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VLA/VLBA

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NEWSLETTER

MARCH WEATHER STATS	
HIGH	LOW
71.8° (20th)	12.2° (16th)
Total Precipitation: 0.5"	
VLA Operations	

From the World's Premier Centimeter Wave Radio Synthesis Telescopes

AROUND THE VLA

Welcome to all of the summer temporary workers! They are: Clark Hust in the Auto Shop; Felipe Baca, Marcus Pino, Shannon Kinnamon, Frank McCutcheon, and James Trujillo on the Antenna Painting Crew; and Ronnie Baca, Michael Greenwood, Jay Apachito, Kcenny Padilla, Antonio Montoya, Todd Dixon, and Carl Oler on the Track Crew. They start work on April 2.

There is a video on site of a lecture given at the AOC given by Robert Preston of JPL titled "Observing the Sun in the Prehistoric Southwest." If you are interested in seeing it, please contact Patty Lindsey.

NRAO OMBUDS PROGRAM

One person at each NRAO site has been selected to serve as ombuds representative. They serve as an impartial source of assistance in resolving employee problems. They have the authority to look into any situation presented, meet and discuss with anyone having knowledge of the matter, and to give advice or an opinion as his or her judgement dictates. The ombuds acts as a neutral member of the organization who provides confidential and inform assistance to employees in resolving work-related concerns.

Anything discussed between any employee and an ombuds remains strictly confidential. The ombuds' role may be either passive or active in providing assistance to an employee. Sometimes an employee needs someone to listen to a problem and explore the options. At other times, the ombuds may play as active role in investigating the actions or decisions which have affected the employee.

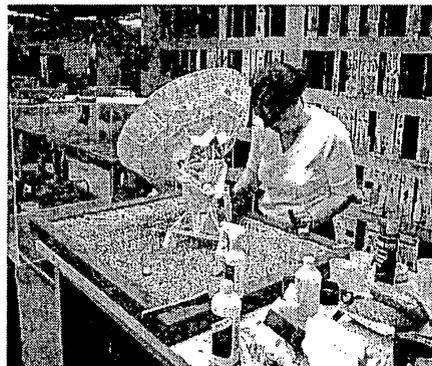
The ombuds representative at the AOC is Sheila Reasner, and at the VLA, Patty Lindsey.

P. Lindsey

ANTENNA 29 OVERHAUL PROJECT

Severe structural problems were discovered on Antenna 29. Several of the support beams had broken loose from the structure. Some of these beams had become completely unattached. The only way to remedy this situation was to disassemble the antenna and repair the backup structure and yoke arm.

After the repairs were completed the antenna was repainted. During the painting of Antenna 29, it was noted that the guardrail on the stairs leading to the vertex room was missing. This condition was documented on a safety action report and forwarded to the Safety Department. In spite of the missing guardrail, Antenna 29 was painted in record time. It usually takes several weeks to overhaul and paint an antenna but our "super telescope mechanic" Emma Rice was able to paint and overhaul this antenna in just a few days. Emma also applied a fresh coat of paint to Transporter number 3 and spread gravel around the south arm pedestal location (BS1).



Emma Rice Overhauls Visitor Center Antenna

So, next time you are in the Visitor Center, please take notice of Emma's great repair and repainting job on the antenna and transporter model.

J. Thunborg

APRIL SKIES

April continues to be a good month to hunt for Messier Objects although the rapidly waxing moon will make this a bit of a problem during the early days of the month. Remember that daylight savings time begins on April 1st, so skies really won't start getting very dark until after 8:30 in the evening.

While Venus rapidly disappeared from the evening sky in March, just as rapidly, it has reappeared in the morning sky. On April 1 only 1% of the planet will be visible at sunrise. By month's end it will be 22% illuminated and will brighten to magnitude -4.5, rising to about 30 degrees above the horizon in the southeastern morning sky.

Both Jupiter and Saturn will continue to be visible in the western sky after sunset for most of the month. By the end of the month Saturn will set near the end of twilight. On the 25th and 26th they will be joined by the new crescent moon on what will be a beautiful early evening sight.

Mars comes up around midnight and by late in the month enough of its disk will be visible so that surface features will be visible through moderate sized telescopes on nights with good, clear and steady seeing.

The New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club will be hosting a star party on Friday, April 6th in conjunction with the New Mexico State Science Fair. By the 6th, the moon will be the dominant object in the sky and prime for viewing if you like looking at lunar topography. The public is cordially invited to attend this star party.

On Saturday, April 7th, the Astronomy Club will have a telescope set up in the vicinity of the Tech Gym during the Science Fair. This properly filtered telescope will be tracking a famous nearby star known as "Old Sol." Stop by for a look and see if you can spot his spots!

J. Spargo

SITE & WYE NEWS

The Track Crew has been preparing for the delivery of track ballast and rail road ties. The area north of the East Arm track at CE-8 has been graded and gravelled to accommodate the ballast. The area between CW-5 and the old maintenance spur will be the storage area for the ties, timbers and planks. They have also rebuilt fences and installed new gates at several stations on the East and West Arms.

