

VLA/VLBA NEWSLETTER

From the World's Premier Centimeter Wave Radio Synthesis Telescopes

WEATHER STATS		
	HIGH	LOW
May	91.2 (29th)	21 (20th)

VLA Operations

AROUND THE VLA

Congratulations to Joe Sanchez who recently became a regular, full time employee on the Track Crew. Joe has served in many capacities as a temporary employee over the last few years.

Steve Aragon, Charley Chavez, Ramon Gutierrez, Ramon Molina, Godin Otero, and Paul Savedra recently completed a course called "Introduction to Computer Applications." The course was offered in Magdalena and Socorro by the UNM-Valencia Campus. They attended every Wednesday evening for several months, on their own time, to improve their skills in word processing, spreadsheet, database, desktop publishing, and communications programs.

Johnny Gonzalez and Ellison Thompson completed a Dozer Operation Course at NMIMT Equipment Training Program.

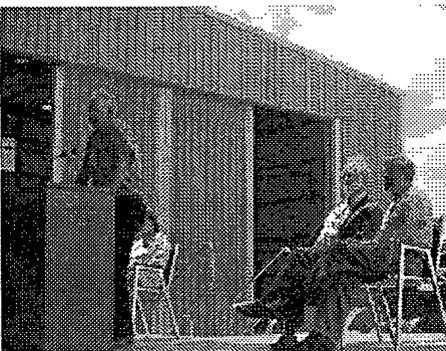
VLA TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

On May 24, 2000, twenty years of VLA operation was celebrated by over 350 people. Employees from NRAO-NM were joined by participants from the "Gas and Galaxy Evolution" conference and by other guests for a barbecue lunch. The lunch was



Lunch is Served

followed by speeches and tours of the various components of the VLA.

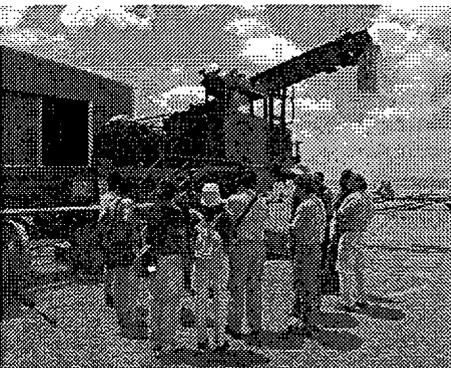


M. Goss Speaks as J. van Gorkom, R. Ekers, and P. Vanden Bout Look On

Dr. Paul Vanden Bout, NRAO Director, spoke of the endurance of the VLA and its continued success as the worlds premier radio telescope. He also saluted Jack Bruton, who welcomed the VLA construction on his ranch, and Jack Lancaster, who served as VLA Construction Manager. Dr. Ron Ekers, who became VLA Site Director a month before the official dedication on October 10, 1980, spoke of his years at the VLA and the necessity of providing needed funding for maintenance and improvement. Dr. Jacqueline Van Gorkom, a frequent user of the VLA, remembered the people she had gotten to know during the many years she observed at the VLA. She enjoyed the scenery so much she moved near the VLA for a time, until relocating to Manhattan. Dr. Miller Goss provided several examples of important contributions to science made through the use of the VLA. He also stressed the need to continually improve the instrument.

Several of the NRAO Scientific Staff led tour groups to displays presented by local experts who gave brief demonstrations of telescope subsystems. The Antenna Structure, Transporters, Receivers, VLA Control Room, Servo System, Waveguide, Pie Town Link, Central Electronics Room

and Spectrum Analyzer were demonstrated. The improvement of these subsystems by the EVLA was explained. Those taking the tour, whether longtime employees or first time visitors, learned something new about the VLA.



Tour Group at Transporter Display

The celebration of the twentieth anniversary provided an opportunity for VLA and AOC based employees to see each other in person, as well as catching up with retirees and astronomers who have been regular visitors. There was a lot of reminiscing, but the focus was on looking toward the future of the VLA and the EVLA and remaining the premier instrument of its kind.

P. Lindsey

JO'S SNAKE DANCE

On May 8, 2000, at noontime, Jo Cason was walking out to her personal vehicle to do a crossword puzzle and possibly take a short nap. This event is a daily ritual for Jo and this day would be one Jo would not soon forget. On the way to her vehicle, Jo customarily goes through the southern door of the Control Building. To her chagrin, as she opened the door, there was a 2-foot prairie rattler sunning in front of the door. Luckily, Jo spotted the snake as she opened the door. She immediately proceeded to do the Snake Dance.

As she shut the door, the snake became trapped under the door and Jo escaped back into the Control Building without incident. Jo sounded the alarm and Paul Savedra, Lew Serna, Bob Broilo, Marlin Smith, and a few others came to the rescue. While Bob Broilo held the snake at bay with a broom, Paul Savedra finally showed up with a shovel and a mop. Paul, being an experienced snake charmer, disposed of the snake in short order. The mop? Well.. we didn't need it, but you never know...we'll keep it handy in case Jo decides to do another Snake Dance.

