

# **HISTORY OF THE TWIN CITY**

## **AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS**

### **1960 - 2020**

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TCAA Historian

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This is a historical review of six decades of trends within and noteworthy events conducted by the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, both as a group and as individuals. The work relates important historical information about various persons who have contributed significantly to establishing and achieving the goals of the club. It contains numerous pictures and appendices, thanks to the generosity of a number of club members, newsletter editors, and associates of the author.

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I want to thank Bertha Kieviet and Weldon Schuette who, during the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the club, submitted to recorded interviews relating to the founding and early history of the TCAA. I want to thank early members of the club who provided oral comments or written reflections. I want to thank those unnamed members who provided information to *The Pantagraph* for articles where other parts of the early history were inadvertently preserved.

I want to thank proofreaders Mike Ryder, Lee Green, Bill Blunk, Sharon MacDonald, Barry Beaman, and Taylor Cisco. These individuals kept me from committing too many grammatical faux pas, provided me additional details, and helped set the historical record straight in some circumstances. If any inaccuracies remain, they are my failing and my responsibility.

I want to thank Bill Blunk and Mike Ryder for their personal recollections of the first few years of the TCAA, as well as David B. Williams who wrote the first newsletters of the TCAA. I want to thank Kora Searcy for additional thoughts about her parents, John & Bertha Kieviet. These reflections provided wonderful insights not obtained by reading extant club records.

I want to thank William Carney, Mike Ryder, and Marie-Antoinette Keeran for some historical photographs; I'd like to thank Vernelle and Diane Armour (the Kieviet's son-in-law and daughter) and Kora Searcy (the Kieviet's daughter) for some early pictures of John and Bertha Kieviet and club activities. I want to thank Bob Finnigan for enthusiastic assistance a photo editor and guide for the production of the master file for this publication. I want to thank my wife Carolyn for taking many pictures of TCAA events during our first years in the club more than three decades ago.

I extend my thanks to all my family members – Carolyn, Rebecca, and Teresa – for their continuing support that also contributed to the success of this project.

C. J. W.

## **President's Message: Our Golden Anniversary**

### **The TCAA is 50 Years Old!**

Way back in 1960, when I was but a child, people met together to find a way to share with others a common love. We were not part of their hopes; we did not enter their minds when they stood up.

They stood up to form a club to celebrate the dawning of a new age. With the Space Age, new frontiers were ripped open, exposing us to new truths about the world and universe around us. In many ways, the era of rockets and satellites and space probes was just a continuation of the many technological advances mankind achieved during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Once industrial strength machines were married to aeronautics, it was just a matter of time before we learned how to break the bonds of gravity. It was almost inevitable that we would strive to extend our reach into previously inaccessible realms, exploring the solar system in ways that, then, must have seemed like science fiction.

And we have explored! Look at all that humanity has accomplished in the last 50 years. In the first 10, not only did we put a man on the Moon, but we placed satellites around planet Earth to monitor weather and provide instant communications worldwide. The second decade taught us to improve our probes and send them throughout the solar system and, with Skylab, start to learn how to survive in outer space. Our third decade brought us the space shuttle making space flight more accessible, paving the way for a Mission to Planet Earth that continues to teach us innovative ways to measure worldwide processes. Our fourth decade saw the introduction of space-based telescopes that monitor and measure the Universe across the spectrum in detail and in a scope as we can scarcely imagine. Throughout our fifth decade, we have continued to expand and refine and deepen our scientific understanding of the cosmos using increasingly sophisticated technologies that are more accessible and affordable than ever before.

Here we stand, 50 years from the beginning of the TCAA. Let us remember all those who came before; those who gave of their time, whose efforts have established and built this club of ours. Let us thank all our longtime members who have sustained the proud traditions of education, public outreach, and community service.

We can be proud that we have a dynamic club that is so active throughout the community. We publish our monthly newsletter, *The OBSERVER*, and we hold eight public observing sessions each year where we meet many people interested in astronomy. We are engaged in an amazing number of events with other groups, giving back a small part of what we have received.

And somehow, members still have time to engage in observing programs and the pursuit of individual interests.

Thank you, TCAAers! Thank you for making the TCAA a great club where friends can join together and share a few of the joys we feel and the hopes we have, as we observe the wonders of the heavens.

Let us resolve to continue the traditions that our predecessors have given to us. Help to sustain this club as we continue to bring the amazing world of astronomy to those of the next generation. Join us as the Twin City Amateur Astronomers continue our activities another 50 years and even beyond.

Lee Green, President  
February 4, 2010

## Introduction

*I remember.* This statement has been my guiding star...

Readers might wonder what motivates the writer of a historical volume such as this. It is the memories. At the time of this writing, I have been a member of the TCAA for more than 32 years – approximately 2/3 of its history. Having been fortunate enough to start attending TCAA meetings in 1978 and joining officially in 1979 (after being elected vice president!), I have had the opportunity to know the club's many luminaries, the history of whom is recorded in this brief work. While it is my desire to share my memories with those who came and will come after me, I am personally motivated to undertake a perpetual sentimental journey. Share with me as we walk down memory lane.

As I wrote in *The OBSERVER* during the past year, I've always encouraged my family – my wife Carolyn and my daughters Rebecca and Teresa – to make memories for themselves. Life will be so much the richer for having done so. In writing this *History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers 1960-2010*, I hope to preserve the collective memory of the club for future generations of amateur astronomers here in the heartland of Illinois. How much richer their lives will be knowing that they now belong to a club with a very significant past – all made possible by the hard work and efforts of TCAAers like you and me.

I hope that others experience even half as much joy reading as I have had in weaving the fabric of this narrative. Doing so has put me in touch with many of the club's early members. Many have shared their personal recollections with me, and this has added immeasurably to the warp and weft of this fabric. It has been easy for me to write this history; it is a work of passion – a labor of love – in which I have been engaged for more than 30 years.

Carl J. Wenning  
TCAA Historian  
January 6, 2010

*Feast of the Epiphany – Commemorating three wise men who once were led by the light of a star.*

## **Dedication**



*This historical volume is dedicated to the lasting memory of John Kieviet (1908-1981) and Bertha Ziebell Kieviet (1912-1994), co-founders of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers.*



# **HISTORY OF THE TWIN CITY AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS 1960 - 2020**

CARL J. WENNING

TCAA HISTORIAN

### ***The Founding of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers: 1960<sup>1</sup>***

In 1960 the group to become known as Twin City Amateur Astronomers was founded. John<sup>2</sup> H. and Bertha<sup>3</sup> L. Kieviet provided impetus for the new club after they moved to Normal (715 N. School Street) in 1957<sup>4</sup>. Both John and Bertha had been very active in the Galesburg Amateur Astronomers<sup>5</sup> of Galesburg, Illinois, with John only recently having served as president. This was a club whose members came from the local community, including Galesburg High School students and professors from Knox College. John's work as an architect<sup>6</sup> eventually drew him to the Twin Cities. Upon arriving in their new community, the Kieviets discovered much to their chagrin that no astronomy club existed in their new town. With the passing of the next three years, the lack of an astronomy club seemed to be a growing omission in light of the fact that so many space-related "firsts" were happening: Sputnik, Laika the space dog, the satellites Explorer and Vanguard, the selection of the Mercury astronauts, the Luna 2 hard landing, and the first pictures of the Moon's far side taken by Luna 3. John and Bertha resolved to rectify the situation.<sup>7</sup>

The Kieviets began by contacting Mr. George Sperry, recreation director for the Normal Parks and Recreation Department. It was their hope to establish an astronomy club under the sponsorship of the town of Normal. A meeting was set up with Mr. Sperry to discuss the proposed club. Mr. Sperry visited the home of John and Bertha on January 23, 1960, to discuss details. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, a meeting announcement was made in the local newspaper, *The*

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<sup>1</sup> In an interesting side note, the TCAA was not the first astronomy club in the Twin Cities. During the early 1900s a small group was formed in Bloomington. See Appendix 1 for details.

<sup>2</sup> b. October 22, 1908, Chicago, son of Nicholas and Cora Owens Kieviet; d. October 28, 1981. John is interred in the Park Hill Cemetery Mausoleum (west exterior) in Bloomington. Bertha was laid to rest beside him after her death.

<sup>3</sup> b. February 24, 1912, Bremen Township, Cook County, IL, daughter of Ewald and Niesja Dyk Ziebell; d. October 6, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> John and Bertha married on May 26, 1934, in Harvey, IL. They had two daughters when the club was founded, Valeria (18; later married Vernelle Armour; Valeria passed away on January 1, 2010) and Kora (13; later married James Searcy). There was also a son, Victor, who was stillborn in 1939. Both daughters spent their lives in Bloomington-Normal. Both John and Bertha were of Dutch extraction.

<sup>5</sup> A newspaper clipping from the late 1950s provided by Vernelle Armour titled *Astronomers Group Hears Description of California Telescope* reads as follows: "A report on their recent visit to the telescope at Mount Palomar, Calif., was given Wednesday night by John Kieviet and Bertha Kieviet at the July meeting of the Galesburg Amateur Astronomers in the Lowell Whitsitt home at Abingdon. After the meeting, which was conducted by Kieviet as vice president in the absence of Ralph Sabetti, president, the members participated in viewing through portable telescopes. Providing the telescopes were Carl Sand, Harlowe Horein and Kieviet. The next meeting will be held Aug. 3."

<sup>6</sup> After graduating from Lindblom High School in Chicago on June 24, 1926, John went on to become a licensed architect. He did so following personal study; he never attended college. After moving to Normal, he worked for Schaefer, Wilson & Evans, Architects, 108 West Monroe Street, Bloomington, Illinois, for 16 years, retiring in 1973. He was frequently involved in the work of Bloomington's Elks Lodge, the Loyal Order of Moose, and the Corn Belt Stamp Club.

<sup>7</sup> To gain a good understanding of the nature of amateur astronomy at this time, see *Amateur Astronomy Handbook* by Lloyd Mallan (1960). Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications. Thanks to Bill Blunk for pointing out this publication.

*Pantagraph*, calling for “amateur moon watchers and star gazers” to assemble in the Normal swimming pool bathhouse “to meet fellow novice astronomers.” According to Mr. Sperry, “any person of junior high school age and over interested in astronomy” was invited to attend the meeting. The meeting was set for Thursday, February 4, 1960, at 7:30 p.m.

At this organizational meeting Mr. Sperry introduced Mr. Kieviet as the person best qualified to guide the new club through its formative period. Mr. Kieviet then explained what he saw as club goals. The main themes would be observing and the sharing of observations with each other and the general public. The club would be a social organization, and never a moneymaking endeavor. Dues were set at \$3.50 for the first adult family member, \$1 for each additional adult family member, and \$3.00 for students. Dues would cover what small expenses the club would have. By way of Mr. Sperry, the town of Normal offered support for a club newsletter if such a newsletter was to be established. *Sky & Telescope* magazine was adopted as a benefit of membership.

John Kieviet was selected as temporary chairman of the club because the election of officers was pending. Mrs. Eileen Jetton<sup>8</sup> and Mr. Lee Brooks were appointed to serve as a nominating committee, and Mrs. Judy Walker and Mr. Robert Courtney were appointed to a constitution committee. In other business, the 20 individuals present at that meeting agreed to meet on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7:30 p.m. At this first meeting, the membership agreed to meet two weeks later to elect officers and adopt formal articles.

The first regular meeting of the club held on Thursday, February 18, 1960. John Kieviet was elected as the club’s first president; Henry (Hank) F. Janecek, vice-president; Judy Walker, recording secretary; Eileen Jetton corresponding secretary and treasurer; and Robert Courtney, librarian.<sup>9</sup> Norma Fese<sup>10</sup> suggested the name “Twin City Amateur Astronomers.” Norma attended the first few meetings of the organization but never officially joined. The first dues payments were collected at this time.<sup>11</sup> A newspaper article making these announcements appeared two days later in the *Pantagraph*.

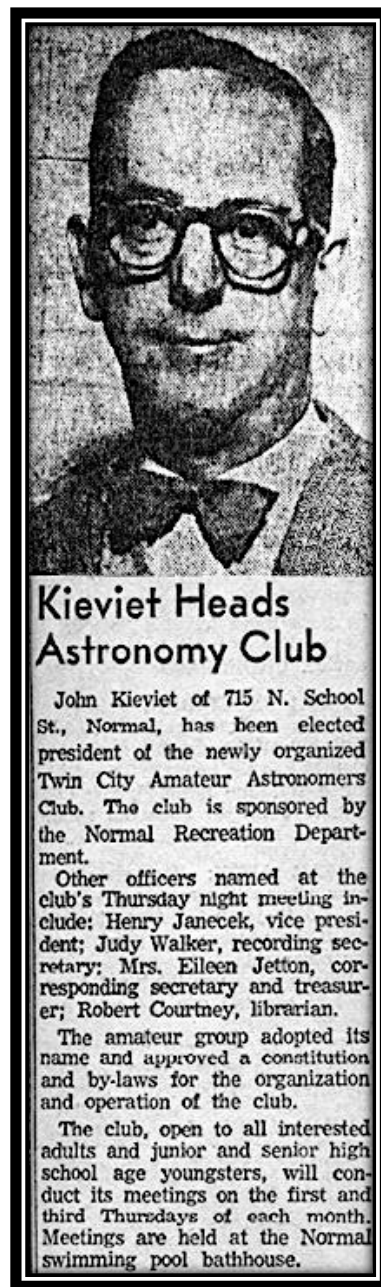
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<sup>8</sup> At the time of this writing (December 2009), Eileen Jetton is 99 years old and still living in Bloomington, IL.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 4 for a listing of major club office holders by year.

<sup>10</sup> Norma Verlee Fese was one of the last surviving adults associated with the founding of the TCAA. She passed away on December 24, 2009 – almost 50 years from the founding of the club. She was 88 years old. Norma always enjoyed discussing “science, space and many of life’s mysteries” according to her obituary appearing in *The Pantagraph* on December 28, 2009. At that time Norma was a 38-year-old mother of three.

<sup>11</sup> In order of dues payment on March 4, 1960, here are the founding members of the club as they appear in the minutes of that meeting: Owen Brooks, Taylor Cisco, Robert Courtney, Spencer DePauw, Jim Engan, Henry Janecek, Eileen Jetton, Bertha Kieviet, John Kieviet, Mary Knickerbocker, Sue Remsburg, Pearl Reynolds, Judy Walker, and David Williams. Warren Light was present at this meeting, but paid his dues on March 17 along with Dennis Soebbing, and Dan L. Hovis. Karen Mishler joined on April 7, Michael Ryder joined on April 23, and Wilma Dickman joined on September 1.

