

# AOC NEWS



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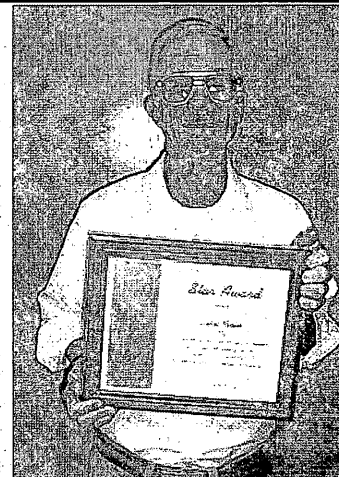


Jim Ulvestad and Robyn Harrison

## STAR AWARDS

### VLA OPEN HOUSES

This winter and spring, public open houses were held monthly at the VLA site. These were the first such events since the 10-year anniversary of the VLA in 1990! More than two thousand members of the public attended, including fifteen hundred during the widely publicized open house in January. Robyn Harrison and Dave Finley were the leaders of the effort, organizing the programs and transportation, generating the publicity, and in Robyn's case, even going out to the VLA site early enough to make coffee for both the NRAO workers and the many attendees from the general public. No one told them to start up these tours; they just got them going because it's something that NRAO "ought" to be doing for all the people who are interested in the VLA, but haven't had a chance for a guided tour since long before "Contact" hit the theaters.



Dave Finley

In recognition of the extra effort that they put out, Robyn and Dave were presented with STAR awards at the all-hands meetings on July 23. (Yes, everyone at the AOC did keep the secret after the AOC meeting, and Robyn was very surprised to receive her award at the VLA site in the afternoon.) They were deserving of the awards as the leaders of the effort, but they also served as representatives of all the NRAO employees who gave up time on one or more weekends to serve as tour guides, parking attendants, EMTs, and roving assistants. Thanks to one and all! We are going to continue with quarterly open houses, with the next one on October 6, so you can expect Robyn to come looking for some volunteers to help out in early autumn.

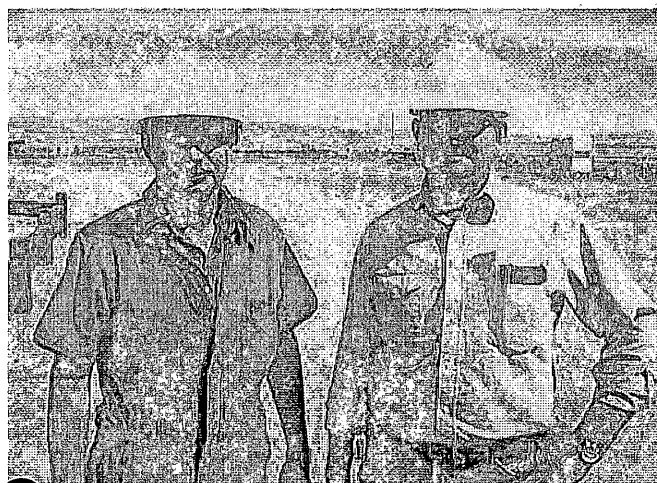
Jim Ulvestad

### VLBA SITE MAINTENANCE VISIT

The VLBA Tiger Team ( Ramon Gutierrez, Steve Aragon, and Eric Carlowe) went to the St. Croix VLBA station in early April of 2002, for a long overdue maintenance visit, which was originally scheduled to last between six and eight days. The team had a long list of maintenance tasks to perform at St. Croix, but shortly after their arrival, they recognized that many other parts of the antenna required immediate maintenance attention. The combination of time, salt, and rain had taken its toll on the antenna. On their own initiative, the men volunteered to work ten hour days for a total of 18 days, with only a one day break, to make the necessary repairs. Just a few

examples of the work they performed include replacing an azimuth motor and an elevation motor, repairing corroded connectors on IF cables and RFI power filter connectors at cable bulkheads, replacing many corroded bolts throughout the antenna structure, and rewiring the focus rotation mount for UPS power.

Ramon, Steve, and Eric prolonged their maintenance visit in St. Croix because they



Ramon Gutierrez and Steve Aragon



Eric Carlowe

determined that the work had to be done, and not because their supervisors told them to do so. Had these men elected to return at the end of the originally scheduled visit, the Observatory would have had to schedule yet another maintenance visit this year, paying the additional high travel costs to St. Croix as a result. They displayed outstanding initiative in volunteering to complete this work. In recognition of their extra initiative, STAR awards were presented to Ramon, Steve and Eric, at the July 23, all-hands meeting.

Mark McKinnon

## WELCOME

Chunai Cai, EVLA (Computing), Allen Farris, ALMA Computing; Barbara Harris, Fiscal; Gregory Hendley, EVLA (Engineering Services); Pat Palmer, Visiting Scientist; Robert Ridgeway, Electronics; Scott Rowe, Computing; Herald Vahle, EVLA (Electronics); Summer RET Teachers: Joshua Bridger, Victor Moore and NRAO Summer Students who arrived in mid-June: Claudia Cyganowski, Kathryn Devine, Karen Peterson, Andreea Petric and Jason Ye.

