

# VLA/VLBA NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER WEATHER STATS	
HIGH	LOW
87.8° (7th)	27° (25th)
Total Rain 1.59"	
VLA Operations	

From the World's Premier Centimeter Wave Radio Synthesis Telescopes

## AROUND THE VLA

Congratulations to Johnny Gonzalez and Tony Guererro for completing a course in welding at Espanola Community College.

Godin Otero has been elected Safety Committee chairperson. Dean served as vice-chair last year. Lisa Foley was elected Safety Committee vice-chairperson and Dave VanHorn was elected secretary.

Lew Serna and Jon Thunborg attended the NRAO Wide Scientific Retreat at the AOC September 18 through 21. The retreat focused on the future of NRAO, as in where we want to be as an observatory ten years from now. A written record that provides much of the material required for the Observatory Long Range Plan will be produced and submitted to the NSF by AUI in the spring of 2001.

Because of the extremely dry summer, there seems to be a greater danger than usual of finding a rattlesnake where he or she shouldn't be. Now that the weather is turning cooler they are looking for warmth. So watch out for these guys invading your space!

## VLA PARTY

The annual VLA "End of Summer" Party was held on September 28 in the Cafeteria. As is now tradition, the Track Crew and Pat Lewis cooked the meat and beans underground, and as is tradition, they turned out great! Ellen Ary made her famous rolls, and Shella Lewis (Pat's wife) graciously volunteered to make macaroni salad, barbeque sauce, and green chile. Gene Cole contributed greatly to the party atmosphere by providing music.

Distinguished visitors from the AOC were recognized. Awards were presented for Safety, and some groups' achievements were recognized. Three special awards were given for outstanding accomplishments in

support of the mission of the VLA. Jim Rexrode and Godin Otero were recognized with the "Ingenuity Award" for the design of the Waveguide Lightning Protection Plow, which is an ingenious device that facilitates the LPS cable installation. For the "Cost Saving Award," Jimmy Sanchez, Carlos Soto, James Trujillo, and Gerad Montoya were recognized for their improvement to the method and techniques of painting antennas, which resulted in significant cost savings to the VLA and made possible the painting of a third antenna this year. The "Array Enhancement Award" went to Ramon Molina, Ramon Gutierrez, John Wall, Phillip Sanchez, Joe Rodriguez, Frank Broadus, Bob Broילו, and Gene Cole for completion of Antenna Panel Adjustments, resulting in a significant increase of antenna efficiency.

This annual event is held to celebrate the accomplishments of the VLA staff and others who work at the VLA during the year, especially the summer when the weather is more conducive to outdoor work. The climate at the VLA is such that activities like antenna painting, construction, manhole replacement, and major track work must take place during the six to eight months that the weather is not too cold and the ground is not frozen.

P. Lindsey

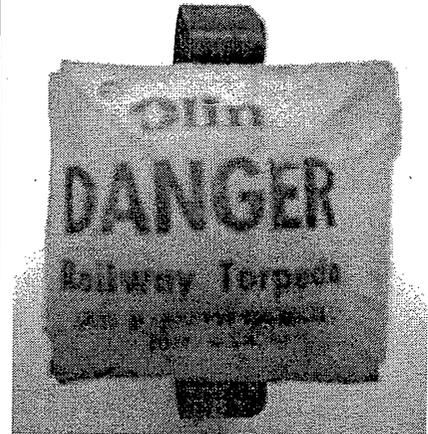
## TRAVEL RESERVATIONS

A well deserved THANKS goes to Liz Cryer for handling the Socorro Ops Reservations office duties while Selfa Lucero has been away on leave. During Selfa's absence, Liz not only took care of the usual comings and goings of NRAO employees and visitors but assisted with a VLBA Maintenance Team visit to North Liberty. She was also involved during the many large meetings held in Socorro such as the Gas & Galaxy Evolution Conference, VLA Anniversary VIP visit, and Scientific Staff Retreat. She did a great job and certainly earned her stripes this summer!

S. Lagoyda

## RAILWAY TORPEDOES

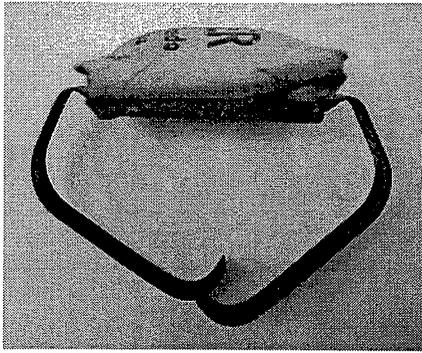
At the start of reconfiguration to the A-Array on October 2, sharp-eyed move crews noticed something attached to the railroad track near the U.S. 60 crossing. Closer inspection revealed that the object was a railway torpedo (see picture below). Obviously someone's idea of a practical joke, it was placed where the transporter would run over it.



Approx. Actual Size of Railway Torpedo

Railway torpedoes were explosive devices carried by railway crews. Clamped to the track, they would make a loud noise when run over by a locomotive or a car. The noise was loud enough to be heard by the locomotive engineer or conductor. Even though they are designed to be noise makers, they still pack a pretty good explosive wallop (about the same as a M-80 firecracker) and should be handled very carefully.