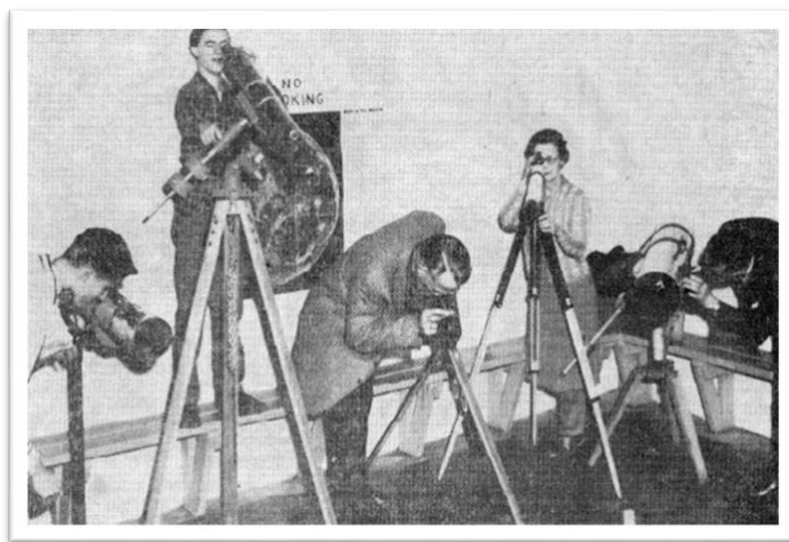


**Figure 1.** *Pantagraph* announcement carrying official club title on Saturday, February 20, 1960

Under John Kieviet's able leadership, the first year of the club's existence proved to be very active. An attempt at monthly public viewing sessions was made and the sky – with its many and varied celestial events – was very accommodating. On the night of March 12-13, club members viewed a total lunar eclipse with the general public at Fairview Park. This was followed by an August 1 observing session featuring Jupiter and Saturn. Seven telescopes were used to exhibit

the wonders of the solar system to some 200 attendees. Later that month, members watched the annual Perseid Meteor shower. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, a total lunar eclipse and the Aurora Borealis were observed simultaneously. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, club members viewed a late afternoon partial solar eclipse, and three days later the public was treated to another peak at Jupiter, Saturn and this time, the crescent moon. October 8<sup>th</sup> marked the date for the first ever club trip to the Adler Planetarium in Chicago. On November 7<sup>th</sup>, members successfully observed the transit of Mercury across the face of the Sun<sup>12</sup>. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, two films describing the Moon and “featuring sound” were presented to club members and visitors.

During the first years of the club, there were only a few notable telescopes among the membership. Among them were a 6-inch reflector built and owned by John Kieviet, a 3-inch refractor owned by Robert Courtney, and a 3-inch Newtonian reflector owned by high school student David B. Williams. Nonetheless, the membership of this new and lively club made excellent use of very limited resources.



**Figure 2.** *Club members demonstrate telescopes February 5, 1961*

In addition to attending observing sessions at Fairview Park in Normal, at Oakland School in Bloomington, and at the homes of club members, John Kieviet encouraged TCAAers to prepare “Vital Statistics” for every meeting. These “Vital Statistics” (Julian date, moon phase, age,

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<sup>12</sup> Sue Remsburg Bassett fondly remembered observing the projected image of the sun and Mercury using John Kieviet’s reflector as well as Robert Courtney’s refractor (using an eyepiece solar filter) when she spoke about this event with the author on April 20, 2010.

sidereal time, location of planets, sunset, end of twilight, and other current information) became a part of regular club meetings through the late 1970s.

During wintertime, the Fairview Park bathhouse<sup>13</sup> was converted into a recreation hall because bathers were not then using it. During the summer, the cabana was not available and so club members met in any of a variety of locations – in the Police Department of the Town of Normal city hall, Fairview Sanitarium, Citizens Savings and Loan, Victory Hall, Felmley Hall of Science at Illinois State University (ISU), and Sherff Hall of Science at Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU).



**Figure 3.** *First Annual Meeting at the Fairview Park cabana*

The astronomy club had an auspicious beginning under the able leadership of John and Bertha Kieviet – the membership having grown to 23 by the end of the year. The first anniversary of the club was celebrated at the Fairview Swimming Pool cabana with a large photograph appearing in *The Pantagraph* the next day. During this first year of the TCAA, *The Pantagraph* carried no less than 15 articles chronicling the activities of the newly formed club. Thanks to David Williams,<sup>14</sup> the next five years of TCAA activity was chronicled carefully in a newsletter.

<sup>13</sup> According to Kora Searcy – the Kieviet’s daughter – her father absolutely hated the word “bathhouse”. He insisted on using the word “cabana” whenever talking about this meeting location.

<sup>14</sup> Years later, David would become president of the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO) for two terms running from 2005-2007. Further, David would serve on the AAVSO Council for more than ten years during which time his efforts included the purchase of the *Sky & Telescope* building at 49 Bay State Road for the new AAVSO Headquarters. In addition, he discovered several variable stars while researching in the Harvard College Observatory plate stacks.

### ***The Years of Activity: 1961 - 1965***

Beginning in August of 1961 David Williams prepared an untitled monthly astronomy club newsletter of one or two pages. The purpose of this publication was, among other things, to document the activities of club members. Each newsletter included information about meeting dates, astronomical events, observing ideas, and other club news. After several suggestions by club members that the newsletter be named, a contest was held to do so. David's own suggestion won – *The OBSERVER of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers*. The newsletter first carried the name on the June 1962 edition.<sup>15</sup>

*The OBSERVER* described a small but very active club. During this second year of the club, member Mike Ryder<sup>16</sup> obtained a 2.4-inch altazimuth Unitron refractor, Hank Janecek obtained 4.25-inch Newtonian reflector, and Bob Mayo moved up from a 4.25-inch reflector to an 8-inch reflector. Half a dozen members, including John Kieviet and Russell Blakney, completed homemade telescopes (6" and 4.25" respectively) before the first two years of the club came to pass.

During 1962 or 1963 the club began formal telescope-making activities. John Kieviet and Hank Janecek led the group using the Normal swimming pool cabana on Saturday morning during the winter to do so. Under their guidance, Bill Blunk completed a 4.25-inch f/5 RFT mirror and mounted it with the assistance of Bob Mayo. John Bryan<sup>17</sup> made a 4.25-inch telescope. Mike Ryder worked on an 8-inch telescope during this time as well.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> It is probably only a coincidence, but the newsletter of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green Bank, WV, was also titled *The Observer* at about this same time. This NRAO publication ran from 1961 – 1981.

<sup>16</sup> At the time of this writing, Mike is a retired physical science teacher and school administrator.

<sup>17</sup> Bill Blunk later remarked, "One former member who I have not seen any current information about is John Bryan. John was the same age as Dave Williams and Mike Ryder and was a club member at about the same time. I believe he and Dave were members (perhaps the main members) of a musical group called the "Hydraulic Banana Singers". They specialized in "Tom Lehrer" like satire and one song I recall (perhaps at a TCAA function) was a modification of "John Henry" who in the song was "a mirror grindin man" rather than a "steel drivin man" (personal communication, April 1, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> For additional details about telescope making, see *Bill Blunk in His Own Words* in Appendix 2. For comments from early members, see in this same appendix reflections by Taylor Cisco and Mike Ryder.



**Figure 4.** TCAAers demonstrate their mirror-making prowess for a Pantagraph photographer.

Because there was no “large” instrument in the club as this time, observations were limited to such things as the moon and planets, the Orion nebula, the Andromeda galaxy, and double and variable stars.<sup>19</sup> Members also were involved in meteor observing and watching occultations of Jupiter’s moons. On four evenings in December 1961, members Hank Janecek, Bill Blunk, and Lyle Rich observed and charted 111 members of the Geminid meteor shower. Delta Cephei was observed, and 31 magnitude estimates made by David Williams, Hank Janecek, and G. Weldon Schuette from October 1961 to January 1962. Weldon, commuting regularly from Gibson City<sup>20</sup>, observed the Echo satellite over 400 times. Public observing sessions were held. Attendance for trips to the Adler Planetarium in Chicago exceeded 20 several times as well. By April 1962, the club membership had stabilized at approximately 30 members, with generally ten persons attending each club function.<sup>21</sup>

By the second year, fully one-half of the TCAA membership was composed of junior high

<sup>19</sup> David Williams and Barry Beaman were both AAVSO members and reported their observations that were announced bi-monthly in the *Review of Popular Astronomy* – the same publication that would employ David as Associate Editor several years later.

<sup>20</sup> At this time Weldon worked for Vail H. Moore Associates in Paxton as an architectural draftsman. He moved to Normal to start work for Keith Middleton & Associates, Architects, on April 1, 1964.

<sup>21</sup> The club membership grew from 23 in 1960, to 33 in 1961, to 39 in 1962, and to 53 in 1963. After that, the membership numbers fluctuated up and down on an annual basis. The average annual membership over the first 25 years of the club was 33.2. The total number of different members over the first 25 years was 181.

school members. These members would be partitioned off in October 1963, under the leadership of Hank Janecek, into a youth group that could more easily cater to the wants and needs of the younger set. Tim McCarthy was elected president; Paul McClure, vice-president; Mike Fisher, secretary/treasurer; and Henry Charneskey, librarian. The meetings of the youth group were held concurrently with the regular club meetings.

Of particular note among the junior members were six very active boys<sup>22</sup> – among them David Williams, Mike Ryder, Taylor Cisco<sup>23</sup>, and John Bryan (the older ones who observed mostly on their own), as well as Bill Blunk and Lyle Rich (the younger ones who observed mostly with one another during club functions under supervision of John Kieviet, Hank Janecek and Bob Mayo). These individuals, mostly high school students at that time, were extremely active amateur astronomers and telescope makers. These individuals inspired many of the club's early activities. They frequently traveled to the Peoria Academy of Sciences' Northmoor Observatory for all-night observing sessions, observing primarily lunar and planetary objects.



**Figure 5.** *Some of the TCAA's "very active" junior members*

There were numerous opportunities to observe the heavens. Besides the observatory

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<sup>22</sup> As this manuscript is being written, David is living in Whitestown, IN; Mike is living in Oregon, IL; Taylor is living in Chicago, IL; John's whereabouts are unknown; Bill is living in Joliet, IL; and Lyle is deceased.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor was enrolled at University High School at this time along with club member Sue Remsburg.

equipment in Peoria, club members had obtained advance access to IWU's Behr Observatory.<sup>24</sup> After a professor at IWU by the name of Porter F. Brace departed in 1961, astronomy courses at that institution were discontinued. As a result, the Behr Observatory, which contained a 6.25-inch refractor, became unavailable to TCAA members, and fell into disuse for several years.

The TCAA's early involvement with the town of Normal nearly paid off by way of a public observatory on city property. Members had reason to believe that the town would completely fund such an observatory, and John Kieviet and others approached the city council for approval. Upon the recommendation of the new Normal Parks and Recreation director, Mr. Jerry MacDonald, the club undertook a program of selling hot chocolate to ice skaters at Fairview Park as a fundraising effort to support the project. Bertha would make kettles of cocoa in her kitchen and then transfer the mixture to insulated jugs to take to skaters and viewing parties on chilly evenings. During the months of December 1961 and January 1962 the ladies of the club, headed by Bertha Kieviet, generated \$55 for the observatory. Upon further examination of the costs involved, the city leaders rejected the proposal as too expensive.

With the passing of the years, TCAA members kept up their chosen mandate of being an entity dedicated to public service. Numerous star parties were held for Scouts and also for the general public. Membership swelled to a high in 1963 with 53 persons comprising the club, and many of these members undertook observing projects on their own. On July 20, 1963, a partial solar eclipse observing session at the home of Hank Janecek; it was attended by some 15 club members as well as members of the general public. Robert Courtney<sup>25</sup> went to Maine to observe the total phase of the eclipse, while Dan Hovis<sup>26</sup> went to Canada. Weldon Schuette also attempted traveling to Canada but was prevented from doing so by car trouble; he observed a partial eclipse from Indiana.

Observing the sky was an obsession for some, especially with the younger members. On the night of July 29, 1963, Lyle Rich and three other club members observed the Delta Aquarid meteor shower. Lyle observed and recorded 106 meteors. The observations formed the basis of a short article that appeared in the September 1963 issue of *Sky & Telescope* magazine. Beyond meteor observations, numerous magnitude estimates continued as part of an ongoing observing program. Beta Lyrae was the subject of 66 observations completed by David Williams, Mike

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<sup>24</sup> Located on the current site of the Mark Evans Observatory.

<sup>25</sup> He was a well-known projectionist at the Normal Theater and the Irvin and Castle theaters in Bloomington.

<sup>26</sup> Mr. Hovis was a traveling salesman from Belvidere, Illinois, who happened to be in the Twin Cities every Thursday evening and attended club activities when able to do so.

Ryder, Hank Janecek, Warren Light, Bill Blunk, and Lyle Rich<sup>27</sup>. The observations and the club's observing project were the subject of an article prepared for *Review of Popular Astronomy* in the July 1964 issue. Observations were also made of comets Alcock, Humason, and Ikeya-Seki, as well as Nova Herculis during this time.

Observing was not the only focus of club members at this time. There was undoubtedly much reading and lively discussion. Rev. Lloyd Strouse spent some of his time writing poetry. He wrote *The Sky is Yours* in 1963 and distributed it to club members on sheets of mimeographed paper.

*Men of wealth and worldly pleasure  
Boast of what their power ensures;  
But you too have untold treasures,  
For the arching sky is yours.*

*There's no need for legal tenure:  
Taxes, deed, or rental fee;  
For God's Sky in all its splendor  
Comes to you entirely free.*

*If you yearn for inspiration,  
Crave adventure that endures,  
Seek new knowledge of Creation:  
Look above! the sky is yours!*

*Then give thanks for all its glory,  
And the rapture it assures,  
And the challenge of its story:  
You are rich! the sky is yours!*

With the arrival of Dr. Ray Wilson, a new instructor of astronomy at IWU, things began to change in October 1963. Under the auspices of Dr. Wilson, Barry Beaman<sup>28</sup> and later David Williams refurbished the aging equipment of Behr Observatory. Barry first installed a 4.25-inch refractor and later, working with David, re-installed the refurbished 6-inch refractor that had been

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<sup>27</sup> TCAAers reported variable star observations to AAVSO regularly from 1962 through 1966. During this interval club observers provided the following numbers of reports: David B. Williams, 405; Barry Beaman, 25; Bill Blunk, 19; Hank Janecek, 9; Mike Ryder, 7; Lyle Rich, 4; and Taylor Cisco, 1. (Data taken from AAVSO Annual Reports.)

<sup>28</sup> Barry would become a well-known variable star observer and serve as president of the Astronomical League from 1994 – 1998.

removed earlier. These efforts were rewarded by a chance to observe a total lunar eclipse from the observatory on December 19, 1964.



**Figure 6.** *David Williams viewing through Behr Observatory's 4-inch refractor*

Throughout their time at IWU, much of Barry's and David's lives revolved around the Behr Observatory. One night, Barry would later fondly recall, Weldon Schuette stopped by the observatory. After about 15 minutes of small talk he humbly announced that he had just completed his 1,000<sup>th</sup> observation of the Echo 1 satellite. Somewhat later, by the autumn of 1966, Barry and David would rebuild and then reinstall the observatory's original 18-inch reflector. Barry, with the assistance of his father, would later build a 3-prism spectrograph. The 18-inch telescope placed on a massive Cave mount, would eventually find its way into the new Mark Evans Observatory<sup>29</sup>. There it would remain until, several years later it was replaced by the current 16-inch Ealing Cassegrain reflector. In January 1966, Barry moved to Peoria working as a

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<sup>29</sup> The Mark Evans Memorial Observatory was dedicated on March 18, 1969. In attendance was honored guest and astronaut Col. Frank Borman of Gemini 7 and Apollo 8 fame. Borman "secured the cornerstone" of the observatory after depositing a time capsule containing memorabilia, including a medallion that had circled the moon during the Christmas 1968 Apollo 8 mission. Also in attendance were IWU Physics Department members Gary Kessler and Ray Wilson. See IWU's weekly newspaper, *The Argus*, for details.

substitute teacher and lost contact with the TCAA.<sup>30</sup>

By the summer of 1964, the club had its observatory. With Bob Mayo as “prime mover,” the first club observatory was built on the farm of Fred Fissel, Jr. (9 Aug 1904–12 Jan 1990)<sup>31</sup> on the crest of the Bloomington Moraine just north-northeast of Normal. Mr. Fissel, Bob’s friend, “loaned” a plot of land for the observatory on the condition that the club membership maintain it. The membership agreed to do this. Using scrap wood from an abandoned rectangular two-story “chicken house”<sup>32</sup> in Lexington, club members worked from late 1963 through the summer of 1964 to build a roll-off-roof observatory. The chicken house provided plenty of structural lumber, siding, and roofing planks. The new observatory, named the Beehive Observatory<sup>33</sup>, housed the 8-inch home-built reflecting telescope built by Mr. Mayo. A Lionel locomotive motor drove the telescope. The observatory



**Figure 7. Fred Fissel, Jr.**

was officially opened on the evening of June 12, 1964, and was preceded by a picnic that subsequently became an annual tradition. Taylor Cisco and David Williams, who spent their time viewing and drawing lunar craters, conducted some of the first systematic observations there.

