



AOC NEWS

Vol. 5 - Issue 2 / APRIL 2003

NOTES FROM THE A.D.

Half of the VLBA station technicians will be visiting Socorro starting on Monday, April 7, for their annual workshop. These are among the unsung heroes of the VLBA, who keep it operating successfully on a daily basis. Please welcome them to Socorro when you see them, and thank them for their hard work on the behalf of all the scientists who observe with the VLBA.

Usually, I use these columns to discuss topics that are of immediate interest for our operational activities. However, we should not forget that we are not just a company building widgets for profit, but an organization engaged in scientific discovery. I thought I would take this opportunity to highlight some of the important scientific results with the VLA and VLBA, since the beginning of 2002, as described in our press releases. I just give titles below; for more details, see: <http://www.aoc.nrao.edu/epo/pr/>.

- Astronomers Trace Microquasar's Path Back in Time
- Young Star Probably Ejected from Triple System
- Giant Radio Jet Coming from Wrong Kind of Galaxy
- Scientists Detect "Smoking Gun" of Colliding Black Holes
- Water Fountains in the Sky
- Supermassive Black Hole Mimics Smaller Cousins
- Age Discrepancy Throws Pulsar Theories into Turmoil
- GBT, VLA Team Up to Produce New Image of Orion Nebula

Thanks to Dave Finley and to the astronomers involved for the hard work in producing these press releases in order to communicate our scientific results to the public and to you.

Jim Ulvestad

CONGRATULATIONS

Each year, the NRAO recognizes those employees who have shown their dedication and commitment to the observatory at an annual Service Award Banquet. This year the guests of honor are:

10-Year Recipients:

Leon Abeyta	Mark Alfero	Lori Appel	Mark Claussen
Vivek Dhawan	Dave Finley	Bill Hancock	Leonid Kogan
Kathy Long	Glenn Mauger	Jaime Montero	Michael Rupen
Clifford Serna	Tony Sylvester	Patrick Trujillo	Douglas Whiton

20-Year Recipients:

Bertha Guzman John Wall

30-Year Recipients:

Eric Greisen Peter Napier Paul Rhodes

WELCOME ABOARD

Murray & Correlator Operations, Ryan Johnson and Cyrus Reed; ALMA Computing, Sohaila Roberts and Scott Rankin; ALMA Electronics, Selina Sutton; EVLA Project, Nissim Chudnoff;

Electronics, Diane Morgan

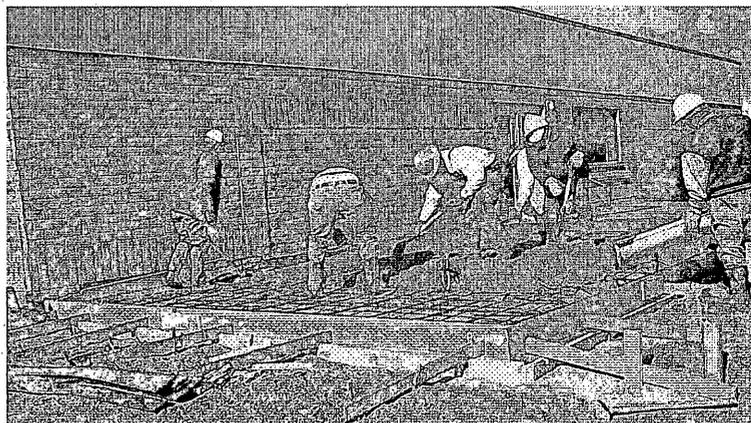
NRAO Summer Students and participant of the RET program (Research Experiences for Teachers)

In the latter part of May, Summer Students and one RET will start arriving. This year's students and advisors are:

Name	Institution	Advisor
Tiffany Borders	Sonoma State Univ.	D. Shepherd & M. Claussen
Katie Chynoweth	The Colorado College	T. Rector
Christopher Clearfield	Harvard Univ.	R. Perley
Richard Cool	U Wyoming	G. Moellenbrock
Emily Landes	UC / Berkeley	Y. Pihlström
Chun Ly	University of Arizona	C. Walker
Holly Maness	Grinnell College	G. Taylor
Itziar Monsalvo de Gregorio	Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Spain	C. Chandler
Miranda Nordhaus	Rensselaer Polytechnic Ins.	Y. Shirley
Alicia Soderberg	Caltech	D. Frail
Laura Spittler	University of Iowa	A. Mioduszewski, V. Dhawan & M. Rupen
Urvashi Rao Venkata	UC / San Diego	T. Cornwell
Matt Williams	Belen, NM	R. Harrison & M. Claussen

VLA VISITOR CENTER IS OURS!

On Wednesday, March 19, 2003, the New Mexico Senate voted to pass House Joint Resolution #3, returning ownership of the VLA Visitor Center to the National Science Foundation. In 1983, the visitor center was built with state funds on land transferred by the National Science Foundation, to the property control division of the general services department. The state has been responsible for major repairs (a new roof three years ago), but NRAO has taken care of the day-to-day maintenance. As we began planning for expansion of the visitor center and its programs, it became evident that we needed to own the building



ourselves. The legislation, sponsored by Representative Don Tripp, now gives us the responsibility for all care and maintenance.