The Grounds Crew has been proceeding with the wave guide lightning protection system (LPS), in spite of the old grader about to give up the ghost. The LPS is complete as of March 22!! BUEN JALE, Godin and Johnny. They continue to do more trenching at the ALMA test site. Godin has also been shopping for trees to replace the diseased ones he had to cut down.

Charley has installed a partition in the Track Shop. This will divide the break area from the construction area. He has been painting in VSQ building #3 in preparation for ALMA occupancy. Ricky Rael and Johnny Montoya have been stripping and waxing the floors in the Control Building and they look great! They also added plastic attachments to the chairs in the Conference Room to help keep the floor looking good.

The Auto Shop has been prepping all of the equipment in order to be ready for the influx of help in April. Many modifications, retrofits and repairs are still in motion. They will be removing the engine from the blue MC-9 and will install a remanufactured one received recently. By the end of March, they should also be receiving a 1998 semi-tractor.

P. Lewis

TIME CARDS

So you didn't get paid what you had expected? Fiscal personnel use their best judgment interpreting information on your time card to calculate pay. However, there are times when the leave marked on a time card is not clear and you may not get paid or credited for the hours you think you should.

Here are three examples of problems which have delayed employees from being paid correctly. By pointing these out to you, we hope that you will see the need to take a little more care completing your time cards, so you will not have to wait for your correct pay.

Example One: There is no leave code on an exempt monthly time report, only eight (8)

hours marked on one day. Exempt employees need only mark the approved leave code and they will be paid for eight (8) hours. Marking hours only without a leave code flagged it as an exception. If leave taken is other than eight (8) hours, write the number of hours beside the approved leave symbol.

Example Two: A non-existent leave code was used. An employee had marked "7 lwop". Fiscal interpreted the time card coding to be 7 hours leave without pay. What the employee had marked was 7 and 1 wop (without pay) thinking he should get 7 hours regular pay and 1-hour leave without pay. This problem was corrected the following pay period.

Please note approved time codes are listed on the back of your time card. Fiscal is not authorized to pay for leave time if an incorrect code is used. In the event that Fiscal personnel do not understand the code, we will make a copy of your time card and forward to your supervisor for correction. If it is returned to Fiscal before our payroll-processing deadline, it will be included in the current payroll. If, however, it is received after the deadline, it will be included in the following payroll.

Example three: Fiscal has received incomplete time reports, which included fewer hours than the employee actually worked. Fiscal will only pay for the hours indicated on the time card.

It is the responsibility of the employee and supervisor to mark the correct hours worked and the correct hours of leave taken on the time reports. If you have any questions regarding time report coding call Don at 835-7440.

D. Welty

COOKING WITH MAINSAVER

Mainsaver is a database tool used to track maintenance activities. Here at NRAO Socorro, we use Mainsaver to produce work requests and work orders, track equipment location through a hierarchy, and accumulate maintenance hours by category. Besides being a good tool to identify what maintenance is required each day, Mainsaver provides a record of what activities have been done in the past. This history provides information on individual modules such as repeat failures and can be used to identify failure trends. This history also provides a justification of manpower and resources.

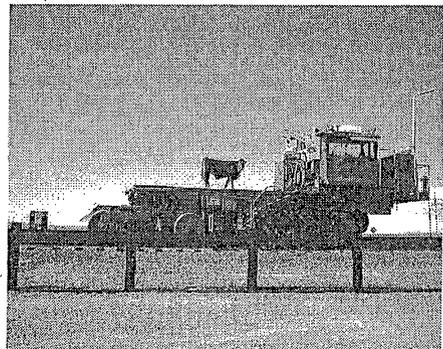
Cayenta Corporation now owns Mainsaver and is providing support. They have produced a tutorial that is a good introduction to the basic operation but also provides examples of the more advanced features such as interactive searches, preventive maintenance scheduling and linking work orders to check lists. Copies of this tutorial can be obtained from Phillip Hicks, the Maintenance Coordinator.

A new version of Mainsaver will be installed in March. This version fixes a few bugs and has enhanced email capabilities. Full screen capability is supported and hierarchy manipulation is more robust. Mainsaver resides on each individual computer, similar to Netscape, for example. Improving Mainsaver requires every user computer program to be upgraded. This will require a visit from our local computer division.

S. Durand

COWPORTER

On March 31, a cow crawled up on the VLA transporter and could not find her way down. Whenever anyone approached the transporter she became quite agitated. We dared not approach the transporter for fear that she would jump off and injure herself. We summoned a few of the VLA cowboys and it was decided that she would eventually find her way back down the stairs if we left her alone. After leaving for the evening and finding her still aboard the transporter the next day, we knew that we would have to try another approach. We would have to do something soon, as she did not have water or food available on the transporter.



A Really Curious Cow!

It was suggested by some that a barbeque might be a reasonable solution. This idea however, would probably meet with some resistance from the local rancher who owned the cow. Luckily, on the afternoon of April 1st, she was able to find her way into the cab of the transporter where she subsequently started it and drove off into the sunset.

J. Thunborg