<sup>30</sup> Barry moved to Peoria to become a substitute teacher. In July 1966 Barry married Carol Gray, and in October Barry joined the USAF. They returned to Illinois 6.5 years later and took up residence in Rockford, IL, where they reside to this day. The 18-inch telescope’s truss system now supports Barry’s 16-inch homebuilt reflector in the Praesepe Observatory. They returned to Bloomington-Normal from time to time and maintained their TCAA membership until the summer of 1973 when they learned of the Rockford Amateur Astronomers. Several years later Barry became the chair of the NCRAL meeting at Rockton, IL, and Carol became editor of the Astronomical League’s newsletter *The Reflector*. Shortly thereafter, Barry became president of the Astronomical League.

<sup>31</sup> Mr. Fissel “...worked at My Store and the Daily Bulletin newspaper. He was also owner of Fissel Feed Co., later called Fissel’s Hardware, 103 E. Beaufort St., Normal. He built the building from bricks salvaged from Holy Trinity Church, Bloomington. After retiring, he farmed north of Normal.” See obituary in *The Pantagraph*, January 14, 1990.

<sup>32</sup> Barry remarked in January 2010, “First thing that comes to mind...is the ‘barn’ we tore down. Actually, it was a two story ‘chicken house.’ We had looked at several circular chicken houses that local farmers offered to donate for telescope shelters. The older club members concluded that doing anything with these buildings was too much work. But the rectangular, two-story chicken house offered plenty of structural lumber, siding, and roofing planks. It just needed a little cleaning. Well, that’s an understatement. Our crew was seven or eight TCAA members. I know Hank Janacek was there and I was there. I’m not sure if David Williams was there, and I think Bill Blunk and Lyle Rich may have been there. We split into outside and inside crews and went to work. The outsiders got a little dusty but when the insiders came out, they looked like they were ready to go on stage in a minstrel show. Those second-floor chickens had been very busy depositing a lot more than eggs in that building!”

<sup>33</sup> Mr. Fissel was a beekeeper who kept honeybees in the vicinity; hence, the name of the observatory. Barry Beaman would later call his observatory in Rockford, IL, the Praesepe (Beehive) Observatory.



**Figure 8.** *The Fissel Farm “Beehive” Observatory*

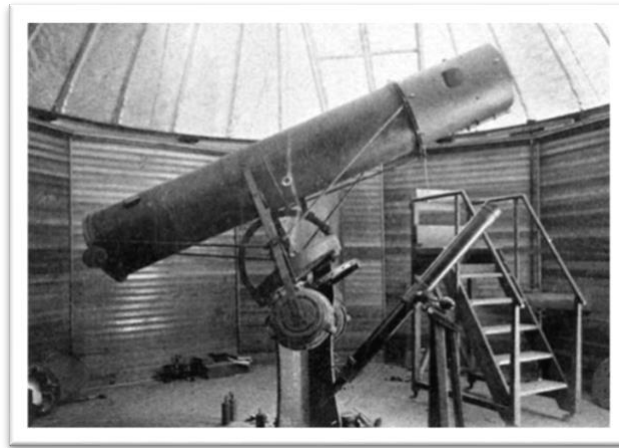
During the early 1960s, events relating to astronomy happened quickly. In October of 1963, the eminent astronomer Harlow Shapley lectured to the TCAA.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Shapley, of Harvard College Observatory, spoke about “astronomy and astronomers” and focused attention on the international nature of astronomy. Later that autumn, David Williams, having become a student at IWU, met Barry Beaman. They made a compact with David saying, “You join my astronomy club and I’ll join your fraternity.” It was quickly a done deal. Barry and David formed a life-long friendship that year that has continued to the present day. Much of their early friendship revolved around refurbishment of the Behr Observatory following the departure of Professor Brace.



**Figure 9.** *IWU's Behr Observatory*

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<sup>34</sup> The IWU Physics Department had brought Dr. Shapley to campus and Barry Beaman, an IWU physics major, was assigned the task of escorting Shapley to various offices around campus including the philosophy and religion departments. There he evidently argued with various faculty members. Barry would later describe Shapley as “a grumpy old man.” Barry did not attend the TCAA event as he had not yet made a connection with the club.



**Figure 10.** *The Behr 18-inch reflecting telescope*

In January 1964, several members convened at Fairview Park after midnight to observe a lunar eclipse. In February of the same year the Peoria planetarium opened with a 33-foot dome and Goto G-1 star projector. Club members visited the facility the same month.

Regular public observing sessions became a reality during the summer of 1964. Among these were sessions held at Oakland Elementary School in Bloomington. On most occasions, Rev. Lloyd G. Strouse, a Methodist minister who lived on Vale Street near the school, conducted these observing sessions attended by a few other TCAAers and members of the general public. The sessions were simple and included observations of brighter celestial objects using one or two small telescopes. There were no formal presentations at these events, but Rev. Strouse would point out planets and constellations while observers were waiting for their turn at the telescope. A typical observing session would consist of about a dozen or so members of the general public – mostly school children with their parents. Among the student observers was a very young Lee Green who would one day also figure prominently in the history of the TCAA.<sup>35</sup>

Several hundred persons attended these and other special functions but, to the disappointment of the club, only two members were gained by the numerous and widely publicized events. Several newspaper articles had featured the astronomy club and its activities, but the club failed to grow substantially. The membership had grown explosively during its earliest days, but now that rate of growth had begun to wane. Many other things kept the spirits of the membership high, however. One such thing was the opening of the ISU Physics Department Planetarium on September 1, 1964.

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<sup>35</sup> Lee Green would become president of the TCAA for the first time in 2007 and continue in this capacity for three consecutive years.



**Figure 11.** *The ISU Planetarium as it appeared in 1964*

At about the same time that the TCAA had its start, ISU began to expand. With funding from the National Science Foundation, a planetarium was added to construction plans for the new Felmley Hall of Science. Not part of the original building plan, the planetarium was added only as an afterthought when the agency funding the expansion project reviewed a wish list from ISU. At the very bottom of this 30-item wish list was a planetarium. The National Science Foundation reviewed this aspect of the wish list favorably, and a planetarium was added with little concern for staffing, parking, and restroom facilities. It was only later agreed that the planetarium should serve the purpose of being used in the Physics Department's astronomy course, for holding adult education courses, for instructing school and social groups, and for admitting the general public from time to time.

Opening without a formal staff, Dr. Harold J. Born, chair of the ISU Physics Department, asked IWU's astronomer Dr. Ray Wilson to help with getting the new planetarium operational. During September of 1964 Dr. Wilson gave several astronomy club members a peek at the new facility and explained how the Spitz A3P star machine could project sun, moon, and planets, along with 1,354 stars and the Milky Way. He subsequently was asked to "give a show" to the rest of the astronomy club. He did this on October 1, 1964, one month after the official building opening. Ray again explained the workings of the Spitz A3P star projector and allowed the membership time to do a bit of constellation study as well. Thus began the long and cordial relationship between the ISU Planetarium and the TCAA that continued for many years under the guidance of various ISU Physics faculty members (1964 - 1971), and planetarium directors: Nerio Calgaro (1971 - 1974), Patrick McGee (1974 - 1978), Carl J. Wenning (1978 - 2001), and

Thomas Willmitch (2001 - present).<sup>36</sup>

With June 1965, the detailed record of the TCAA comes to an end. David Williams, the editor<sup>37</sup> of the club's newsletter, left town after graduating from IWU. The newsletter, *The OBSERVER of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers*, was no more. The last item of importance noted in the final newsletter was the fact the David had introduced a program of regular Messier observing and had kicked off the project with a lecture about Messier himself. With the loss of the newsletter there was no widely distributed documentation of the club's activity. What was recorded appeared only in the club minutes and newspaper accounts. Unfortunately, some of the earliest secretary's minutes and sign in log (containing the signature of Harlow Shapley) disappeared and later minutes were irretrievably lost in 1981<sup>38</sup>. The history that remains of the club's next dozen or so years comes only from a few newspaper clippings and memories of some of the TCAA's early members.



**Figure 12.** John Kieviet receives gaveled plaque from Bob Mayo at 1966 Annual Meeting

<sup>36</sup> While an experienced amateur astronomer, Tom never became significantly involved in the TCAA.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 6 for a listing of editors, property managers, and other minor office holders by year.

<sup>38</sup> A discussion with Bob Finnigan on August 3, 2010, revealed that some of the club's important historical documents were irretrievably lost following a club meeting at Bob Johnson's Brandtville Restaurant in Bloomington. The records were inadvertently left behind following the meeting. Upon inquiring at the restaurant, the club was informed by the management that one of the restaurant's workers had thrown away the materials without thinking.

### ***The Hidden Years: 1966 - 1972***

As the years went by, the membership continued to share its interest of the nighttime sky with the general public. That John and Bertha had done a wonderful thing establishing the TCAA in 1960 was fully recognized by the club. At the February 1966 Annual Meeting the membership presented John with a gaveled plaque recognizing him as founder and first president, and Bertha received a corsage in recognition of her interest in and support of the TCAA. Beginning April 17, 1966, and continuing weekly through April 2, 1967, several members prepared a newspaper column for the Sunday issue of *The Pantagraph*. The column titled *Central Illinois Sky*<sup>39</sup> dealt mainly with aspects of observational astronomy. Rev. Lloyd Strouse was the principal writer of the column, with several members of the club contributing articles from time to time. The other writers were Hank Janecek, David Williams (writing from school), Bill Johnson, and Weldon Schuette. In one of the columns, that of April 10, 1966, Rev. Strouse wrote in a prose poem<sup>40</sup> that *The Sky is Yours – Tax Free...*

*Let's get acquainted with the sky. It belongs to you, you know; all its glory, its beauty, its mystery, and its challenge come to you entirely free. There are no taxes, no rent, no legal documents, and no time limit.*

Besides being responsible for the weekly column, Rev. Strouse taught an adult education course relating to astronomy at this time. In addition, Rev. Strouse built an analog computer to chart the locations of bright stars and planets. He called the device the “horizograph.” Clearly, Rev. Strouse was among the most active TCAAers at this time.

During July 1967, several club members participated in a hobby show held on the sidewalks of downtown Normal. The display consisted of several telescopes set up in front of North Street Pharmacy.

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<sup>39</sup> A complete set of articles is preserved in the TCAA's historical archives due to the foresight of Hank Janecek. Images are also available on the historical DVD.

<sup>40</sup> Years later, while being interviewed separately for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *A Brief History of the TCAA*, both Bertha Kieviet and Weldon Schuette recalled this particular column with fondness. Rev. Strouse was involved in the fine arts. His song “Thou strong Man of Galilee” was published in *The Abingdon Song Book* in 1938 when he lived in McLean, IL. Strouse moved to town in 1954 coming from pastoral assignments in Cissna Park and Paxton, IL. That year he acted in a theatrical production during his church's (Wesley United Methodist Church in Normal) centennial celebration, playing the role of the parish's founder.



**Figure 13.** *TCAA hobby show display in front of North Street Pharmacy*

On July 24, 1968, John Kieviet gave a talk to the Exchange Club of Bloomington. The topic of his presentation was the working of telescopes. In making this presentation, he demonstrated the workings of his home-built 6-inch telescope.



**Figure 14.** *John Kieviet giving a telescope talk at an Exchange Club meeting in July 1968*

From 1965-1967 some of the club membership became immersed in the study of variable stars under the leadership of David Williams who returned to town during the summers. The club's study of variables – especially the naked-eye variable Beta Lyrae – resulted in David

Williams authoring several articles for *Review of Popular Astronomy*, and which led to his first job in 1967 as assistant editor of the *Review* that was then based in Saint Louis, Missouri.

Club members continued to find themselves involved in observatories of one sort or another. The club's observatory on the Fissel farm was used periodically, but its location on the outskirts of town made it less than perfectly suitable as a regular observing site. Club members continued to reach out in other directions for observing opportunities. Ray Wilson and Barry Beaman worked long and hard on refurbishing an 18-inch reflecting telescope for the IWU Behr Observatory. The 18-inch mirror came from an instrument donated to Illinois Wesleyan in 1895 – one year after the Behr Observatory was constructed with funds donated by a wealthy Chicagoan. Reconstruction and installation of the telescope were completed by the autumn of 1966. The telescope fit snugly into the 12-foot diameter dome of the observatory.<sup>41</sup>

In 1968 Behr Observatory was deemed too small to contain the observing program and astronomy classes that the Wesleyan faculty wished to offer. A decision was made to remove the aging facility and to replace it with a larger structure to accommodate the growing astronomy program. The wife of deceased IWU alum E. Mark Williams gave \$90,000 to construct an observatory on the same site as the Behr Observatory. As a result, Behr Observatory would either have to be moved or razed. Once again, the club leadership attempted to engage the town of Normal in efforts to erect a club observatory within the confines of a city park.

Hank Janecek, then President of the TCAA, told the town council that the TCAA had planned to obtain the Behr Observatory structure from IWU. According to a *Pantagraph* newspaper account, the town council instructed administrator Gordan Jaeger and Recreation Director Dave Anderson to look into the costs associated with moving the structure and getting it set up. The council assured the TCAA that it would provide the land and a concrete foundation to ready the observatory for public use in Fairview Park. It was agreed that club members would supply telescopic instruments, and that IWU would keep its equipment. Investigation of the costs involved revealed that the project would be more expensive than at first anticipated. The project fell through, and the Behr Observatory would soon be reduced to rubble. Before that happened, however, Bob Mayo, Hank Janecek, Dave Williams, Lyle Rich, Bill Blunk and perhaps a few others spent several Saturdays salvaging parts from the old observatory before it was demolished. They took these parts to the Fissel farm with the idea that the club might one day build a TCAA domed observatory, but that did not happen.

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<sup>41</sup> Barry never had observing time with the 18" telescope. He joined the USAF before the telescope was finished. He stopped to visit in January 1967 while home on leave after Officer Training School and got to help carry the tube assembly out to Behr Observatory for installation on the mounting.

Club meetings continued as usual during the first decade and served as a focus of most activity for quite a while. With the turn of the decade many things besides astronomy began to attract the attention of club members, and the twice-monthly meetings were reduced in number. The last twice-monthly meetings were held in September 1970. Thereafter the membership would meet formally only once monthly.

Eclipses continued to hold a certain fascination for the general public and astronomy club members alike. Weldon Schuette continued to contribute articles and diagrams to local newspapers highlighting important astronomical events such as eclipses. He journeyed to Florida in March 1970 and to the Gaspé Peninsula of Canada in July 1972 to see total solar eclipses. Both times he was clouded out. While Weldon was far afield, the club hosted a successful public viewing program during the July 10, 1972, partial eclipse on the volleyball court of Fairview Park in Normal. John projected an image of the sun on a slide screen while observers looked on.



**Figure 15.** *John Kieviet projecting the eclipsed sun in July 1972 using his home-built telescope*

It was around this time that Hank Janecek and his wife Angeline moved to Lucas, OH, following his retirement<sup>42</sup>. He maintained interest in the club, communicating by phone with Carl Wenning from time to time starting in the late 1980s and continuing into the early 1990s. The two never actually met. After Hank's departure another of the club's early guiding lights, Bob Mayo, became less active in the club and rarely attended any club functions. He remained in town until his retirement<sup>43</sup>.