L. Serna

MORE SNAKES

Yep, it's warm outside these days on the Plains of San Augustine. Hibernation is over and critters are everywhere. Nonetheless, as the story above demonstrates, we must be mindful about some of our neighbors, like rattlesnakes. Just remember that rattlesnakes are most active from March to November. They can strike from any position and do not need to be coiled up, nor do they always rattle first. Rattlesnakes can also strike again immediately, if so inclined. And, all rattlesnakes in New Mexico are poisonous. Keep this in mind especially during antenna moves, track and grounds work. If by bad luck, you are bitten by a suspected poisonous snake:

- Calm yourself; you will not die, but may sustain damage by mistreatment.
- Sit down (do not lie down); minimize movement.
- Do not elevate bitten area.
- Place a loose, constricting band, such as rubber band, above and below the bitten area.
- Do not tourniquet and do not use suction kits or cut the area.
- Leave bands in place until anti-venom is available.

G. Cole

TIME CAPTURED

Time is critically important for astronomy, it is also important for catching the bus. In the Newsletter back in October '99, this writer said the only accurate time available at the VLA site is the UTC display next to the maser in the VLA Control Building, not very convenient for the average bus rider. The Cryo Shop resets the master clock used to control the clocks you see on the walls around the site, but in the past, Cryo did not

have an accurate standard for setting the master.

Now Cryo has a "radio-controlled" clock which is automatically updated by NIST (previously National Bureau of Standards). The clock receives signals via a 60 KHz ground wave transmitted by NIST radio station WWVB, and has a theoretical maximum accuracy of 10 milliseconds. It even updates automatically when switching between daylight savings and standard time! Magdalene Romero bought the clock off the Web for only \$35.

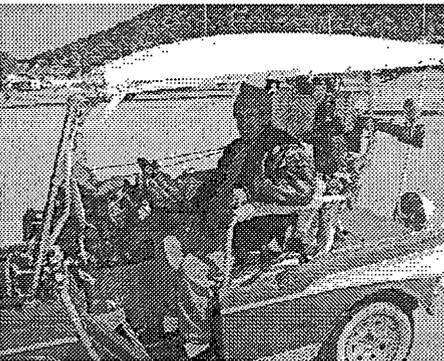
So now Cryo can reset the master clock accurately, and you can be in time for the bus...which now has its own very accurate clock, so the driver knows exactly when to leave the site.

C. Janes

ACROSS AMERICA IN A '57 CHEVY

A '57 Chevy golf cart, that is. I came upon this unique sight in White House canyon recently. Cruising down Highway 60 was this bright red '57 Chevy -- at about 1/8 scale -- putt-putting along at 35 mph. I grabbed a passing photo, hoping to see him on the plains later. The opportunity was better than that.

He stopped at the Eagle Guest Ranch in Datil, so I did a few more photos of his unoccupied traveling machine. Shortly he came outside and, as might be expected for someone driving such an attention getting vehicle, he was quite talkative.



George J. Bombardier, Jr.

George J. Bombardier, Jr. of Bloomington, California, is enjoying his retirement in style. Turns out his transportation is a bonafide golf cart, or was. In addition to the Chevy body, which is one of many styles available, he chose a custom paint job to keep it looking

good. He also installed a 500cc Kawasaki engine in place of the original electric motor, and a host of goodies like a stereo and video camera. His bed is a folding plywood platform which carries his sleeping bag and sundries, and he has storm flaps that roll down from the top (roof?) to keep him not dry, but less wet.

Where was he headed in this easy going fashion? "Connecticut, I've got family there." And, this is not his first transcontinental excursion a la golf cart. He's worn out other carts and has stories to fill a book. He knows the country -- and many policemen by name. They look out for him and help him along his favorite routes.

So keep your eyes open, George J. may be puttering back this way some day, though he'll take a detour around Salt River Canyon, "that place was a nightmare." And after all, the idea is to enjoy traveling in the lap of luxury.

K. Gatlin

SITE & WYE

The North Arm French drain is finally complete. The Track Crew decided to go further than the original plan, so the drain now runs from BN-5 to CN-8 and from CN-7 to CN-8. By the time this is printed, the track from CN-8 to BN-5 should be leveled and aligned. The Grounds Crew began the LPS installation over the wave guide where zinc no longer exists. Godin Otero, Johnny Gonzalez, and as many people as they could borrow to help, did the continuity check on the zinc strips to determine where new cable was needed.

Most of the Site and Wye Group moved the tables, chairs, and speakers' stand from Socorro to the Site, and joined AAB personnel in setting up for the VLA 20th Anniversary celebration on May 24, then delivered them back to Socorro on Thursday, the 25th.

The Auto Mechanics have been very busy. Seems they have had a lot of repairs to do besides keeping up with PM's, clutch repairs, power steering units broken, steering gear boxes kaput, broken transmissions, etc. However, they have managed to modify the grader for plowing LPS cable in over the wave guide, in spite of all this.

P. Lewis

Thanks to all those who helped with the 20th Anniversary Celebration!