



AOC NEWS

Vol 4 - Issue 1 / FEBRUARY, 2002

NOTES FROM THE AD

First, I would like to thank all those who participated in the VLA Open House in January, described in detail elsewhere in this newsletter. More than 20 people helped out with the tours. In addition to being valuable in our community, such events are quite important in demonstrating our increasing commitment to outreach to the general public, part of our responsibility to the taxpayers who pay the bills. Please consider volunteering for one of the monthly public tours we will hold through April.

The second important event in January was the National Science Foundation (NSF) review of the management of NRAO by Associated Universities, Inc. (AUI). AUI is the non-profit organization that operates NRAO under a cooperative agreement with NSF. AUI actually was the organization that "invented" NRAO, and has operated it since its inception in 1956. A panel of scientists and scientific managers met to evaluate AUI management of NRAO for NSF, which is determining whether to renew the cooperative agreement for a longer term, or to request competitive proposals to operate the NRAO. The review took place at the AOC on January 29 and 30, after a great deal of hard work by many people at both NRAO and AUI. Thanks to those who helped out, and to those who were understanding of the need to adjust their own plans on short notice.

During the beginning of the VLA A configuration session in late January and early February, we started the second session of full operations of the VLA-Pie Town fiber-optic link. Approximately 21 proposals were accepted for use of the link, compared to 18 in the previous A configuration. These accepted proposals will use about 15% of the allocated VLA time through early May.

February and March are the primary months for the Performance Evaluation Process in NRAO. During the next two months, I ask all employees and their supervisors to take some time to think carefully about performance goals for the upcoming year, and to select specific goals that are consistent with NRAO's mission and realistically achievable in 2002.

As many of you know, NRAO has contracted with an outside consultant to review NRAO's compensation system, focusing primarily on market competitiveness and general job/salary structures. That study is nearing its conclusion, and a draft report has been received from the consultant. A final report can be expected within the next few months, and will be summarized when available.

Jim Ulvestad

OPEN HOUSE AT THE VLA SITE

Saturday, January 19, 2002, the VLA provided guided tours for the general public for the first time since 1990. Due to some

unexpected (though not unwelcome) help from the front page of the *Albuquerque Journal*, the occasion drew about 1500 people and other visitors!

This event (along with three more) was planned to gauge the interest of New Mexico citizens in an on-going guided tour program of some sort. Judging by visitor comments and follow-up e-mails, the event was a rousing success.

Tour groups were collected at the Visitors Center by our guides. Their first stop was the Whisper Gallery where they were welcomed



The end of the crowd at the Whisper Gallery

by Jim Ulvestad and entertained by his special Whisper Gallery card trick. Mark McKinnon and Clint Janes shared duty explaining the



Visitors in VLA Control Room

intricacies of the visitor antenna and the transporter. Phillip Hicks, Greg Patterson and Mike Bradford managed to answer questions and perform a 5-subarray observation at the same time in the control room. The tours ended with complimentary coffee and tea, VLA merchandise (not complimentary!), and questions and answers in the cafeteria.

We could never have managed without volunteers from the AOC and VLA who generously donated their Saturday to the cause of Education and Public Outreach: Mark Claussen, Dave Finley, Lisa Foley, Kelly Gatlin, Johnny Gonzales, Miller Goss, Gareth Harris, Phillip Hicks, Clint Janes, Pat Madigan, Prescilla Mauldin, Mark McKinnon, Garry Morris, Godin Otero, Travis Rector, Joe Sanchez, Paul Savedra, Lew Serna, Kerry Shores, Jon Spargo, Greg Taylor and Jim Ulvestad.

The dates for the next three tour days are Sunday, February 17, Saturday, March 16, and Sunday, April 21. We

want to see whether participation increases (yikes!), declines, or remains steady, but we can't do it without YOU. Even if you don't think you know enough about the VLA to lead a tour, we can still use your help, whether it's directing traffic,

showing people where to park, greeting guests, or running errands. If you can volunteer your time and talent, please contact Robyn: email: rharriso@nrao.edu or ext.: 7243.