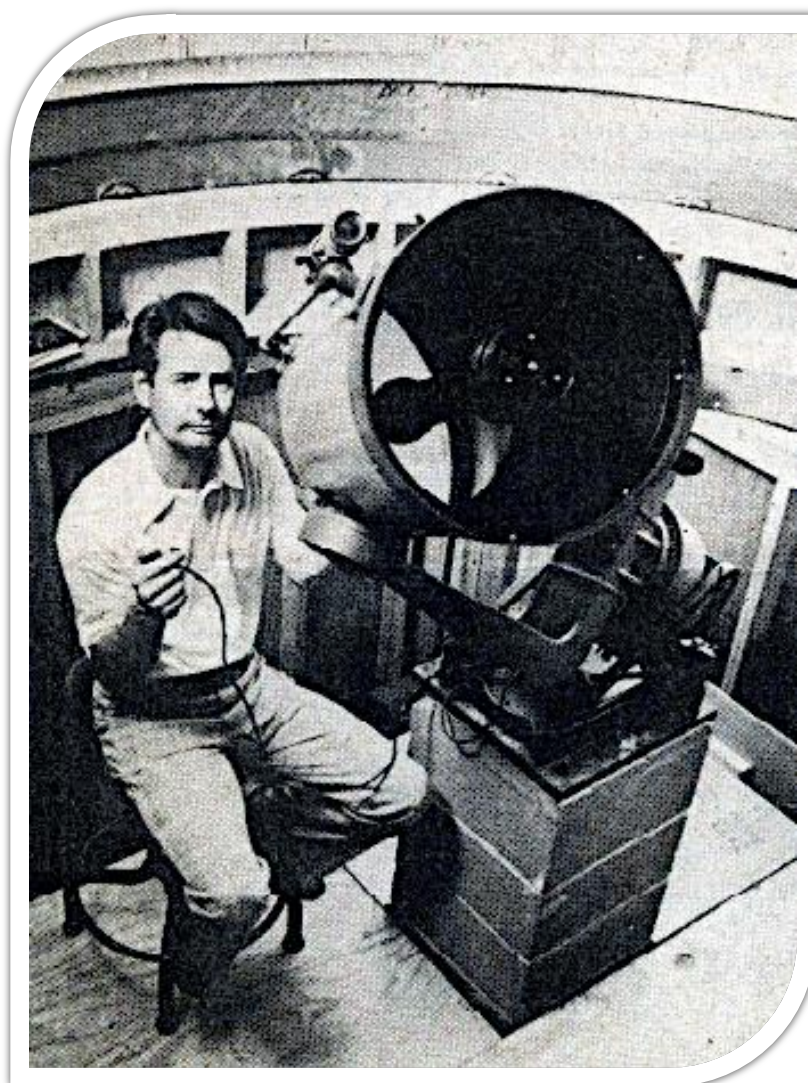
### ***Years of Transition: 1973 - 1978***

Though the historical record is incomplete through 1974 due to the loss of important meeting minutes (and without the second series of newsletters appearing until 1975), the flow of club history becomes clearer with the appearance of several critical newspaper articles in 1973 and afterwards. One item chronicled so well was the arrival of a club member by the name of Robert (Bob) Finnigan. His appearance coincided with the appearance of Comet Kohoutek. A full page of the December 1, 1973, *Pantagraph* was dedicated to these two luminaries.

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<sup>42</sup> Angeline (nee Alletto) died at the age of 82 on March 16, 2011. She had been living in Laurel, NJ. Their daughter, Claudia Janecek, continues to live in Normal at this time.

<sup>43</sup> After Bob Mayo's retirement as a machinist, he and his wife Jessica (Jessie) moved to El Paso, TX, in 1982 where he passed away in 2007. After Bob's death, Jessie returned to Normal, IL. She is 87 years old at the time of this writing (January 2010).



**Figure 16.** *Picture from Pantagraph feature article about Bob Finnigan*

Comet Kohoutek was described aptly by Dr. William Kubinec, an Illinois Wesleyan faculty member and member of the TCAA from 1973 through 1975. Bob was described in the newspaper account as an atypical amateur astronomer. Bob, it was noted, had just purchased a Celestron 14-inch telescope for \$5,000 (sic)<sup>44</sup> in March of 1973<sup>45</sup>. He had it positioned on the top of his garage at 1305 E. Oakland Avenue in Bloomington. There he had constructed a six-foot-diameter dome resulting in the non-use of the garage. The reason – it had a concrete pier running up through its center! That Bob was very dedicated to the pursuit of amateur astronomy was also evidenced by

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<sup>44</sup> This figure reported was wrong; Bob noted later that the amount was approximately \$4,000.

<sup>45</sup> The TCAA acquired this C14 telescope from Bob Finnigan on August 4, 2010, with the intent of installing it in the SGO under the same dome that originally housed it at Bob's residence in Downs, IL, some 30 years earlier.

the fact that he was the first to obtain a picture of Comet Kohoutek in the Twin Cities. The photo was taken in the early morning hours of November 30 and was a culmination of over a hundred hours of practice according to Bob. Bob's presence also led to a growing number of field trips starting with a visit to Fermi Lab in Batavia, IL, in 1973. Bob, Eugene (Gene) Sutton, and several others participated in this visit.

By June of 1975 Bob had moved out of the eternal twilight glow of Bloomington to the darker skies of Downs, Illinois, taking his 6-foot, custom-built dome with him. He constructed a small, freestanding observatory<sup>46</sup> with the help of some 10 club members, most notably Bill Zaffiri – a carpenter by profession<sup>47</sup>. Within a month of establishing his new observatory, Bob was back at work photographing comets. Several of his photographs and a short article about Comet Kubayashi-Berger-Milon appeared in the *Pantagraph* on July 28, 1975. A large picture of Comet West also appeared in that paper on March 8, 1976. By the summer of 1977, Bob concluded that the 6-foot dome was too small. He then bought a \$3,500 10-foot diameter Ash Dome, and gave his 6-foot, garage-top dome to Gary Rosenbaum then living in Lexington, IL. Gary Schultz who had a truck transported the dome to Downs from Plainfield, IL. Another article describing Bob's activities and the club appeared in *The Pantagraph* on September 11, 1977. The article detailed how the TCAA membership, and the public were most welcome to observe through the observatory's equipment. Also at this time, Bob, working with member Tim Stone and his father (a machinist), built a cold camera that could be loaded with dry ice to improve the sensitivity of the single frame of film loaded within. According to Bob, only one picture was successfully made with this camera – that of galaxy M81 – before it was “retired” as more trouble than it was worth.

Under the influence of Bob and Gary Rosenbaum<sup>48</sup>, the club began to observe more regularly and grow substantially. Many of the earlier observing programs of the club had fallen to the wayside as “space events” became more mundane, and the club membership began to drop – heading for an all-time low. By the mid 1970's, membership had decreased to less than twenty, with a smaller number still actively involved in observing.

At this time, Beehive Observatory at the Fissel Farm began to see less and less use. Better equipment and darker skies were available to the membership elsewhere. Missing, too, was the young group of amateur astronomers who had made most use of the facility over the years.

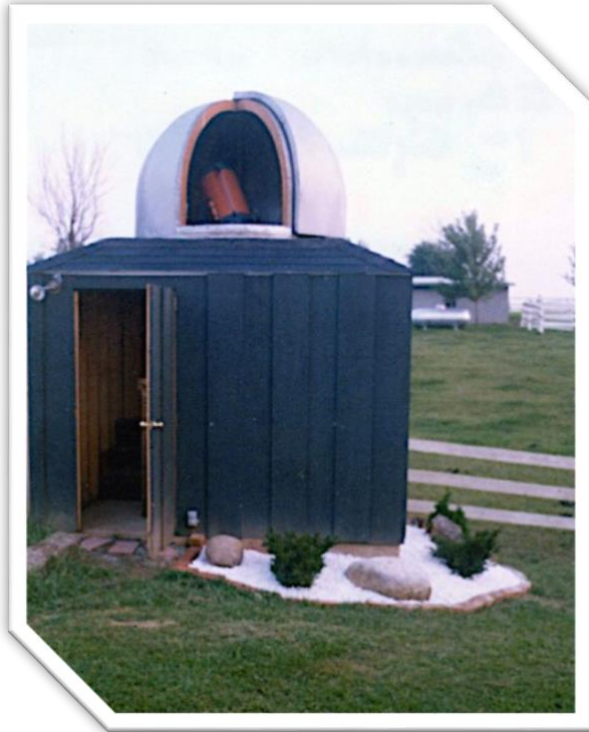
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<sup>46</sup> The observatory was named the Marie-Antoinette Observatory after his wife.

<sup>47</sup> A few years later, Bill became a certified Materials and Processes Teacher. As of 2011 he is at Countryside High School in Clearwater, Florida.

<sup>48</sup> Gary would later become well know as an amateur astronomer in the Tucson Area Amateur Astronomers (Arizona), and also became a vendor of astronomical equipment.

Weldon Schuette saw to the upkeep of the observatory grounds, but the building and its contents became rather dilapidated according to Bob Finnigan who spoke about it years later.



**Figures 17 & 18.** *Marie-Antoinette Observatory at Downs, IL, with 6-foot and 10-foot domes*



**Figure 19.** *Marie-Antoinette Observatory with 10-foot Ash dome in place*

Gary regularly publicized the TCAA with a brochure that he handed out at the restaurant he managed<sup>49</sup> and membership grew by 13 during the year that he served as president. With access to new, more powerful equipment, the club reinstituted the Messier observing program in July 1975 under the leadership of Bob Finnigan. This was a follow-on to the first such observing program established by David Williams many years before. In March 1976, the TCAA joined the Astronomical League, a benefit of which was a formal Messier observing award program with a certification and awards process. Under the Astronomical League program Bob Finnigan<sup>50</sup>, Weldon Schuette, Gary Rosenbaum, and Tim Stone earned provisional awards for observing 70 or more M-objects during 1977.<sup>51</sup> Tim received the top honors on July 17, 1979, for having observed all 110 M-objects.



**Figure 20.** *Astronomical League founded in 1939*

With Bob Finnigan's observing equipment so readily accessible to club members, a suggestion was made at the July 1976 general membership meeting to abandon the club's observatory located at the Fissel farm. This suggestion produced a bit of consternation among older club members. It was the beginning of a classic battle between the "old guard" and the "new Turks." John Kieviet headed the old guard and Bob Finnigan the new Turks. Suggestions of "out with the old and in with the new" were not welcome as they related to not only observing sites, but to the procedures of the meetings as well. "Vital statistics" were deemed no longer appropriate; emphasis on observation rather than socialization was promoted. Only after four years would this contentious dispute be resolved.

In August talk of abandoning the Fissel site was tabled, and a consensus reached to refurbish the observatory building. Actual work was put off due to the approaching cold weather. The site was all but abandoned, however, because the majority of club events and programs were being carried out elsewhere in and about the Twin Cities. In May 1977, the decision to refurbish the

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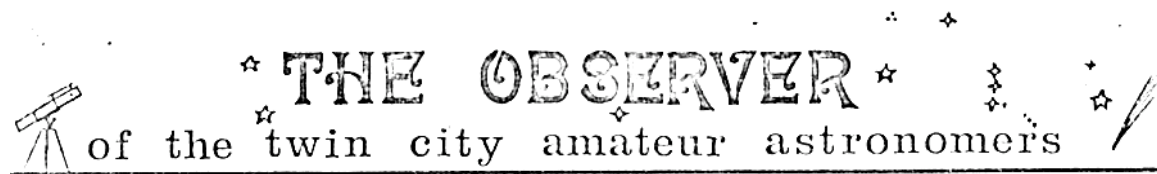
<sup>49</sup> He managed a number of chain restaurants serving fried chicken.

<sup>50</sup> Bob earned his Messier Award in 1974 while a member of the Peoria Astronomical Society. Art Grebner, a renowned observer of the Peoria Astronomical Society visually certified all of Bob's Messier observations.

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix 8 for a listing of Astronomical League observing club award recipients.

Fissel farm observatory was rescinded. During the 1960's and 1970's the town of Normal had grown tremendously, as did the amount of light pollution caused by both the city and the completion of Interstate 55 and its brightly lit interchanges. TCAA members realized this fact and knew what it meant in relation to Beehive Observatory.

The following July the membership voted to remove the observatory because of "lack of interest and other better sites available that are farther from the city and highway lights." The essentially unused observatory building was torn down on July 24, 1977, and its telescope returned to Bob Mayo. The removal of the observatory provided much relief to Weldon Schuette who had almost single handedly kept up the grounds surrounding the observatory for many years. He did this on behalf of the club and in accord with the terms of the site agreement.



**Figure 21.** Original Masthead of *The OBSERVER*

*The OBSERVER of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers* reappeared in March 1975 under the editorship of Weldon Schuette. The reformulated newsletter chronicled observations of Skylab, Pageos, and Apollo-Soyuz satellites – all observations that could be made without optical aid. Observing sessions were held at Oakland School and at other sites. Club meetings, held every third Thursday of the month, featured constellation and planet study, films, guest speakers, and trips to the ISU Planetarium. Club members kept relatively busy.

With a new year, 1978, the club's direction changed substantially. One of the more memorable events was "The Great UFO Debate" between Eugene Sutton and Bob Finnigan. At question was whether aliens were visiting the Earth in spacecraft. Gene took the affirmative side and Bob the contrary. When the great debate arrived, Bob was prepared with lots of information taken primarily from a book on the subject matter by famed debunker Phil Klass. Gene came with a clipping from a recent edition of the *National Enquirer*. He reported that a UFO had been observed to explode in orbit and that NASA could track the paths of the resulting fragments of that explosion backward in time, gather up the fragments, and reassemble them to show proof of alien visits to earth! The membership was a bit taken aback if not entirely bemused. Bob later remarked, "I ended up debating myself."

Under the leadership of Bob Finnigan, Gary Skinner, Mike Miller, and newly hired planetarium director Carl J. Wenning<sup>52</sup>, the club decided to institute public awareness displays at local shopping centers. Somewhat earlier, Bob and Weldon Schuette had put up a display in Eastland Mall. The display was a large painting by Weldon Schuette featuring Woodhenge at Cahokia, Illinois. In addition, Carl and Bob Finnigan shared their interest with the general public in November 1978 with five hours of radio talk show programming over WRBA radio working with "disk jockey" Al Lundy. A month later Carl obtained lunar sample disk (featuring 6 rock samples, a standard sampling of lunar regolith, and a small amount of "orange soil" from the Apollo missions to the moon) from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for public display at Eastland Mall. The club had reached a turning point. A more pronounced public service, awareness, and education became the by-words of the TCAA. A new era of amateur astronomy was dawning.