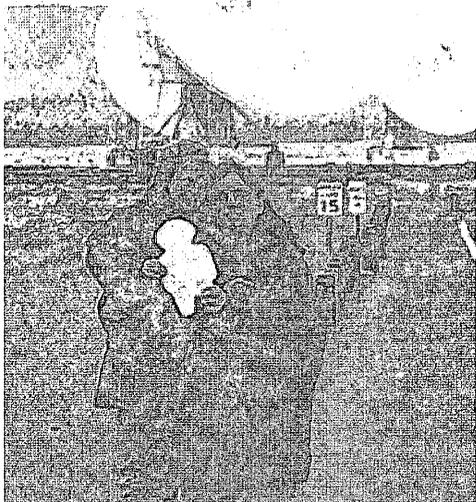
Construction on the gift shop addition to the Visitor Center began March 5, 2003. We hope to hire personnel in late April and to open for business some time in May. Photographs of construction progress can be found on a PC at the Neighborhood Network, NRAO, Dionysos/VLASite/VISITORCENTERADDITION2003.

Robyn Harrison

FLAT STANLEY VISITS THE VLA

In the book *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown, Stanley is smashed flat by a falling bulletin board. One of the many advantages of being flat is that now Flat Stanley can visit his friends by traveling in an envelope. As a project in language arts and geography, students mail a cutout of Flat Stanley to relatives and friends, encouraging them to take him interesting places and then send him back. Kira Hale, daughter of Tami and Andy, recently received Flat Stanley from a first grader in Illinois, via Kira's uncle in Seattle. Kira took Flat Stanley to the VLA. Now a whole class of first graders in Illinois know about the Very Large Array in New Mexico!

Robyn Harrison



Kira and Tami Hale with Flat Stanley

RETIREMENT PRESENTATION

The NRAO Human Resources Department is pleased to announce that Fidelity Investments will be presenting in NRAO-NM, on April 10-11, 2003. Three general sessions are planned - two at the AOC and one at the VLA. Additionally, Fidelity will offer a limited number of individual counseling sessions by appointment, at the AOC and the VLA site. Watch for announcements with specific times and contact information.

Allen Lewis

APRIL SKIES

One of the first events for this month is that we have to remember to spring forward! This year, daylight-saving time begins on Sunday, April 6. Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour.

As April begins, the planet Mercury can be seen low near the western horizon about 30 or 40 minutes after sunset. On April 4, it will be at its greatest illuminated extent but still close to the horizon. By April 16, it will have risen to about 20 degrees above the horizon and should be fairly easy to find since it won't set for about 1-3/4 hours after the Sun.

Saturn is still keeping company with its "Crabby" neighbor in the constellation Taurus. During the month its rings are at their most open position, tilting 27 degrees from edgewise. This will be the greatest tilt

seen since 1987.

Jupiter will continue to outshine everything in the sky (except the moon) for the entire month. On 3-4 April, it will be just about one degree south of the M44 (Beehive Cluster) in the constellation Cancer (see last month's column).

Mars rises between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m., daylight-saving time, and will almost double its brightness during the month, as it heads for its closest approach in August. At that time Mars will be at its closest to the Earth in Human history being only .0373 astronomical units (a.u.) from the Earth.

Astronomers often use an "astronomical unit" as a distance-measuring tool for objects in our solar system. It is defined as the mean distance between the Earth and the Sun and is equal to 149,597,870.691 Kilometers or 92,900,277.699 miles! Just between you and me, rounding it off to 93 million miles is perfectly acceptable!

Venus is fading fast and by the end of the month will rise in the morning barely one hour before sunrise. To see it, look low in the east.

This month the Moon will be new on April 1, first quarter on April 9, full on April 16, and last quarter on April 23. Our web site of the month belongs to the Albuquerque Astronomical Society and can be found at: <http://www.taas.org/>. The Society has a variety of public outreach programs including observing at its General Nathan Twining Observatory a few miles southwest of Belen, New Mexico.

Jon Spargo, New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club

FISCALS "HOW TO" ON TIME CARD PROCEDURE.

The Fiscal Department would like to take this opportunity to go over something we all have to do. Just like the laundry, it has to be done. That is filling out our time cards. In recent NRAO history the policy was changed to allow us to take leave in full 1-hour increments in lieu of one half and one quarter day. This may be a surprise for some, and a new procedure for others. When recording hours of leave taken, simply mark the number of whole hours taken next to the appropriate symbol located on the back of the time card on the day the leave was taken. This would simplify Fiscal's job of coding time cards and eliminate our need to inconvenience you after the card is turned in.

Commonly asked questions:

1. Can I take one half hour of leave?
 - No. Leave can only be taken in full 1-hour increments. If you mark fractions of an hour, Fiscal will round up to full hour increments.
2. What if I mark vacation time as holiday?
 - NRAO has 12 paid holidays per year; any other leave taken should be marked as vacation and taken in whole hour increments.
3. What if I am summoned for Jury Duty?
 - When you are summoned for jury duty, simply mark the number of hours involved with the appropriate code found on the back of your time card and attach a copy of your Notice of Jury Service.

Brad Strong, Barbara Harris

Coming Soon: Spring Forward! Daylight-saving time begins on Sunday, April 6, 2003.