Robyn Harrison

WELCOME ABOARD

Admin. Services - Christine Wingenter; AIPS++ - Sanjay Bhatnager; Electronics - Carlos Marrero, Duane Clark/Kitt Peak, Christopher Boyden/Co-op; Computing - Thomas Morgan; Safety-James Sullivan; EVLA - Michelle Jenkins; VLBA Array Operations - Kathryn Jakischa.

SMALL POTATOES INVESTMENT CLUB

It has been almost two years since an article appeared in this newsletter about Small Potatoes, the NRAO investment club. Since then, many new employees have joined who may not be aware of this club's existence.

The main purpose is to learn about the stock market without risking a lot of money (hence the name). We have about 15 members, who each pay \$20 per month. During our monthly meetings, which take place at the AOC during the lunch break, we decide which stocks to buy or sell.

During the three years of its existence Small Potatoes has had its ups and downs. As many others, we suffered when the Tech boom finished, though we were clever (or lucky) enough not to get



Speck poses during tour of VLA

involved with true Internet stocks (dot.coms). We had better luck with some of our investment in the retail, financial, and medical sectors, and overall we have managed to do a little bit better than the S&P 500. Overall, we realize the true success of the club is not measured in dollars won, but in valuable experience gained.

There are currently 15 members, and New Mexico law limits us to 20. So, we still have some open slots for other partners. Membership is not limited to NRAO employees, friends or family are also welcome. With monthly subscriptions being just \$20, it's a great way to learn about investing without risking one's retirement!

If you are interested in joining, or would like to learn more, please see Bryan Butler (President), Peggy Perley (Vice President), Steve Durand (Secretary), Skip Lagoyda (Treasurer), or myself.

Gustaaf van Moorsel

HISTORY OF VLA ANTENNA PAINTING

Although work at the VLA site is never done, many projects have been brought to an end. The Antenna Painting program began in May of 1994, with antenna #10 and we hope to finish painting all 28 antennas in 2002. It will take nine years, at an average of 3.1 antennas per year, to complete the program, "if" we can paint the last four antennas this year. Our worst year was 1998, when only the Quad legs on three antennas were painted. Our best year was 2001, when five antennas were painted. The painting has been done with temporary help (three employees) and one regular full time employee as lead person. The antenna mechanics are responsible for painting antennas and Jimmy Sanchez has been the paint program lead person, for the past three seasons. Antenna painting is done during the summer months only.

We hope that the paint work done on this round of painting will last 20 years, in which case antenna #10 would require painting in 2014, 12 years from now. A plan to extend the life of a paint job by doing spot repairs either in the field or after each overhaul is being considered.

Lew Serna

WHAT'S UP IN THE FEBRUARY SKY

Jupiter and Saturn continue to dominate the early evening skies. High in the South, Saturn continues to keep company with Taurus "The Bull," while Jupiter prefers the company of the "Twins," hanging out near Gemini. Both are shining very brightly, are easily found and are great to see with binoculars or a small telescope.

Mars is still visible mid way up the western sky just after dark. However, it is fading fast as the Earth pulls away leaving Mars behind. It is seen, in small telescopes, as a small rust colored, featureless ball.

Venus returns to the evening skies, late in the month, after spending most of last year in the morning sky. Look for Venus just above the western horizon about 20 to 30 minutes after sunset.

The moon and the planets perform some interesting maneuvers during this month. The moon will be new on the 12th and full on the 27th. In between there will be two major cover-ups! On the 20th, the moon will occult Saturn. In New Mexico, the fun begins when Saturn disappears behind the moon at about 4:25 P.M. It reappears a little over an hour later at 5:31 P.M.

For this late afternoon and early evening event you will need some good binoculars or a small telescope as the sky will still be pretty bright. If you happen to be traveling to Western or Northern Europe on the 23rd, you'll be able to see the moon occult Jupiter around 7:00 A.M.!

Jon Spargo, NM Tech Astronomy Club