## NOTES FROM THE A.D.

All-hands meetings at the AOC and at the VLA site were held in late July. Much of the information that traditionally goes in this column was discussed at those meetings, and will not be repeated here.

As residents of the AOC have noted, the building is coming perilously close to filling up. After the summer students have left, we will develop and implement a plan to create additional office space in the center of the building, in the general vicinity of the current student cubicles and the VLBA correlator. We hope to have the new office space operational by the end of the year. However, this may reduce the number of summer students we can host in 2003.

Planning has begun for a scientific meeting to be held in June 2003, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the dedication of the VLBA. A Scientific Organizing Committee has been formed, and is chaired by Mark Reid of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. A Local Organizing Committee also has been formed to take care of the myriad local issues that must be addressed. Please talk to Jon Romney for further details.

The new NRAO director, Fred K.Y. Lo, will be visiting Socorro between September 5 and 10, which includes the dates of an ALMA Science Advisory Committee meeting. We are attempting to arrange short addresses to the entire staff at the AOC and at the VLA site; these are likely to occur on Monday, September 9, at the VLA and Tuesday, September 10, at the AOC. Further details will be provided when available.

Jim Ulvestad

## NEW ARRAY TO BE BUILT AT ETS CORN

On July 19, two ten-foot mesh dishes arrived at the AOC loading dock. They were ferried away to the new shed at Ets Corn Observatory, to become a part of N2I2: the NRAO/New Mexico Tech Instructional Interferometer. The project is a cooperative effort between Tech and NRAO Education and Public Outreach. The plan is to build a 2-element adding interferometer, with receivers at 1.4 GHz, to be used with students and teachers. Much of the work is being done by New Mexico Tech Physical Plant employees, though the actual assembly of the telescope is the responsibility of Masters Degree candidate Danielle Rundle (with input and advice from an array of others!). Lisa Young, Dave Westpfahl and Robyn Harrison are planning the curriculum for a course for the Master of Science Teaching program as well as various projects for introducing the concept of radio interferometry.

## AUGUST SKIES

With only two planets readily viewable this month, planet hunting will have to take a back seat to this month's star attraction, the Perseid meteor shower. But, if you must, Venus will continue to dominate the evening sky for at least a couple of hours after sunset.

Saturn will continue to climb in the early morning sky rising 1 hour after midnight by the end of the month. The moon will be in its last quarter on the 1<sup>st</sup>, new on the 8<sup>th</sup>, first quarter on the 15<sup>th</sup>, full on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and last quarter again on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

From the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Earth will make its annual journey through the debris trail left by comet Swift-Tuttle. This will result in the famous meteor shower, known as the Perseids, which is supposed to peak on the night of the 12/13<sup>th</sup>. With the crescent moon setting early in the evening, the northern hemisphere should be in good shape to view the shower. The peak is predicted for after midnight on the 13<sup>th</sup> (local time and date) and, according to the experts, could reach 60 meteors per hour.

Members of the Tech Astronomy Club will be on hand at the Ets Corn Campus Observatory on the 12<sup>th</sup> for a star/meteor party, weather permitting. Come join us for an evening of sky gazing. Follow Canyon Drive past the golf course. Turn right on Buck Wolfe Drive and follow the signs to the observatory.

If you get bored counting meteors, the Milky Way, our home galaxy, will be just overhead offering plenty of wonderful late night viewing. If you follow the plane of the galaxy to the south you should be able to pick out the constellation Sagittarius, the bow-wielding Centaur. Actually, the most famous part of this constellation is a group of stars in the outline of a teapot. With its curved handle on the left and triangular spout on the right, the slightly tipped teapot appears to have some "steam" emanating from its spout.

The steam is, of course, a myriad of stars in our galaxy. Very near to this spot is the center of the Milky Way about which we are told 100 billion other stars are turning. To the west is the constellation Scorpius, the scorpion, with the orange/red giant star Antares. This region in the sky abounds with interesting objects for a small telescope.

This month's web site will tell you how to find and track the International Space Station (ISS). It's a long and complicated address so copy carefully. Once you have it book marked, it will give you data specifically for viewing the ISS from Socorro.

<https://neptune.hq.nasa.gov/novis/ISSinfo.cfm?country=U%2ES%2EA%2E&city=Socorro%2C%20NM>

Jon Spargo, New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club

## REQUESTS FOR PAYROLL CHECKS

Requests for picking up payroll checks at the AOC need to be received in the Fiscal Department by noon on Thursday, the day before payday. Fiscal sends the payroll checks to the site on Thursday afternoon to be ready for distribution by Thursday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. Because of the scheduled mail delivery to the VLA, the checks and stubs are on their way to the VLA early Thursday afternoon. Remember you don't need to worry about picking up your check if you are using direct deposit; it's automatically deposited to your account on payday.

We want to insure that you receive your check; therefore, YOU must request the check. Fiscal will NOT accept requests from family members or friends to pick up your check. If you need to have someone pick up your check, Fiscal must receive the request from you in writing, (e-mail is fine). This is to insure that your payroll information is not confidential.

Please contact Nancy (7444), Brad (7448) or Laurel (7436) if you need to have your check held. Checks are not available to be picked up before 2:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoons.

Nancy Ortiz