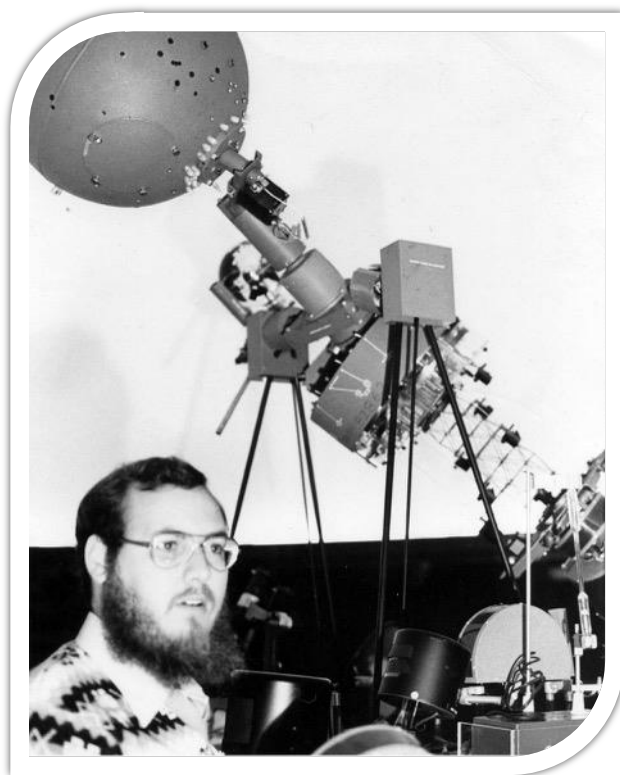
### ***Years of Public Service: 1979 - 1984***

The year 1979 started off with a real media event. There was a 78% partial eclipse of the Sun on February 26. Club members assembled on the "quad" of ISU and instructed several hundred college students, faculty and staff members, and school children how to safely observe the eclipse. Numerous telescopes were set up among the mounds of snow under a crystalline blue sky. At eclipse maximum over 300 persons were present. Several club members even saw the planet Venus without optical aid just west of the Sun. The next day a full-page display of the club's observing activities appeared in the ISU student newspaper, the *Daily Vidette*.

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<sup>52</sup> Carl joined first attended a club function during a monthly meeting at IWU's Mark Evans Observatory on September 21, 1978. To learn more about his early involvement, see *About the Author* at the conclusion of this volume.

Encouraged by the Astronomical League, the TCAA presented the first of several “Astronomy Day” displays at Eastland Shopping Center on April 7, 1979. Nine telescopes (including a 4-inch Alvin Clark refractor brought from Columbus, Ohio, by amateur astronomer Doug Wereb) were on display. Bill Zaffiri demonstrated telescope mirror making. Mike Miller put up a display of space stamps and space mission insignia. Carl Wenning was also present with the six lunar samples returned by the Apollo moon missions. The entire event generated significant public interest.<sup>53</sup>



**Figure 22.** *Carl Wenning, the new planetarium director at ISU, stands astride the star projector*

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<sup>53</sup> Despite this fact, many members of the general public seemed disinterested in viewing the six lunar samples – even when encouraged to do so. At least one disinterested visitor who took the time to view the moon rocks noted with a sense of disappointment, “These look like rocks from my driveway.”



**Figure 23.** *Eastland Mall display featuring six lunar samples in a Plexiglas disk*



**Figure 24.** *Kieviets receive honor of lifelong honorary membership at 1980 Annual Meeting*

Upon the suggestion of park naturalist Nancy Morgan, the TCAA began to present lectures and observing sessions for the campers and visitors at Moraine View State Park. Sixty persons were present for a constellation mythology talk and M-object observing program held in the campground on July 20, 1979 – the tenth anniversary of the first Apollo moon landing.

Bob Finnigan was very influential in turning the interest of club members to anthropology at this time. Bob had visited the Mayan and Aztec ruins in Mexico earlier, and his interest turned to cultural anthropology. Under the guidance of Gary Skinner,<sup>54</sup> TCAAers visited Dickson Mounds near Havana, IL, in October. Under the leadership of Bob Finnigan and Weldon Schuette, club members (typically Skinner, Miller, Wenning, and Sutton) made several group visits to survey the Cahokia “Woodhenge” near East St. Louis in November and December 1979, as well as in July and October of 1980.



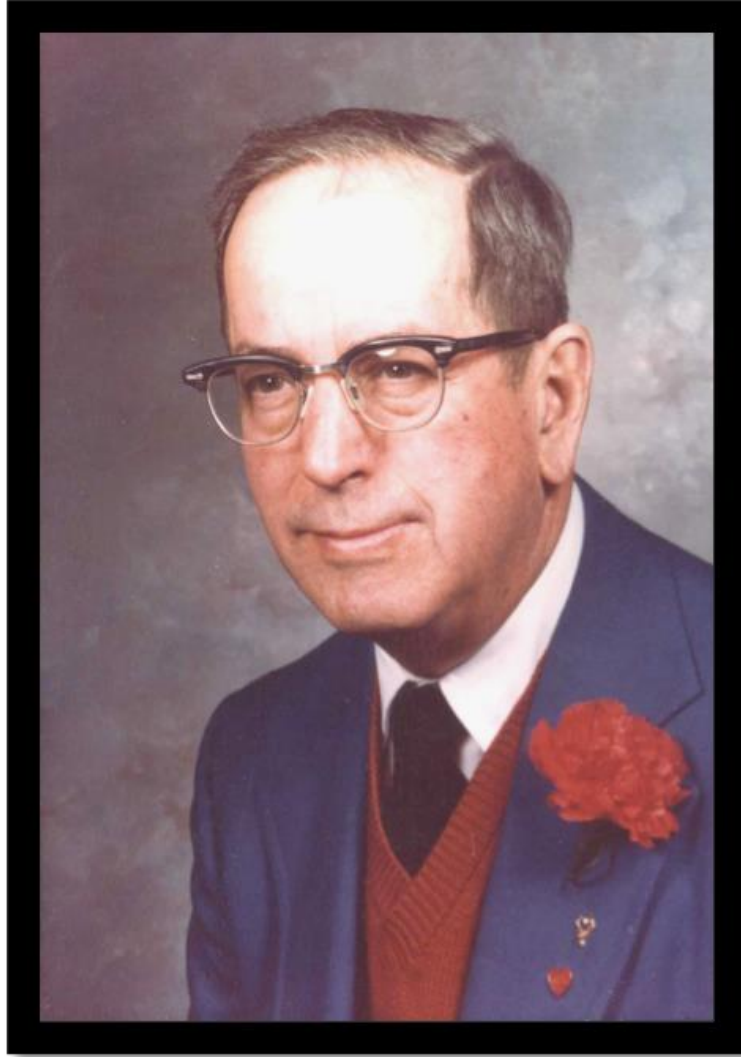
**Figure 25.** *Carl Wenning, Weldon Schuette, Gary Skinner, and Calvin Abby at Cahokia*

The club membership was very happy to confer upon John and Bertha Kieviet the first Lifelong Honorary Memberships at the February 1980 Annual Meeting. This award was presented after 20 years of dedicated service to the club. Carl Wenning, by presenting a plaque on behalf of the TCAA, conferred the honor. This was the last tribute paid by the club to co-founder

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<sup>54</sup> Gary had earned a Bachelor's degree in anthropology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

John Kieviet. He would die on October 28, 1981, from a stroke.<sup>55</sup> (Years later, after the passing of Bertha Kieviet, the club instituted the John & Bertha Kieviet Founders Award in their honor.<sup>56</sup>)



**Figure 26.** *John Kieviet, co-founder of the TCAA, shortly before his death in 1981*

Moraine View Park programs and field trips continued throughout 1980. In July of that year, six club members, friends, and family members would take the longest group trip ever. Eugene Sutton, Gary Skinner, Bob and Sophie Finnigan, Bruce Jiles, and Carl Wenning traveled to the

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<sup>55</sup> It was unfortunate that Mr. Kieviet's last years in the club were marred by controversy. Change was occurring within the club and he resisted it, sometimes vociferously. For instance, Carl Wenning recalls that his first attendance at a club meeting in September 1978 included a heated debate about whether to continue including "vital statistics" in meeting agendas. Still, John persisted in attending club meetings to the very end of his life.

<sup>56</sup> To see a list of Founders Award recipients, see Appendix 7.

Perkins Observatory<sup>57</sup> near Delaware, Ohio, to observe with the 32-inch reflecting telescope located there. In addition, members visited the Ohio State University Astronomy Department and the OSU Radio Survey Telescope (the “Big Ear”) located immediately to the east of Perkins Observatory. Club members also took the time out to visit Serpent Mound, Seip Mound, and the Mound City Necropolis in southern Ohio.

So much of what happened within the TCAA over the years can be characterized by what went on at the meetings and in its observing programs at this time. Members met regularly at Mark Evans Observatory upon the invitation of Dr. Ray Wilson, and at the ISU Planetarium with the assistance of Carl Wenning. Diverse topic matter was covered in talks presented by club member and guest lecturers. Observations<sup>58</sup> were made of comets, meteors, planets, deep space objects, satellites, and atmospheric, lunar, and solar phenomena. Field trips were taken to the Peoria Astronomical Society observatory at Jubilee State Park, to Adler Planetarium in Chicago, and to Yerkes Observatory at Williams Bay, Wisconsin.

During these years public service had been at the forefront of all its activities. Astronomy Day displays number two, three, and four were held in April 1979 at Eastland Shopping Center, and in May 1981 and July 1983 at the new College Hills Shopping Center. About 100 persons attended a public lunar eclipse observing session at Normal’s Maxwell Park on the night of July 5-6, 1982, over a span of about two hours. This particular eclipse netted a new member by the name of Sharon MacDonald. Little did Sharon realize at the time that less than two years later she would become the president of the TCAA and be videotaped by TV-10 describing a partial solar eclipse that occurred on May 30, 1984.

Television and radio appearances by club members became more common over the years as the club’s reputation spread far and wide. The TCAA and its activities were subjects of an hour-long radio interview conducted with Gary Skinner and Carl Wenning over WRBA radio on May 23, 1983. During that month Gary was interviewed by two television stations: WBLN and TV-10. The subject of the interviews was a naked-eye comet first discovered by the IRAS satellite. Comet IRAS-Aracki-Alcock became an easily noticeable object passing within 3 million miles of Earth. It was a large, diffuse, naked-eye object as it passed through the stars of the Big Dipper. The comet was an obvious media event and the TCAA held observing sessions for the general public at Comlara Park.

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<sup>57</sup> Carl had worked at Perkins Observatory while an undergraduate astronomy major at Ohio State University.

<sup>58</sup> Informal observing programs at the Finnigan residence in Downs were often a mix of astronomy and anthropology, and many hours were spent both at the eyepiece and sitting around the kitchen table with Carl, Mike, Gary, and sometimes Gene Sutton sampling Bob’s wine collection and talking about Mesoamerican anthropology.

The membership of the TCAA was disappointed by the loss of Bob Finnigan who departed the club in 1982.<sup>59</sup> When Bob departed the club, observing from Downs dropped off even though club members were permitted to observe there using the telescope Bob left in position until 1983.

Beginning in 1983, the membership attempted to recover from the loss by making an ambitious proposal to the McLean County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for a public observatory in a county park. On April 14, Gary Skinner delivered a formal proposal to the Board for a Comlara Park observatory after consulting with park personnel. The Board and park director reacted very favorably to the proposal written by Carl Wenning. It was decided that the TCAA would begin regularly scheduled interpretive programs during the summer of 1983 to determine the suitability of the site, and to see if a good working relationship could be established between the TCAAers and the park officials.



**Figure 27.** *Carl Wenning related “authentic” Indian sky lore at Comlara Park in 1983*

With the assistance of Comlara Park naturalist Theresa English, the club sponsored 13 weekly programs that summer. These programs dealt with Indian Sky Lore, deep sky observing,

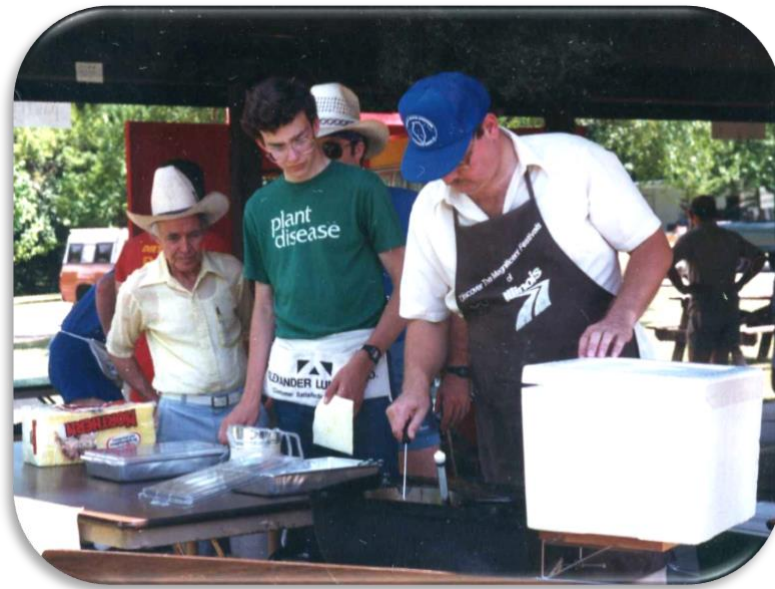
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<sup>59</sup> Bob phoned Historian Carl Wenning “out of the blue” on Monday, August 2, 2010. The duo met for breakfast the next morning to talk about the club’s history and to examine Bob’s new Celestron 11-inch SCT telescope on a CGEM mount. At the time of this writing (August 3, 2010) Bob is 68 years of age and living in Normal.

planets and the moon. The programs were well received by the public and were attended by roughly 500 park visitors over the summer. Additional summertime programs were presented during 1984 with comparable results.

During the Astronomy Day program of 1983 the club followed the lead of two new TCAAers, James and Susan Baker, to carry out a formal raffle. Club member donated some \$800 worth of prizes for the event. By the time the raffle was over, the club netted \$1,230 for the proposed observatory. In June 1984, the TCAA became involved in “Comlara Fest” selling soft drinks, ice cream, and peanuts, netting another \$50 for the project. The next year the club tried selling Swedish pretzels with equivalent results.

Another event that started around this time was Astronomy Bowl. In an effort to spice up meetings, the membership held astronomy trivia competitions with two teams facing off. The events were quite popular and a lot of fun. The event would eventually make a regular appearance in the club’s Astronomy Rendezvous and Conference in the latter part of the 1980s.



**Figure 28.** Eugene Sutton, Scott Turner, and Carl Wenning at Comlara Fest

The club membership, never satisfied to be involved in only one project, worked on other important interpretive programs in addition to those mentioned already. During the summer of 1983, Jeff Rhodes and James Baker conducted two programs in Bloomington’s Miller Park. Jeff concentrated on lunar observing, and Jim orchestrated a public education course. Jeff sponsored two additional observing programs in the summer of 1984 as well. During February and

November of 1984 Sharon MacDonald taught two adult education courses for the TCAA through the Bloomington High School Adult Education program. Each course was a series of three classes, one each dedicated to constellations, planets, and telescopes. At this same time Carl Wenning discovered that he enjoyed writing after composing an introduction for the book *Mythology for Young People: A Reference Guide*.<sup>60</sup> In his introduction Carl explained what he had learned about celestial mythology from working for years in a planetarium.

Five club members gave presentations at this time to planetarium visitors after regular public programs on behalf of the TCAA. The individuals,<sup>61</sup> Carolyn Wenning, Weldon Schuette, Mark Castleman, and James Baker, representing the club, gave short sky lectures, described the club, and invited interested individuals to join it.

During the Annual Meeting of February 1984 the TCAA conferred upon Weldon Schuette Lifelong Honorary Membership. This was only the third such membership to be conferred by the club. Cited among his numerous accomplishments was work with amateur astronomers of the TCAA, his writing and publication of *The OBSERVER* since 1975, his numerous lectures, writings, projects, and drawings for the club observatories, and his many observing accomplishments. He, like John and Bertha Kieviet before him, received a plaque that he mounted in a place of honor in his home.

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<sup>60</sup> Rita Kohn, *Garland Reference Library of the Humanities* Vol. 605, 1985, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

<sup>61</sup> This included Mike Poss, the planetarium's first informal "employee" who was an ISU student, but not a TCAAer.



