

# VLA/VLBA NEWSLETTER

From the World's Premier Centimeter Wave Radio Synthesis Telescopes

## AROUND THE VLA

Farewell to long time VLA Operator Larry Brothers. He leaves us to begin a new career in Raleigh, North Carolina. His goal is to become a math teacher. Substituting in the Socorro school system has not changed his mind. Larry has been with NRAO since 1984, first as an array operator in Greenbank, then transferring to the VLA. He has been a contributor to the newsletter and many interesting conversations over the years. Larry will be missed by many. We wish him well in his new life.

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Reminder: the children's Christmas Party is December 9, at 1:30 p.m., in the AOC auditorium. The adult Christmas Party is at the Garcia Opera House on December 16, with cocktails at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00. Please R.S.V.P. if you haven't already!

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The newly elected NMPRA Board Directors are Tom Baldwin and Joel Domschot. They will join reelected directors Emma Rice and Ken Lakies, and continuing directors Richard Murillo and Allen Lewis. Leaving the board in January, after years of hard work and dedication, are Linda Major, Mary Ellen Chavez, and Clint Janes.

There is now an alias on ZIA for the entire ES Division. It is called "nmessdiv" and can be used to send email to everyone in the division.

The Business Office has asked that we notify "nmpurch" by e-mail when planning a trip to Albuquerque or Belen

Please be sure to close all gates at the Antenna Stations after you visit an Antenna. Report any broken or damaged gates to the ES Division Site & Wye Group as soon as possible.

A new "Accident/Incident Form" has replaced the old form. Please begin using this form to report accidents.

## OBSERVATORY MEETING

An Observatory Status Presentation was held on Thursday, November 30, at both the AOC and VLA Site. As an introduction, Miller Goss discussed, among other things, that in spite of last year's flat budget and RIF many accomplishments were made. The successful PT Link, K-Band is 3/4 done, Q-Bands on 25 antennas, W-Band installations on the VLBA, pointing efficiency increased to 40% with panel adjustments which will continue in 2001, ALMA test site construction, Dynamic Scheduling and major contributions from the VLBA to the VLBI VSOP mission. Additionally, Miller Goss is optimistic about our funding for 2001.

Peggy Perley explained that the original reason for forming the Employee Committee was to review and critique the first Performance Appraisal Process. The purpose of the committee has evolved to bringing issues forward to upper management which could improve efficiency, working conditions, and morale.

Dick Sramek and Peter Napier brought us up to date on the ALMA project. ALMA is in the third year of Design and Development, and around mid 2004 the focus will be on the Chilean sites. Peter Napier announced that the first prototype ALMA Antenna is due to be delivered around the end of November, 2001. Antenna construction should begin by July of 2001. He also explained that it is doubtful any VLA Site employees will be sent to Chile to work on the project.

Rick Perley spoke with great enthusiasm about the plans for EVLA, projected timelines, and possible funding. The VLA will be 10 times better after the EVLA project is finished. A review committee of seven referees is due to inspect the VLA Site on December 14, 2000.

Mark Claussen reported on the great success of the Pie Town Link, which has been operating

on a test basis since October. Success was met by the target deadline and we can boast that we have the longest fiber optic link in radio astronomy.

A Science Talk on "The Supergalactic Center" was given by Frazer Owen. He explained how the VLA and VLBA are an especially effective tool for observing this area of the Galaxy.

The 2000 Performance Evaluation Process was explained by Allen Lewis. This is the fourth year of the PEP at NRAONM. Other sites are using the process for the first time this year. New forms will be used for this year's evaluations.

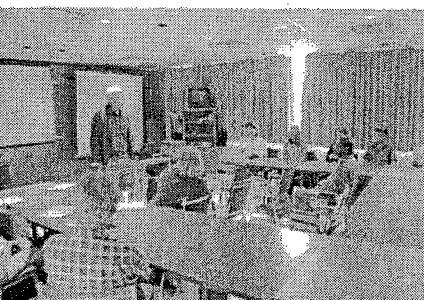


Photo by K. Gattin

In his closing remarks, Miller Goss announced his plan to resign as Assistant Director at the end of 2001. Miller will be staying on in Socorro as a member of the scientific staff. Congratulations Miller, on all your achievements and contributions.

