

# HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION NEWSLETTER 15 APRIL 1990

## -- CHAIRMAN'S REPORT -- Katherine Bracher

In 1989 the HAD held two meetings: the first, in Boston in January, was reported in last year's annual report. The second was held at the University of Michigan on June 11 and 12, in conjunction with the AAS meeting there. The Sunday session (prior to the opening of the AAS meeting) was held at the old Detroit Observatory on the University campus. About 25 members attended, and were able to tour the 1854 observatory, which is being restored through the efforts of Professor Nicholas Steneck of the Department of History. Instruments there include a 12-inch Henry Fitz refractor and a beautiful meridian circle by Pistor and Martins. Participants in the session heard three papers on the history of the observatory and its staff in the 19th and early 20th centuries, given by Margaret Steneck, Nicholas Steneck, and Rudi Lindner, all of the University of Michigan. Other Michigan-related talks were given by T. R. Williams (on Robert McMath) and by Owen Gingerich (on the 1953 Michigan Summer School in Astrophysics).

On Monday, June 12, the HAD held a morning session at the regular AAS meeting. K. D. Pang spoke on Shang Dynasty oracle bones and eclipse records (essentially a recalibration of Chinese calendrical records), and his analysis at our session was noted in *Science News*. Donald Osterbrock gave us insight into Lick's W. W. Campbell as the creator of an "astronomical factory" and William Liller's talk on the orientation of ceremonial platforms on Easter Island was a welcome addition as he originally was scheduled to present the paper at Boston. Although this session was well attended (75--100 people), the paucity of papers was due to the fact that this was the second HAD meeting in six months. We still attracted almost 1/4 of the total AAS membership attending the meetings in Michigan!

HAD people were also saving up for Washington. On January 13/14, 1990, the HAD met in Crystal City, VA, again in conjunction with the AAS. We had two very full contributed oral sessions (13 contributed and one invited) on the 13th, as well as a poster session that day. Both were well attended, and indeed many of the talks were fascinating and memorable.

### *The January HAD Business Meeting in Washington:*

The HAD Business meeting was held at 1:00 pm on the 13th, with about 30 members present. Among future meeting plans we discussed the June 1990 meeting in Albuquerque. As Mike notes below, there will be a special session and a field trip, to be co-sponsored by the HAD, but arranged by Mike. We also discussed invitations for future meetings in Seattle (May 1991) to be organized by Woody Sullivan; and in Chicago at the Adler Planetarium (June 1992) to be organized by James Sweitzer. Both were enthusiastically accepted; especially the possibility of a joint meeting in Chicago with the Division for Dynamical Astronomy. LeRoy Doggett is pursuing this last possibility.

Steve Dick discussed the matter of publishing properly prepared obituary notices in the *Bulletin of the AAS*, and urged HAD members to endorse this when they respond to the AAS Survey that has been distributed. David DeVorkin pointed out the need to support the preservation of old *Astrophysical Journal* correspondence, and the members voted to endorse this preservation effort with a one-time \$50 contribution from the HAD coffers. Members also approved the transfer of remaining AAS files to the American Institute of Physics, which had been approved by the AAS Council earlier in the week. DeVorkin was also authorized to grant requests for one-time copies of the HAD mailing

list at the discretion of the HAD committee, and to charge for these lists (two rates: one for non-profit scholarly organizations with allied historical interests, and one for all others). Ray White discussed the new status of the *Astronomy Quarterly*, and encouraged HAD members to submit historical articles.

**Note:** As plans now stand, we will be meeting in Philadelphia in January 1992 with the AAS. If any HAD members in that city are interested in helping with local arrangements, please contact me or David.

**Note 2:** As you will read elsewhere in this Newsletter, the HAD Nominating Committee would like your suggestions for additional names for the upcoming election. **Speak now or...**

**Note 3:** The Winter 1992 meeting will be in Atlanta. We must decide by the end of the Business meeting in January 1991 in Philadelphia what our plans will be. If any Atlantans have any ideas, let us know!

On Sunday, January 14, the HAD cosponsored an all-day symposium at the U. S. Naval Observatory, on the topic of National Observatories. Steve Dick and LeRoy Doggett are to be congratulated on organizing one of the best and most coherent thematic sessions we have yet enjoyed. It was a fitting continuation of the precedent set in Boston. Historians of astronomy across the United States and abroad attended and contributed. About 75 people stayed the whole day, and were treated to a wonderful lunch, reception and tour. In all, a very satisfactory history day. As you know the proceedings are soon to appear in *The Journal for the History of Astronomy*.