**Figure 29.** Gary Skinner (r) presents Weldon Schuette with Lifelong Honorary Membership plaque at 1984 Annual Meeting

Under the dynamic leadership of Sharon MacDonald, James Baker, Weldon Schuette, and Carl Wenning, the TCAA was formally incorporated in June 1984 and received official non-profit/tax-exempt status from the state and federal governments in the autumn of 1984. Bylaws were carefully rewritten to suit the new status conferred upon the club by both state and federal law. The process of obtaining non-profit status was lengthy.

The effect of incorporation on the membership was significant. With incorporation, the nature of the club moved from “direct democracy” to “representative democracy” with a Board of Directors now in charge of making decisions for the club.<sup>62</sup> This change in governance irked a number of club members even though the Board was open to hearing recommendations from the membership before making any significant decisions. Each member had “a voice but not a vote.” The Board always worked to develop a consensus of the membership before making any decisions that might prove to be controversial. Nonetheless, and in spite of the fact that the Board explained repeatedly that incorporation under the laws of Illinois required this form of

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<sup>62</sup> See Appendix 5 for a listing of Board members by year.

government, this change left several leading club members disaffected and they dropped out of the club shortly thereafter.

On Monday evening, February 4, 1985, six club members convened in the Fairview Park cabana to celebrate 25 years of club existence. These members, Bertha Kieviet, Weldon Schuette, Michael McCall, Sharon MacDonald, and Carolyn and Carl Wenning, started the commemorative meeting with a reading of the minutes of the organizational meeting held at that spot 25 years earlier. A silver anniversary history of the club documenting the first quarter century was read aloud for the first time. Each of the several members took turns delivering this history. The members then shared an anniversary cake prepared to celebrate the event and reminisced about times past.



**Figure 30.** *Members celebrate club's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the cabana on February 4, 1985*

A festive gala celebrating the first quarter century of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers was held on Saturday evening, February 16, 1985, at Ewing Manor in Bloomington. Forty-five persons attended the event, and some had traveled from quite a distance to be present for the occasion. During this celebration Bertha Kieviet was honored with the presentation of a specially engraved pewter and crystal candy dish. The base read, "T.C.A.A., 25 Years, 1960-1985."



**Figure 31.** *Club celebrates silver anniversary at Ewing Manor*



**Figure 32.** *Bertha Kieviet receives club candy dish from Carl Wenning at Ewing Manor*

The evening's events included an informal reception over punch and finger food from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., a banquet dinner at 7:00 p.m., and assorted activities afterwards. The activities included the showing of a special tape/slide program prepared by Carl Wenning entitled "Twenty-five Years in Space." The program was used to exhibit things that occurred in space exploration from the time the Kieviets moved into town to the present. Slides taken of club members during past TCAA functions were also shown. There were numerous chances for everyone to reminisce throughout the evening. Door prizes were awarded at the evening's end, including a piece of Skylab material that was donated by a former member then working for NASA, Sue Remsburg-Bassett<sup>63</sup>, a painting of the Horsehead Nebula created and donated by Cindy Baker<sup>64</sup>, and a sun catcher in the shape of a star donated by Bertha Kieviet. The lucky winner of the Skylab fragment was Marianne Skinner. Mark Warren won the painting. Gary Skinner won the sun catcher.

### ***Years of Reflection: 1985 - 1989***

Probably the single largest phenomenon that influenced the latter half of the 1980s was another effort by the TCAA to create a public observatory. The membership focused its attention and all its fund-raising efforts on this goal. Since 1983 the TCAA had been presenting public observing programs and talks at Comlara Park, six miles north of Normal. Beginning in 1985 the club had been a regular part and contributor to the Comlara Fest activities that were designed to generate revenue for and interest in the Park. The service rendered at Comlara Park was part of the club's mandate for existence. As a result, many members began to think of the possibility of erecting an observatory that could both serve the public and the membership of the club. It was only natural to want to select a site within Comlara Park. The site was workable, accessible, protected, and had a "captive audience" in the campers that frequented the area in search of outdoor adventures. Unfortunately, this project had to be put on temporary hold by Roger Monke, the very supportive park manager, due to financial constraints resulting in the recent downturn in the economy. This did not dissuade the membership from continuing to work at Comlara Park.

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<sup>63</sup> High school student Sue Remsburg was a founding member of the TCAA. Active in the TCAA until she started work as a college student at Illinois State University, she left town in 1967 after earning a BS degree in Biology. Several years later, after she married and moved to Maryland with her husband who was in the military, she earned an MS in computer science from Johns Hopkins University. Shortly thereafter she was hired to work as a computer programmer for NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. Her work there continued from 1984 through 1990. While working at Goddard SFC, she was president of the Center's astronomy club. At this writing (April 20, 2010) she is retired but remains actively involved in two astronomy clubs – the Astronomical Society of Greenbelt (MD) and the National Capitol Astronomers. During her time in the TCAA, Sue was a good friend of Karen Mischler who eventually earned a Ph.D. and moved to Moscow, Idaho, where she lives to this day.

<sup>64</sup> Jim Baker's sister; not a TCAA member.

The 1985-86 apparition of Halley's Comet provided the opportunity for a bit more growth of the club and a golden opportunity to show the McLean County Board that the TCAA could "deliver." The first observation of Halley's Comet by a TCAAer was made by Weldon Schuette viewing from the south boat ramp area of Comlara Park on the evening of September 19, 1985. He made a confirming observation on October 13. Darren Drake<sup>65</sup> confirmed Weldon's "discovery." ISU historian and club member Sharon MacDonald gave a public talk on Halley's Comet and the Bayeux tapestry; Jim Baker gave a talk at Westminster Village; and Mike McCall gave a presentation at the Bloomington Public Library.



**Figure 33.** Sharon MacDonald and Darren Drake (r) at Astronomy Day display

William Carney and several other TCAAers made some of the first naked-eye observations of Halley's Comet on December 6. They were mentioned in the April 1986 edition of *Astronomy* magazine and were similarly recognized on the front cover of the February *Reflector* of the Astronomical League. During the autumn and winter of 1985-86 the club hosted numerous observing sessions. The two largest observing sessions were held at Comlara Park on January 10 and 11, 1986. On these two evenings more than 2,000 individuals viewed the comet through a variety of telescopes. Weldon Schuette and Carl Wenning had both independently created

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<sup>65</sup> Darren was an ISU middle school education major from Indian Head Park, IL. He was already a very experienced and capable amateur astronomer when he joined the TCAA. He did his viewing with an 8-inch Newtonian reflector.

observer guides for the return of Halley's Comet. Ayne VandenBrook<sup>66</sup>, planetarium volunteer and later a club member, helped Carl Wenning deliver several hundred planetarium presentations (two different showings) about the comet that brought planetarium attendance to an all-time academic year high of 27,000.



**Figure 34.** “Family photograph” taken at 1986 Annual Meeting

On February 25 Carolyn and Carl Wenning made the club's first naked eye, post-perihelion observation of the comet. It was glimpsed over a sea of fog from an elevated railroad bed just south of Bloomington. The comet had a nuclear brightness of about third magnitude and a visible tail 3 degrees long. This observation fueled interest and several parties traveled south to get better views of the comet's closest approach to earth in March. Carolyn and Carl<sup>67</sup> went to Louisiana, Jim and Sue Baker went to Arizona, and Weldon Schuette went to Florida.

In the wee morning hours of March 14 and with the assistance of Jim Baker, the club's oldest member, Aubrey Johnson, became a Comet Halley “Two Timer.” He recalled seeing the comet in 1910 when 12 years of age. Aubrey had a chance to recount both of his observations of Comet Halley on that evening when he and two other guests from Westminster Village in Bloomington were invited to share their recollections at the ISU Planetarium during a club meeting. On March 17<sup>th</sup> Aubrey was featured in a *Pantagraph* article and quoted describing the comet on its 1910

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<sup>66</sup> Ayne would later be named a Robert G. Bone Scholar “with distinction” by ISU. Later still, TCAAers Donald F. Johnson (1989) and Rebecca E. Wenning (2006) would be recognized with the same honor.

<sup>67</sup> Along with baby Rebecca who had been enrolled by her father in the TCAA on the day of her birth in September 1985. Carl went to Weldon's house at 441 S. Adelaide Street in Normal to proudly announce the birth.

visit as a “big bright headlight with a tail.” Aubrey was later recognized by the TCAA and congratulated on this second observation with a special Comet Halley Two-Timer plaque.



**Figure 35.** *Aubrey Johnson receives Comet Halley Two-Timer plaque from Carl Wenning*

Unfortunately, the sky was overcast for so much of the time that Halley was present in the sky. Many club members saw the comet for the first time at William Carney’s favorite viewing site south of the sharp turn on the old Ireland Grove Road. There was a short dirt road leading to a barn or large storage/farm equipment building.

In late March, the TCAA began holding morning observing sessions for the general public at the Apostolic Christian Church just east of Bloomington. On March 22 some 200 people showed up at 4:00 a.m. to view the comet. Before long it would be time to say goodbye as the comet headed back out into the depths of the solar system to await the TCAA of 2061. In its wake it left the club with its largest membership ever – 89. The TCAA said “hello” to many new members as a result of Halley’s Comet.

Much of the membership observing at this time took place privately and in small groups viewing from the darker regions of McLean County. Carl Wenning and Weldon Schuette spent innumerable hours observing from the western edge of Moraine View State Park. Another favorite observing spot was the home of Bob Ryburn located on the southeastern edge of the park. Joe DeHoff also spent innumerable hours there observing and making homebuilt telescopes

along with Bob. In the main, Joe made the mirrors and Bob – a retired high school shop teacher and part time musical instrument maker – mounted them in wooden tubes on Dobsonian mounts.

Not to be deterred from building a public observatory, the membership launched programs to generate revenues such as holding an Astronomy Day raffle, promoting Chuck E. Cheese pizza sales, selling t-shirts and the two different Comet Halley guides published by Weldon and Carl. Following many Tuesday evenings during “mirror making” activities at the Wenning home in Normal, the *Astronomy Rendezvous and Conference* came into being in 1987 as another observatory fundraiser. The annual event, held in August for four years running, featured guest speakers, planetarium programs, laboratory exercises, a flea market, door prizes, and an observing session. The one-day Saturday event was held in the ISU Physics Department under Carl’s leadership, but failed to generate significant revenue.



**Figure 36.** *Flea market at A.R.C. – Astronomy Rendezvous and Conference*

Plans and drawings for a proposed observatory were dusted off from the earlier Comlara Park phase with then park manager Roger Monke that had ended with the near demise of the park during the recession experienced in the early 1980s. Preliminary talks with new park manager Bill Wasson had led the membership to believe that the club would be welcome to erect a public observatory at Comlara Park.

In anticipation of constructing such a facility, the club, at its December 1986 meeting, decided to purchase a DS-16 telescope by Odyssey. The members of the Decatur Area

Astronomy Club were familiar with the TCAA's desire to buy such an instrument and alerted the TCAA of the availability of a used 16-inch reflector in Decatur. In March 1987 Kevin Brown, Sharon MacDonald, Jim Moncher and Carl Wenning used \$1,100 of club funds to purchase the telescope from the then president of the DAAC, Mike Vaclav. Obtaining the telescope was just the first step in establishing a public observatory.

During the spring of 1987 Allan Timke<sup>68</sup> discovered the Vesto M. Slipher Committee and its penchant for donating funds for worthy causes oriented toward public astronomy education. Carl Wenning requested and received a \$550 grant from the Committee for the purchase and refurbishment of a used 22-foot diameter converted silo dome. Upon the recommendation of James Baker, the club purchased the dome from a private individual in northern Illinois. In August 1987, the dome was transported to Bloomington where it was stored in the Game Designer's Workshop through the intervention of member Kevin Brown who worked there. The cost of the dome was \$350.

It would seem that everything was falling into place for the erection of the Comlara Park observatory, but that was not to be. By the spring of 1988 it was becoming clear that there was a major stumbling block with the county – 24-hour access by members of the TCAA. The club insisted upon it; Mr. Wasson resisted it. Because Mr. Wasson had up to this point represented the club before the McLean County Board, it was clear that the TCAA would have to make its own case before the Board.

Carl Wenning prepared a written proposal for the Property Committee of the McLean County Board in which the observatory proposal was outlined. It was presented to Mr. Davis, chair of the Committee, following the May meeting of the club. In the outline it was made very clear that the club insisted on 24-hour access. The Property Committee was willing to accept use until 10:00 p.m. without notification and until midnight with advanced notice. The club was unable to accept this provision because it was to build the observatory with its own revenues, turn the real estate over to the county, carry liability insurance, conduct public programs, and install its own equipment. The limitation of observatory access seemed entirely unreasonable to the club membership as anglers could be in the park at all hours. Despite the club's efforts, the McLean County Board was intransigent. Simply put, it did not want anyone in the park after nightfall "unless they are fishing" due to state requirements and legal liability concerns. The club membership rightfully balked at this condition. The ignorance of at least one County Board member was revealed when he asked, "How long does it take to do astronomy anyway?"

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<sup>68</sup> Originator of Timke's Law, "When the sky is clear, the moon is full."

Negotiations with the Board lasted five years. Following the recommendation of the club at the May 1988 meeting, representatives of the club, Sharon MacDonald and Kevin Brown, formally withdrew the proposal. A few days later, an editorial in *The Pantagraph* noted how unfortunate this turn of events was for the citizens of McLean County. Unfortunately, the public observatory did not become a reality due to forces beyond the control of the membership. This failure served to cause the membership to reflect on the work it had been doing with the general public and to redirect their efforts into more fruitful areas of endeavor. For nearly a decade thereafter the TCAA had no place it could call “home” other than the ISU Planetarium.

In the following weeks and months the club redirected its interest and its finances. The club had amassed \$3,600 for the observatory project and had spent \$1,100 on the 16-inch telescope. The \$550 Slipper Committee grant funds were returned and the aluminum silo dome (which was in poor shape) scrapped. The remaining funds, some \$1,950, were used to purchase several items for the club with the rest set aside for future expenses. After a deep and prolonged introspection it was decided that the new emphasis would be on the benefits of membership rather than the benefits to the general public.

Shortly after the TCAA said “goodbye” to Halley’s Comet, it had to say goodbye to others who left, as it were, with it. Weldon Schuette, along with Bertha Kieviet, had been the heart and soul of the club since its founder, John Kieviet, had died.<sup>69</sup>

Weldon died quite unexpectedly on August 19, 1986. Weldon had joined the TCAA in 1961 and drove twice a month from Gibson City to participate in club functions until he moved to Normal a few years later. He had served in every elected capacity in the club and held elected office continuously since 1971. He reinstituted *The OBSERVER* and was the newsletter editor from 1975 until the time of his death. He was a dedicated and able observer having obtained the Messier Certificate and having observed satellites thousands of times. He passed away at 69 years of age.

Weldon was interested in all sorts of space and astronomy activities. He was a part of every program that was hosted by the TCAA. Weldon was dearly loved, deeply respected, and truly revered by his fellow club members. In honor of Weldon and in recognition of his service, the TCAA created the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers on January 17, 1987 – the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.

The Annual Meeting of 1987 was held at The Elms of El Paso. Bertha Kieviet was inducted into the G. Weldon Schuette Society during this meeting in honor of her unceasing dedication and

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<sup>69</sup> See Appendix 3 for a list of deceased TCAA members.

guidance of the club. Carl Wenning was to follow in 1988, and Sharon MacDonald was so honored in 1989. Donald Johnson was inducted at the 1990 Annual Meeting.