P. Lindsey

## DRIVER'S LICENSES

Recent Decision Driving Course sessions revealed that several employees did not have a driver's license in their possession. According to NRAO policy, operating an observatory vehicle, or a private vehicle while on official business, without a valid driver's license is not permitted. Possession of a current driver's license is an essential requirement in many NRAO job

classifications. Loss or suspension of the driver's license could affect the employment status of an employee. It is your responsibility to keep your license current. If your license expires or is revoked you must notify your supervisor immediately. Failure to do so could subject you to disciplinary action.

G. Cole

## SITE & WYE NEWS

Charley Chavez and Carl Oler have been finishing the work on the CB Annex. They have, with the help of others, formed and poured the two major electrical slabs for transformers and switches at the VLA ALMA test site. They are in the process of placing the 20th Anniversary plaque on the visitor's path outside the Control Building.

Godin Otero and Johnny Gonzalez worked with Jaime Montero excavating conduit trenches, back filling and tamping the areas in preparation for the concrete. Once all the concrete is poured, they will do a final grading of the area and place base course over the site.

The Track Crew has been busy replacing a station intersection that had bad timbers and was misaligned. When they started, it was a two week job, but as work progressed, they discovered other major problems. The entire spur and intersection had to be rebuilt!

The Auto Shop stays busy! Keeping up with breakdowns and PM's keeps everyone hopping.

P. Lewis

## NEVERMORE OR NUNCAMAS?

Next time you visit the VLA you may notice several antennas with a large bird nest in the webbing under the dish. This would be a raven's nest. Ravens build large, bulky nests of stout sticks and line the center with bark, hair, fur, or grasses. Many nest sites are in protected ledges that are well shaded, such as an antenna dish. Word has it that these nest builders used to build a flat nest but have learned to build a boat or banana shaped nest that cradles and prevents the egg from rolling out when the dish is tipped.

Ravens are large black birds that can grow to the size of a large hawk, and may live 25 - 50 years. Although they are frequently confused with crows, ravens differ in many ways. Physically, ravens are about twice the size of crows. Ravens and crows belong to

the Corvidae, or "Crow", family of birds. Ravens are considered among the most intelligent of all birds; like crows, they can learn to imitate a variety of sounds, including the human voice.

Two species of ravens live in the Southwest: The bigger Common Raven (*Corvus Corax*), and our own, smaller Chihuahuan Raven (*Corvus Cryptoleucus*) found only in the Chihuahuan desert region.



Photo by C. Gino

The Chihuahuan Raven (pictured above) also called the White-Necked Raven is a gregarious, crow-sized raven of arid, open country. It resembles the Common Raven, but is smaller, has a slightly different voice, and its neck and breast feathers, when ruffled, reveal a white base. The scientific name "Cryptoleucus," means "hidden white."

Both the Common Raven and the Chihuahuan Raven are seen at the VLA. No one knows for sure which raven builds the antenna nests. This writer believes that the antenna nest builder is the Chihuahuan Raven. If anyone has positive proof of which raven builds the nest, please let us know. If it is the Common Raven, I suppose I'll ... eat crow.

L. Serna

## DECEMBER SKIES

During December the early evening skies are dominated by the brilliant planet Venus, seen in the Southwest just after sunset. Venus will continue to get higher and brighter with each passing week and will shine at its brightest during January and February. On December 29<sup>th</sup>, a beautiful sight will be the new crescent moon joining Venus at dusk in the Southwestern sky.

To the East, Saturn and Jupiter continue their steady climb into the night sky. Saturn is found to the right of the famous star cluster known as the Pleiades. This beautiful open cluster also known as "The Seven Sisters" actually has an equally famous name in Japanese. Can you name it? Hint: Think of a popular Japanese automobile. (The answer is at the bottom of this page) Jupiter is below and to the east of the Pleiades and is much brighter than Saturn. Jupiter is followed by Taurus the Bull with the giant red star Aldebaran marking the eye of the bull.

With the appearance of Taurus, Orion the Hunter, probably the most recognizable constellation of all, is not far behind. To some the true beginning of Winter was marked by Orion's appearance above the Eastern horizon in early evening.

If you would like to join us to view these and many other winter objects through a telescope, there will be a public star party at the Etscorn Campus Observatory on Friday, December 15 beginning at 6:30 p.m.. All are welcome.

Jon Spargo



Photo by K. Gatlin

This is a photo of one of our two resident gray foxes. This one is actually on the roof of the cafeteria, and let Kelly Gatlin study him for quite some time and get very close while he shot photos. They have been seen by different employees running, jumping, and playing around the site. Most impressive is their amazing climbing abilities. They seem as curious about us as we are about them.

♦Answer to the December Skies question:  
"Subaru!"♦