrieved from a waste paper basket? That night was challenging enough.

So why tell the story now? Why not let this piece of history fall into obscurity? Members who were involved in that piece of history expressed their concern about the misrepresentations of that logo. For some, that logo represents the continuation of our society’s history. It is a symbol of efforts made over the past twelve years to build this organization up to what it is today.

Many well-intentioned people have represented our logo in different ways over the past few years. I’ve seen the three stars applied backwards, upside down and left out altogether! I’ve also seen 3² stars. On one occasion the explanation was, “It looks better that way” and on another occasion I was told “They didn’t fit”.

Being consistent with our society’s logo is more than just an issue of style or design. What is our logo anyway? Is it the one voted on and adopted after much debate twelve years ago? It appears correctly on the front of this newsletter. Is it the one made up for the convenience of a printer? Is it the one redesigned to meet one individual’s personal taste? If another organization were to start using our “official” logo, how would we argue for infringement of our exclusive right? To an outsider, it might seem that we don’t have “a” logo. After all, with so many variations, isn’t our logo becoming … arbitrary?

From a legal perspective, if our society’s logo is inconvenient or not to someone’s liking, perhaps a proposal should be submitted at a meeting of the directors. From a sentimental perspective, our logo represents the change over the past 12 years from an organization that had around 60 or 70 members, one broken loaner scope, an obsolete library and less than $500 in assets.

Today, The Albuquerque Astronomical Society is approaching 500 members. We have numerous loaner scopes for our members worth thousands of dollars including a two-story observatory on four acres of land. We have a fantastic library and assets totaling around $100,000.

Under the banner of that logo, much has changed. It may seem trivial to some. The concept may even be baffling to others, but the phrase spoken on May 15th, 1987 still seems appropriate to me . . . “The name and logo or no go!” I’m very proud of what it represents. I know you are too.
June Trivia Contest

by David Blair

The June 26 General Meeting of TAAS tackled this trivia challenge:

Ah, the summer stars! One of these constellations does not border on Lyra. Which one?

Guest Marylou Mendenhall was our winner.

A—Cygnus    B—Draco
C—Hercules   D—Sagitta
E—Vulpecula

Trivia Answer

D. Sagitta. Thirty-five percent of members and guests answered correctly, but with a startling gender differential. Of the 10 ladies attempting the challenge, 6 (60 percent) answered correctly, but of the 13 gents who tried, only 2 (15 percent) chose Sagitta.

The gents were quick to point out that the sample was too small to justify any general conclusion.

Video

Continued from page 8

our library. Here are the details Lisa Wood provided me on checking out the videotapes:

“It is recommended that you check out the tapes in sequence as each tape builds on the material presented in previous tapes. The TAAS library will request a $25 deposit be made when you check out a tape (the cost of duplicating if lost). The deposit will be returned to the borrower when the tape and the course guide are returned to me. Each tape will check out for one month. Please be prompt about returning the tape. You can email me to request I bring a particular tape to a general meeting, or arrange to meet me at my home to pick up or return tapes. Please let me know if you wish to check out the course guide with the tape. Upon completion of the entire series, a certificate will be awarded the TAAS member at a general meeting. TAAS Docents are especially encouraged to complete this course so that they may bring deeper insights to our school children and their parents.”

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TAAS Hot Line Phone Number is 296-0549
MEMBERSHIP: You may request a membership application by calling the Hotline or by sending an email to the Database Manager (see previous page). Applications may also be downloaded from the website. Annual dues to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society are $30/year for a full membership and $15/year for an educator or full-time student membership. Additional family members may join for $3/each (educator, student, and family memberships are not eligible to vote on society matters). New member information packets are available for $3.50 (free copies are available from the website). 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 (see previous page) at the next meeting.

MAGAZINES: Discount magazine subscriptions to *Sky and Telescope* ($29.95/12 issues) and *Astronomy* ($29/12 issues) 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 (We recommend you renew 1-2 months early to ensure uninterrupted magazine subscriptions.).

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES/ADVERTISEMENTS: Articles, personal astronomical classified advertisements and business card size advertisements for businesses related to astronomy must be submitted by the deadline shown on the Society calendar (generally the Saturday near the new Moon). Rates for business card size ads are $10/ad/issue or $7/ad/issue for 6 consecutive issues or $5/ad/issue for 12 consecutive issues. The newsletter editor reserves the right to include and/or edit any article or advertisement. E-mail attachments in Microsoft Word, 10 point Palatino, justified, .25 inch indent at paragraph beginning, no spaces between paragraphs is preferred. ASCII and RTF are acceptable. One column is approximately 350 words. Contact the Newsletter Editor (see previous page) for more information.

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Map to UNM Campus Observatory
(not to scale)

Map to Regener Hall
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