**Figure 37.** *Bertha Kieviet inducted as the first member of the G. Weldon Schuette Society*

Sadness again touched the heart of the club during the autumn of 1989 when it was discovered that Ayne VandenBrook had died in the flower of youth. She was only 24. Ayne had been a volunteer at the ISU Planetarium since her arrival at the University in 1983. Though completely blind in one eye and legally blind in the other<sup>70</sup>, she was the match of any TCAA member at the telescope. She had obtained her provisional and honorary Messier Certificate in 1988 and was an inspiration to all who knew her. Were it not for the volunteer efforts of Ayne during the autumn of 1985 and winter of 1986, the ISU Planetarium would have had a tough time managing the crowds to learn about Halley's Comet. Free Comet Halley programs were given on many Friday evenings at 7 p.m. and then – because of overflow crowds – often presented on an hourly basis with the last showing starting at midnight. As a lasting memorial to Ayne, her

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<sup>70</sup> Ayne had a congenital eye defect known as bilateral coloboma. Both of her eyes, while appeared mostly normal on the surface but for an irregularity in each iris, were malformed. Interior malformation caused the limited vision.

parents donated her 10-inch Coulter Odyssey telescope that she had only recently purchased to the ISU Planetarium.<sup>71</sup>

During the latter part of the 1980s, TCAAers made several significant observations some of which have been recounted above. Others included an observation of the Space Shuttle Challenger making a water dump on August 2, 1985. Mike and Donna Miller, Carolyn and Carl Wenning, and Weldon Schuette observed the Space Shuttle looking like a comet or an airplane with its bright landing lights extending far out beyond. Nine members gathered to view the moon-Venus occultation on the morning of April 30, 1987, and to share breakfast a few hours later. The July 16, 1988, meeting at the ISU Planetarium was “interrupted” by an occultation of Regulus by the moon. The whole club watched. A host of club members gathered with the general public to view lunar and solar eclipses as well during this time.

One amazing thing that resulted from the numerous observing activities was the acquisition of Messier certificates by TCAAers. By 1990 TCAAers held 2% of all the Astronomical League certificates awarded nationally.

During the autumn of 1986 Diamond Star Motors was erecting its Mitsubishi plant just west of Normal. Very concerned about outdoor lighting, Carl Wenning approached DSM and asked them to reconsider the use of their outdoor lighting. They did so! By November 1986 they had redesigned their storage and parking areas to include a smaller number of low-pressure sodium vapor lamps that had downward reflectors. They were delighted with the projected long-term electrical savings. This is just one of the capacities in which Carl has served the TCAA. He was recognized for his service at the Annual Meeting of 1988 at which time he received Lifelong Honorary Membership, having been a member of the TCAA for only ten years.

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<sup>71</sup> For a personal tribute to Ayne, see Appendix 2. The TCAA would acquire her telescope in 2010 on indefinite loan from the ISU Planetarium.



**Figure 38.** *Carl Wenning receives Lifelong Honorary Membership plaque from Bertha Kieviet*

The membership of the TCAA traveled a fair amount as a group during this period. The following field trips took place: DAAC Jamboree (1984-89); Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, Steven J. Gould, May 1985; Henry Crown Space Center, September 1986; University of Illinois campus observatory, November 1986; Huntsville (AL) Space and Rocket Center, March 1987; Astronomy from Illinois Conference featuring Clyde Tombaugh, April 1988; and the U of I Radio Observatory, July 1989. Mike Miller and Carl Wenning attended a 3-day Space Academy for adults at Huntsville, Alabama, in October 1988.



**Figure 39.** *Mike Miller and Carl Wenning relating their Space Academy experiences during the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting at Jumer's Chateau and Lodge*



**Figure 40.** *Club field trip to abandoned U of I radio observatory near Danville, IL*



**Figure 41.** *Mike Miller with Dr. Clyde Tombaugh, discoverer of Pluto*

The membership was saddened to hear of the death of a reasonably new member – Michael T. Turner – who passed away from brain cancer on December 2, 1987. Michael had been attending meetings regularly with his son Scott. His death, unfortunately, was only a sign of things to come.

### ***The End of an Era: 1990 – 1994***

It seems inauspicious to begin this chapter of the history of the TCAA by talking about endings; however, endings impacted the membership in this organization in a much greater way than ever before during this five-year period. First and foremost among these endings was the loss of our co-founder Bertha Kieviet on October 6, 1994. She had been an active member of the club since day one and continued to be so up to the very end<sup>72</sup> – even attending the very last meeting before her death a few weeks later.<sup>73</sup> Other club members passed from the scene as well. This included Thomas Moore (1990), Howard Southerland (1991), E. Eugene Miller (1991), Miriam Johnson (1993), and Aubrey Johnson (1994). Somehow the club would never be the same without them.

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<sup>72</sup> After John passed away, first Weldon Schuette and then Sharon MacDonald always saw to it that Bertha had a ride to club events. After John passed away, Bertha moved to 4 James Place in Bloomington to be nearer her daughters.

<sup>73</sup> Shortly after Bertha's death, Valeria and Kora – her daughters – donated John Kieviet's 6-inch homebuilt telescope to the TCAA. The telescope was later "removed" from the club's inventory. Due to poor storage conditions (and a lack of knowledge of the historical value of this instrument), the telescope's cardboard tube was ruined by water and later thrown away. No one seems to know what happened to the mount that was made from wood and pipe fittings. Only the mirror and a few hardware items from the telescope appear to remain. According to William Carney, "The mirror, finder, focuser and such are at SGO in a plastic container" (January 2010).



**Figure 42.** *The dearly beloved Aubrey and Miriam Johnson*

Not only did people pass from the TCAA scene, so it was with certain club-sponsored events and activities. Among the casualties were Astronomy Day – at least for several years; ARC (Astronomy Rendezvous and Conference) was last held in August 1990; and Adult Education, was last held in spring 1993 (to be started up again in 2006). There were several disappointing events as well during this era. Comet Austin, expected to rival Comet West of 1976, fizzled during the spring of 1990. The supposedly dazzling Perseid Meteor storms of 1993 and 1994 were abject failures for US observers, though a few bright meteors were observed by non-Illinoisans who had clear skies in choice locations. The Community Astronomy Rendezvous, the TCAA's answer to the DAAC Jamboree, scheduled in May, and held in September 1993, also fizzled, but not for want of trying. The 1992-93 resurrection of the Junior Astronomers division of the TCAA also fell flat due to the fact that there was insufficient time available to those trying to resurrect the division. The TCAA involvement in ISU's *College for Youth* also went by the wayside. The traditional Christmas party changed from the large event it once was to a simple pizza party. Nonetheless, many good things happened in this five-year interval as well.

In 1991, Marie-Antoinette Finnigan moved away from her property in Downs where the observatory named in her honor still stood. On January 25, 1991, the TCAA acquired by donation the Marie-Antoinette Finnigan Observatory. Jim Jones, the new property owner, became a member of the TCAA. He allowed the membership to continue observing from this location. Through his generosity, the observatory continued on at the original location until the late 1990s.

Throughout the course of the five years chronicled in this section, the membership continued to follow its mandate to provide public service unabated. During the summer of 1990, the TCAA membership was instrumental in putting on a "Family Space Odyssey" at the ISU Museum in the

former Red Bird IGA on Main Street in Normal. They also assisted with science open house solar displays on the university campus.

Nighttime observing sessions hosted by the TCAA for the general public were numerous at this time. These included monthly summer sessions with the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department at Ewing Park III, and solar observing at Fairview Park. Several special sessions were held for the public that featured the Shoemaker-Levy/Jupiter impacts during July 1994. Additionally, several lunar eclipses were successfully observed with the general public including a particularly beautiful lunar eclipse (eclipsed moon rising) on December 9, 1992. Eight-year-old Rebecca Wenning observed the lunar eclipse of November 28, 1993, along with her father. During this event she was able to determine the longitude of Bloomington-Normal by working with her dad. Using both a salt-based hourglass and the method first employed by Christopher Columbus, she had an error of only one-quarter of one degree in longitude. An article about this feat appeared in the National Science Teachers Association magazine, *The Science Teacher*, several months later.

Several members ventured far a field in pursuit of their astronomical and space interests. Field trips of an extensive nature took place during 1991, 1993, and 1994. These included a three-day Space Camp field trip by Carolyn and Rebecca Wenning in December of 1993, and two expeditions by club members in an effort to view total solar eclipses. In an effort to observe the July 11, 1991, eclipse club members Sharon MacDonald, Roy and Barb Ostberg, Lynn Waishwell, Mike Starasta, and Garth Bock, along with non-member Ann Crump journeyed to Mazatlán, Mexico. Four club members – Roy and Barb Ostberg, Sharon MacDonald, and Carl Wenning (along with four non-club members<sup>74</sup>) – organized a trip and traveled in a group to Potosí, Bolivia, to view the November 3, 1994, event. Only the second venture was successful.<sup>75</sup> Never to be forgotten was the phenomenally successful annular eclipse of the sun on May 10, 1994, when hundreds assembled for TCAA-sponsored observing sessions at Ash Park in Normal<sup>76</sup> and on the IWU campus in Bloomington. (TCAA member and ISU Planetarium Director Carl Wenning prepared a 16-page booklet called “The Great Eclipse.” Some 400 schools in Illinois adopted the publication as their official guide to the event.)

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<sup>74</sup> Also traveling to Bolivia was Ted Schaar from Wisconsin, Tom Naber from the Decatur Area Astronomy Club, Dr. Walter E. Mitchell from Ohio State University, and Agnes Wenning, Carl’s mother, from Ohio.

<sup>75</sup> Carl Wenning wrote a detailed, 20-page account describing the trip called *A Bolivian Adventure*. See the club’s historical materials or DVD for this booklet.

<sup>76</sup> None of the club members realized that TCAA founding member Sue Remsburg Bassett was there that day with her Questar telescope. She appeared in a *Pantagraph* photograph the next day.



**Figure 43.** *Solar eclipse viewing team in Potosí, Bolivia*

Public service also extended to non-observational activities. Included in the extensive listing are the following: providing a guest speaker for the Decatur Area Astronomy Club's Jamboree (every year since its inception), writing three *Pantagraph* features (moon-Venus, Perseid meteors, and a lunar eclipse), sponsorship of *StarDate* on WGLT-FM since 1992 (made possible by the incredible generosity of Mike Rogers and Jean Memken), and *Skyline* (a monthly telephone update provided by Carl Wenning and later by Thomas Willmitch through the ISU Planetarium). During the summers of 1992 and 1993 Sharon MacDonald, David Portree<sup>77</sup>, and Carl Wenning presented programs through ISU's College for Youth. Of particular note were the programs "Rockets to Space," "Junior Astronomers," and "Junior Planetarium Directors."

The membership put on some well-received programs and displays during the 1990 through 1994 time interval. These included a 1993 Diamond Star Employees Day (for which the TCAA received a \$200 honorarium), Astronomy Day, and a six-month astronomy display set up at the Prairie Aviation Museum at the Central Illinois Regional Airport by Carl and Rebecca Wenning during the summer of 1994. Sandy McNamara and Mike Rogers also erected a beautiful astronomy display at the Bloomington Public Library during the summer of 1994.

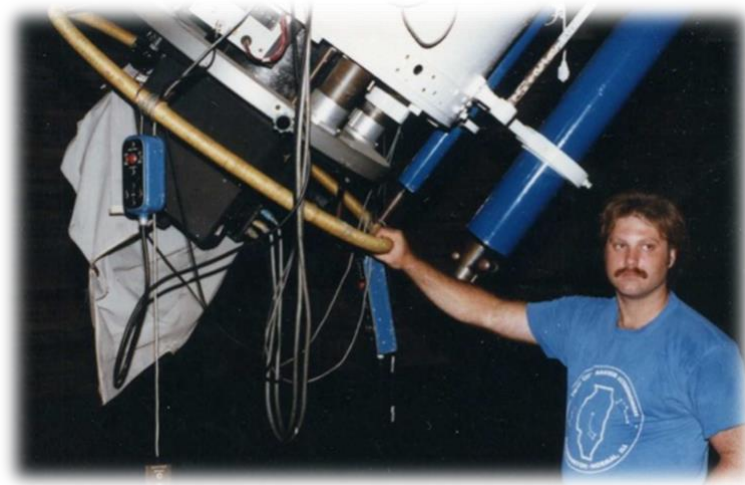
Members-only observations were rewarding as well. Supernovas were observed in M81 and M51 during the time period, and club members observed several spectacular auroras during the

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<sup>77</sup> David S. F. Portree was a part-time planetarium employee in the early 1990s. Today he is known as a space history author and former technical writer for Johnson Space Center. He authored many scripts for *StarDate* over the years. As of 2010, he resides in Flagstaff, AZ.

winter of 1992. Rebecca Wenning, seeing these along with her father one night at 7 years of age, called the aurora “dancing air” – an apt description. Viewing the July 1994 impacts of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter was quite a thrill for TCAA observers. Several TCAA members attempted and completed the club’s seasonal mini-Messier marathons as well.

During this five-year interval, the TCAA membership carried the banner to a host of astronomical conventions scattered all over the nation. These included Astrofest (yearly), Hidden Hollow (Carl Wenning, 1992), the Universe ‘92 convention in Madison, and Universe ‘94 in Phoenix (Lenore Trainor). Five members (Lenore Trainor, Sandy McNamara, Sharon MacDonald, Mike Miller, and Carl Wenning) attended ALCON ‘93 in Madison and one member, Sandy McNamara, attended ALCON ‘94 in Kansas City. Tim Maurer attended the Riverside Convention in California in 1992 and 1994. Lenore Trainor and Carl Wenning attended the North Central Region Astronomical League (NCRAL) convention in Burlington, Iowa, in April 1994. Carl gave an invited talk at the convention. His talk dealt with a national survey of amateur astronomers that he had been conducting. Shorter field trips were taken to the Adler Planetarium by seven members and one guest in August 1992, to Yerkes Observatory in both August 1990 (12 participants) and November 1991 (two participants), and to the Field Museum in December 1993 to see the *Star Trek* display (four members and one guest).



**Figure 44.** *Jim Moncher near the tailpiece of the Yerkes Observatory’s 40-inch refractor*

TCAA members were honored during this time period as well. At the 1991 Annual Meeting Jim Moncher was inducted into the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers. The same honor was conferred upon Sandy McNamara at the Annual Meeting in 1994. Former TCAA member Darren Drake, video astrophotographer extraordinaire, had video

footage of the Jupiter comet impacts shown on national TV (PBS) in July 1994. Sandy McNamara received her honorary Messier certificate and Brian Barling his provisional Messier certificate in 1994.

In an effort to revamp the way the meetings were conducted, three different interest groups were arranged that, in 1992, gave monthly reports or presentations. The three groups were naked eye, solar system, and deep space. This format operated for about a year until it fell out of use due to the fact that members in charge of the various sections would miss meetings from time to time.

One of the changes that the club underwent during this time period was a change in the editorship of *The OBSERVER*. After the passing of Weldon Schuette, Gary Skinner and then Jim Moncher took over the editorship<sup>78</sup> of *The OBSERVER*. In June 1993, Michael Rogers and Jean Memken took over the production of the newsletter using newly available personal computers with desktop publishing software. There were immediate changes in format and content, the likes of which the TCAA had never seen before. Production quality, including layout and printing, improved markedly improved due to the untiring efforts of the editors. The editorial staff prepared, printed, and posted the 12- to 16-page monthly issue of *The OBSERVER* at their own expense. Though the junior division of the TCAA died an untimely death many years before, the younger members of the group still found time to make significant contributions to the club. Briana Trainor and Rebecca Wenning both authored articles for *The OBSERVER* and were recognized for their literary accomplishments during the 1994 Annual Meeting.

As a group, the TCAA was honored by the presence of a variety of excellent keynote speakers at its Annual Meeting banquets: Pamela Gossin (Millikin University English Department, 1990), (Herman) Lew Detweiler (IWU Physics Department, 1991), Jim Stanlaw (ISU Anthropology Department, 1992), David Leake (Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, 1993), and Eric Clifton (Peoria Astronomical Society, 1994).