#### -- THE ALBUQUERQUE MEETING -- Michael Zeilik

The Albuquerque June AAS meeting will include a special session on Archaeo- and Ethnoastronomy, Tuesday, 12 June, from 10:00 - 11:30 am. The theme of this session will be "The Greater Southwest." Kim Malville has agreed to provide a special invited review paper, and other invitations thus far accepted are by Ed Krupp, who will be speaking on "Southern California Astronomy and Ethnography;" Rolf Sinclair and Anna Sofaer on "Building Alignments at Chaco Canyon;" and Rob Robbins on "Astronomical Imagery in Mogollon Pottery."

We are also planning an exciting field trip for Sunday, June 10. Tentatively, I hope to arrange for a special visit to the Pecos National Monument, as well as a visit to a New Mexican winery, and the "Star Axis" site by artist Charles Rass. Transportation will be by special van, and a lunch will be included at an estimated total cost of about \$20 per person. We will return to the meeting site before the evening AAS reception. I [*Mike Zeilik*] will be handling all arrangements for the special session and field trip locally, so if you are interested, please let me know as soon as possible so I can confirm these arrangements. The final HAD Newsletter for the Albuquerque meeting will be coming out of my office at the University of New Mexico Department of Physics and Astronomy, Albuquerque, NM 87131. (505) 277-2616; FAX: (505) 277-1520.

#### - The HAD Nominating Committee -- Don Osterbrock

The nominating committee for the upcoming HAD election later this year includes Don Osterbrock, chair (Institute for Advanced Study, (609) 734-8191; FAX (609) 924-8399; E-Mail: DON@IASSNS.BITNET - till June), LeRoy Doggett (USNO - (202) 653-1572 [navobsy@narda.cva.arpa]), and Sarah Genuth (Adler (312) 322-0320). They must identify two candidates for vice chair, and four candidates for the HAD committee to complete the ballot. Please contact any of the three as soon as possible if you have suggestions. An official ballot will appear in the early Fall issue of the Newsletter.

-- *American Astronomical Obituaries* - **Steve Dick**

Six years ago John Lankford first brought to the attention of the Society "The Decline of the Obituary as a Source for the History of Modern Astronomy." (*BAAS*, 16, no. 2 (1984), pp. 560-64). In 1989 the President of the HAD appointed an *ad hoc* committee to study the issue. The committee (S. Dick, S. Brush, and J. Lankford) has confirmed Lankford's conclusions, which are also evident in any volume of *Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts*. Only about 10% of the obituaries listed in that publication have American astronomers as their subject, and many of these are in foreign journals.

After due consideration the committee has made the following recommendations: (1) that astronomical obituaries be published in the *BAAS* as a journal of record of the AAS; (2) that these obituaries be a maximum of 2-3 pages in the *BAAS*, amounting to perhaps 25 pages per year in the Bulletin; (3) that page charges be waived for this purpose; (4) that HAD members play an appropriate supporting role in the event this proposal is adopted, perhaps as part of an obituary editorial board; and (5) that in the meantime HAD members encourage favorable consideration of this matter by the AAS Publications Board and eventually by the Council.

As a publication of the AAS, we feel the Bulletin is appropriate as the journal of record for obituaries of its members. Other publications, such as the AIP's *Physics Today*, have a much broader constituency and cannot be expected to provide adequate coverage for astronomy. Surely, however, our Society -- one that publishes thousands of pages of scientific results annually -- can publish 20 to 25 pages of obituaries in the same time period, not only for the benefit of historians of modern astronomy, but also as a memorial to the astronomers who produced all those scientific results.

The decisions of the Committee on the Future of the *BAAS* and the AAS Publications Committee are due out soon. We urge AAS members to support the recommendations listed above.

-- *Herbert C. Pollack Awards for 1990/1991*

The seventh annual Pollack Awards have been announced by the Board of Trustees of the Dudley Observatory for research in the history of astronomy and astrophysics. Recipients are:

\$10,000 Pollack Award:

**James M. Lattis** (U. Wisc.)  
"A Study of Christopher Clavius."

\$5,000 Dudley Award

**Mark Littman** (Loyola Coll.)  
"Biography of Edwin Hubble."

\$3,000 Dudley Award

**Norriss S. Hetherington** (U of Calif.)  
"Edwin Hubble's Cosmology."

\$2,000 Dudley Award

**Frederic J. Baumgartner** (Vir. Poly.)  
"The Origins of the Provençal School of Astronomy."

Submission deadlines for Pollack Awards is 15 December of each year, with announcements by mid-January. Please submit three copies of proposals to Ralph A. Alpher, The Dudley Observatory, 69 Union Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12308.