Mr. Paul Archie is the BNSF Safety Officer based in Clovis, NM. According to Paul, the best way to deal with these devices is to soak them in at least one gallon of water for at least two weeks. Such a soaking will render them inert, after which they can be disposed of without any special precautions.



No longer used by railroads, these devices were actually used as safety warning devices in the days before radio dispatching or Centralized Traffic Control (CTC). If a train was stopped on the main-line, members of the train crew would walk out ahead of and behind the stopped train and place the torpedoes such that an approaching train would hear them in time to stop before running into the stopped train.

Our torpedo is now in a very soggy condition and can be viewed in the Safety Officer's office in the Control Building.

J. Spargo

## SITE & WYE NEWS

Charley Chavez and Carl Oler have been working on the Control Building Annex (formerly known as the SLOB) and they have done a super job. It makes the rest of the building look pretty shabby. About all that is needed is the carpeting and, of course, the bathrooms will be put back in service. Charley and Company also completed concrete work at the VSQ #3 patio and walkway. This work is done in support of the ALMA Project.

The Track Crew has been trying to get the track ready for the antenna moves and it looks like they are going to make it. The Jackson tamper that NRAO acquired still needs to be debugged. Richard, Lew and Pat have all been involved with the Track Crew to try to get it going. About the time the crew finishes the north arm, the tamper should be done!!

The Grounds Crew has been spraying all the "D" and "A" array stations with herbicide. They hauled a load of water to VLBAPT and brought back the tank when the water association got their water going again. They have been keeping the anode beds watered and should be able to get back to the waveguide LPS soon. Godin Otero began clearing and grading the area for the ALMA operation on September 22nd, but the

steering on our dinosaur of a grader gave out. The machine is now dead-lined and we cannot find spare parts for it because of its age.

The Auto Shop has been very busy. They pulled the engine out of the yellow MC-9 (it was "making" oil), sent the heads out, got them back and are in the process of putting everything back together for reinstalling the engine. Jim Rexrode has been gone about three weeks and Tony Guerrero has been at welding school for one week. Needless to say, Richard Murillo has been busier than a cat trying to cover poop on a marble floor (grabbed that saying from someone in Charlottesville and I will not tell which member of the Petty family that was). Richard, Mike Torres and Clifford Serna left for California on September 25th to see if some buses found on surplus are worth bringing back. They were beyond redemption.

P. Lewis

## NRAO MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory is to design, build, and operate large radio telescope facilities for use by the scientific community; to develop the electronics, software, and other technology systems that enable new astronomical science; to support the reduction, analysis, and dissemination of the results of observations made by the telescope users; to support the development of a society that is both scientifically and technically literate through educational programs and public outreach; and to support a program of staff scientific research that enables leadership and quality in all these areas.

P. Vanden Bout

## PC SUPPORT AND DIONYSUS

The PC Help Desk will provide a higher level of support for the personal computers at the VLA site. They will have someone come to the VLA once a week to provide PC support. If you need immediate assistance, send E-mail to "helpdesk" or call Marie Glendenning or Lothar Dahlmeyer.

The Computer Division will also maintain our new computer server named "Dionysus." Over the next few weeks they will be connecting your computers to this server. Please cooperate with them during this changeover.

The new server will allow us to access the entire NRAO domain. This means that you can read any files that are in shared files on other

NRAO computers. Others will also be able to read your shared files. Make sure that you do not have any sensitive information in shared files. If you need help with this, please contact Lothar or Marie.

The server will allow reliable centralized printing. Everyone will have access to the new color laser printer located in the Control Building. You can also use the server to back up data files. Marie will create a folder that only the originator and Administrator can access. These files will be backed up on tape every weeknight. This will be a good place to store important data files. However, we do not have the disk space on the server to back up your entire machine.

There will be a shared drive on Dionysus called "vlasite" with a pub share folder where the latest versions of free software, such as Netscape, will be available for download. Remember that you should not store any sensitive information on your machine or the server, as a good hacker will be able to read it.

J. Thunborg

## "CHANGE YOUR CLOCK, CHANGE YOUR BATTERY"

October is National Fire Prevention month and the end of Daylight Savings Time. Connecting these two events is an easy way to remember to change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

After inserting fresh batteries, make sure the detector itself works by pushing the test button. Install at least one smoke detector on every level of your home, including the basement, and most important, outside all bedrooms. Clean your detectors of dust and cobwebs, which can impair sensitivity by clogging the wiring, by vacuuming monthly.

Keep a working flashlight near your bed, in the kitchen, basement, and family room and use it to signal for help in the event of a fire. Install a fire extinguisher in or near your kitchen and know how to use it. Test it annually. Develop at least two different escape routes and practice them with the entire family. Make sure your children understand that a smoke detector signals a home fire and recognize its alarm.

So, on October 29 change your clock back one hour and change the batteries in your smoke detectors!