### ***Changing Gears: 1995 - 1998***

In an effort to get the public more involved with amateur astronomy, regularly scheduled public observing sessions were started in Bloomington's Ewing Park II in 1995. "Astronomy in the Park" consisted of a five-part series running summer through autumn. The events were very well attended with an average of about 50 members of the general public at each session. The number of club members in attendance ranged typically from 2 to 5. The format of the sessions was a short talk and slide show followed by pointing out of the brighter constellations visible

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<sup>78</sup> For a listing of editors and their years of service, consult Appendix 5.

from town. Sessions then culminated in views of celestial objects that could be found using finder scopes and star hopping.

These programs had their start with recognition that significant changes in society were having an impact on the TCAA membership. The mid 1990s was filled with lots of TCAA-related activities – monthly membership meetings at the ISU Planetarium, field trips to locations such as the Adler Planetarium, the Decatur Area Astronomy Club (DAAC) Jamboree, the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society (CUAS) and Staerke Planetarium, and Astrofest. On a local basis there were open houses at the Downs observatory, Astronomy Day events in local shopping malls, displays at the Bloomington Public Library, and in-town observing sessions. While the turnout of the general public was typically good at public events, attendance by the membership had begun to wane. Meetings at the planetarium especially were poorly attended. In late 1995, the club leadership began to question whether the club should even hold monthly meetings. Sharon MacDonald suggested quarterly meetings, but the Board decided on meetings during even-numbered months. The months would interlace with traditional events such as the February Annual Meeting, the June picnic, and the December holiday party. It was agreed by the remaining active membership that the club should change its format from being one that is more social to one that is more observation and education/public outreach oriented. The change for fewer meetings was formally made with the creation of a standing rule at the 1996 Annual Meeting.



**Figure 45.** A traditional June picnic held at Fairview Park in Normal in the early 1980s

Despite successful public events in 1995, a drop in club membership became a growing concern of the club leadership in 1996. Efforts were made to grow the membership and included such things as holding a second year of Ewing Park II public observing sessions, the *Skyline* information service at the ISU Planetarium, viewing sessions for two total lunar eclipses (each attended by 140-150 members of the general public) and Comet Hyakutake (attended by about 400 at a public observing session on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at Comlara Park), the creation of club attire with regalia,<sup>79</sup> a club camp out, guest speakers at monthly meeting (physicist Dan Holland and planetarium assistant Paul Iutzi), membership brochures, speaking with the Bloomington High School Astronomy Club under the auspices of Mark Cabaj, the production of a club newsletter of exceptional quality, and even a member-paid support for the *StarDate* program broadcast over WGLT-FM radio twice daily (thanks to Mike Rogers and Jean Memken). Nothing that the club leadership did had much of an impact on either member participation or club growth. Something was different from the heydays of spaceflight when so many showed a high interest in astronomical events.

During 1996 and 1997, the five-part “Astronomy in the Parks” program continued but the club’s observatory at Downs saw less and less use for a variety of reasons, not the least of which were parking problems and a need to pre-arrange observing sessions with the property owner. During this time – and for about 5 years previous – lots of formal and informal members-only observing sessions were taking place at the homes of Sharon MacDonald near Carlock and Sandy McNamara in Stanford. It is during her backyard viewing sessions that Sandy earned the club’s first Herschel 400 award and where Rebecca Wenning got her start on the Messier observing program by viewing the Pleiades. Rebecca earned the provisional Messier certificate at 11 years of age. Starting with a Friday club observing session at Sandy McNamara’s house one autumn evening the year before, Rebecca observed the 70 required Messier objects by September 16, 1997 – a day before her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had used the club’s 8-inch Odyssey telescope and completed the observations by star hopping in only 9 sessions, averaging one “discovery” every ten minutes. This was not at all unexpected for a youngster who at 5 years of age gave her first planetarium sky lecture to a public group during an evening planetarium program!

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<sup>79</sup> Blue caps and sweatshirts sporting the club’s original hand-drawn logo showing Illinois, the Dippers, and Cassiopeia. See Appendix 9.



**Figure 46.** *Rebecca Wenning receives her provisional Messier certificate earned at 11 years of age. Also shown are her father Carl and President Avo Vill.*

Within three or four years of being deeded to the TCAA, the Marie-Antoinette Observatory in Downs, IL, started to exhibit problems – especially with the observatory’s floor – wood rot. At this time President Avo Vill began efforts to secure a site for a new club observatory. He approached the leadership of Timber Pointe – the former BSA Camp Heffernan – north of Normal on the edge of Lake Bloomington. By mid 1996 mention was made about moving the Marie-Antoinette Observatory and Mike’s C14 telescope due to notification and accesses issues, structural problems, and growing light pollution in Downs. Mike’s 14” was removed from the Marie-Antoinette Observatory during the autumn of 1997. The dome remained in place temporarily.

Under Avo Vill’s leadership, monthly meetings were again scheduled for the membership by a decision of the Board at the February Board 1997 meeting but, before the year was out, he noted in one of his monthly columns in *The OBSERVER* that the membership was not showing up for these meetings when held at different venues and featuring specific topics (planetarium programs and computer demonstrations) and guest speakers (including IWU’s Dr. Cynthia Hess and UIUC Astronomy Club’s Dan Gosha).

Despite the lack of a suitable observatory, the core members of the club continued to work diligently to fulfill the club's mandate – sharing the richness of the night sky with the general public. For instance, during March and April of 1997 large crowd attended two observing sessions for Comet Hyakutake at Comlara Park, and members were featured in both radio and TV spots. On May 17 of that year, the TCAA held a joint meeting with the Corn Belt Lapidary and Geological Society to visit with Rev. James Cox who discovered the 1938 “Bloomington meteorite” that was also on display, having been borrowed by Carl Wenning from Augustana College where half of the specimen then was part of a meteorite collection. Some five-dozen members and guests were present for this event held at the ISU Planetarium. An article appeared the next day in *The Pantagraph*.

Bob Cuberly also made his appearance at this time, sporting a 15-inch Dobson telescope, larger than the 13.1-inch telescope once sported by member Dr. Allan Griffith. In addition to observing and talks, Mike Rogers initiated the Astronomy Reading Group to get members together for discussions on a regular basis. Discussions were typically held at Barnes and Noble Booksellers in Bloomington, and discussion focused on a different book each month. Reading group activities, public and members-only observing sessions, Astronomy Day events, and special-request talks continued. Sharon MacDonald and Lenore Trainor attended the Universe '97 proceedings in Chicago and had several amusing adventures along the way.

Despite the club's fervent desire to build a club observatory at Timber Pointe, a decision was made at the October 4, 1997, Board meeting to put development plans “on hold.” The reasons cited included: (1) limited access with a maximum of only five key holders, (2) a horizon substantially blocked by trees as the observatory would not be in the middle of the large open field as was originally hoped, and (3) a lack of financial resources. A fundraiser held earlier through Cub Foods (redemption of receipts) netted the club only \$81.43 – far short of the thousands of dollars actually needed.

Several club members continued pursuits of the February 26, 1998, total solar eclipse. Sandy McNamara went on an eclipse cruise in the Caribbean. Sharon MacDonald went to Venezuela, again traveling with Ann Crump. Sharon and Ann viewed the eclipse on a peninsula in northern Venezuela. Despite political difficulties between Columbia and Venezuela, Southwind Adventures (the same group who facilitated the November 3, 1994, eclipse trip in Bolivia) got the group almost to the centerline, to the perfect location. In fact, it was on the beach next to the site chosen for the President of Venezuela, who came in by helicopter to view near the site. According to Sharon, “the security was unreal. We spent time before the eclipse letting some of

the troops protecting the president look through our scopes. The outstanding element of that eclipse was the diamond ring effect – the flash extending vertically was enormous. The team celebrated with excellent champagne from Argentina served in elegant champagne glasses after the event. A classy surprise served up for us by Southwind.”

Annual meetings during this interval featured the following keynote speakers: former member Daren Drake (1995), Tom Naber (DAAC, 1996), Jim Kaler (UIUC Astronomy Department, 1997), and Curtis Niebur (1998). During the 1996 Annual meeting, Brian Barling and Sandy McNamara were recognized with the inaugural 1996 Founder’s Award – an award established by the ISU Planetarium for recognizing TCAA members who made significant contributions to education and public outreach associated with amateur astronomy. During the 1997 Annual Meeting Lenore Trainor was recognized as one of the club’s Outstanding Amateur Astronomers when she was inducted into the G. Weldon Schuette Society.

Not to be forgotten were the long-serving editors of *The OBSERVER* – Jean Memken and Mike Rogers – who prepared the newsletter year after year. In 1998, they received the inaugural Mabel Sterns Award on a unanimous vote by the Astronomical League’s leadership recognizing them for publishing the best club newsletter in the nation. Also unofficially recognized were the many contributing writers of the newsletter: Avo Vill with his presidential letters, Sandy MacNamara with her observing columns, Carl Wenning with his minutes and historical documentation, Roger Eggleton with his *Astronomy on Stamps* series, Mike Rogers with his light pollution series, Bob Cuberly with his “In search of dark skies” series, Lenore Trainer with her travel reports about visits to astronomical observatories, and Jean Memken’s reports of family travels to astronomical sites around the world. In addition to this recognition, Jean and Mike received the 1998 Founder’s Award from the ISU Planetarium for their contributions to education and public outreach in the area of amateur astronomy.

### ***Construction of Sugar Grove Observatory: 1998 - 2001***

In his January 1998 “Presidential Letter,” Avo Vill pointed out that the Sugar Grove Nature Center (SGNC) at Funk’s Grove was just starting to be developed, and that the possibility of a TCAA observatory on site existed. SGNC was to be established on an abandoned farmstead about five miles south-southwest of Shirley, Illinois. Later that month, Avo (assisted by the efforts of Sandy McNamara, Mike Rogers, and Duane Yockey) solicited the Funk Family Foundation with the idea of erecting a public observatory augmented with regular public programs. A formal proposal was made to the SGNC Board on February 10, 1998, with approval coming shortly

thereafter. As part of the agreement, the SGNC would help with some of the construction materials. Following the observatory proposal approval, William Carney, Duane Yockey, Dan Miller, and Mike moved the 10-foot Ash dome from storage at Game Designers Workshop to temporary storage in the white barn at SGNC. William and Avo cleaned and painted the dome while it was held in storage there until such time as the observatory was ready for its installation.

By March 9, an architect by the name of Don Gronert developed initial drawings for a modest observatory, and later that same month an inaugural members-only observing session took place at SGNC. Over the course of the year, the rather simple plan developed by Avo had “exploded” to become a \$100,000 facility with a spiral incline for use with the disabled and included an adjoining building that would contain a meeting room, storage space, sleeping quarters, and restrooms. This was a great expansion over the original plan of developing a small observatory on the existing rectangular corncrib foundation between the Nature Center and a barn to the northeast. Within a brief time, the club came to understand that only a smaller structure could ever be built in light of club limitations, and the grandiose design was dropped in favor of a smaller, simpler, and more realistic facility.

The final placement and style of the observatory were dictated by solutions to requirements set by the SGNC Board during 1999. The TCAA initially had planned a shorter building – a ground-level dome with attached warm up room, or even a roll off attachment – but this was not consistent with the SGNC’s vision. The club needed to blend the observatory’s appearance with the “farm” look of the Nature Center. The final SGO design was a compromise – a silo effect that would blend in with “the look” of the Nature Center. Its placement was dictated by a need to eventually interface it with an instructional area the SGNC Board was planning to build next to it, and the height was dictated by the need to see over the adjoining buildings because it was so close to them. It still had a computer room, storage room, and observatory areas that were wanted, but they were stacked instead of being spread out into a larger ground-level complex.

Construction of the Sugar Grove Observatory (SGO) began in a snowstorm on March 11, 2000, with just over \$1,000 in the club’s treasury. Avo, Bob, Mike, Dan, and Allan Timke were at the core of the building activity, as was former club member Jim Baker. Taking a strong lead was Vice President Vince Burdette (owner of Holder Construction Company), who was a project manager at the time for a large development at State Farm. Vince obtained the assistance of several trade unions before he left to head up a construction project in Argentina. He also was able to get lots of material donations, as well as many of his crew to volunteer hours for the

framing of the building including bringing in scaffolding for the initial framing of the building. Sugar Grove Nature Center provided the rough-hewn hardwood siding.



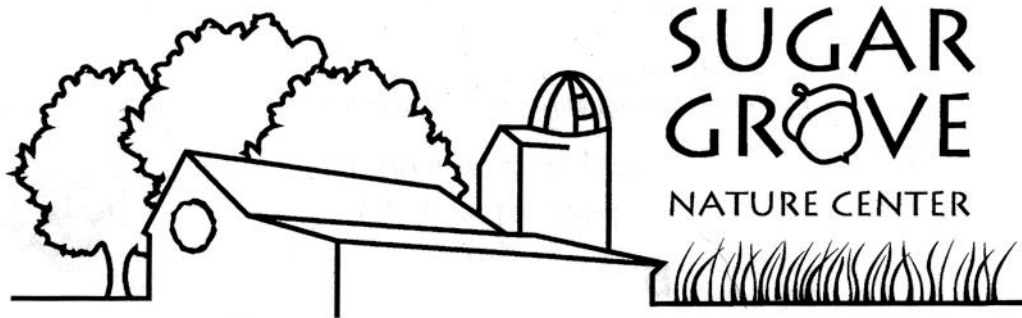
**Figure 47.** *Construction crew working on the Sugar Grove Observatory*

Avo Vill, Bob Cuberly, Mike Rogers, William Carney, and Duane Yockey were there for a lot of the beginning foundation work. With the departure of Vince, Jim Baker took over the leadership on the project, and immediately worked to install the stairs. Evidently, there was disagreement about the stability of the column put in place to hold the telescope. The pier was a narrow, 20-foot high, unsupported vertical concrete column prone to vibration. This disagreement led to two members departing the project and, ultimately, the club. Dan and Michael took care of supervising and doing much of the remaining construction. They donated their weekends, evenings, and often their personal funds to finish the structure. They spent most of the summer of 2000 doing the interior work. They, along with their families, laid the flooring and smoothed and sanded the walls and painted them. Sandy McNamara and Jean Memken did much of the plastering and painting in the building. They, along with Brian Barling, helped Mike and Dan put up interior paneling. Roy Lawry helped out with painting and paid for the Tyvek for the outside. Other members contributed time and energy as well. SGNC provided for the hardwood exterior covering to give the SGO a consistent look with the rest of the Nature Center buildings. A crane was arranged to place the reassembled 10-foot Ash dome atop the structure.

The construction job was completed by the next January, but the opening was delayed until the February Annual Meeting that would be held at SNGC. The first telescope housed under the SGO's 10-foot Ash dome was Mike Roger's 1978 vintage 14-inch Celestron Schmidt-Cassegrain

that had been in place at the Marie-Antoinette Observatory at Downs. The observatory saw “first light” at the February 20, 2001, Annual Meeting. The night was clear and cold, and the guest speaker for the evening – astronomer Dr. James Brown from Millikin University – adapted an imaging camera to the telescope.

From start to finish, the construction job took only about ten months. So fiscally responsible and generous (in time, talent, and treasure) were those who constructed the observatory, that its construction hardly affected the balance of the club treasury. From the time of its proposal to its completion, the time involved in the negotiations for and construction of the SGO took three years of concerted effort. The club finally had its replacement for the Beehive Observatory that once stood on the Fred Fissel Farm. Duane Yockey was the first official key holder.



**Figure 48.** *The SGO gracing the SGNC logo.*



**Figure 49.** *Sugar Grove Observatory (2010 © William Carney)*

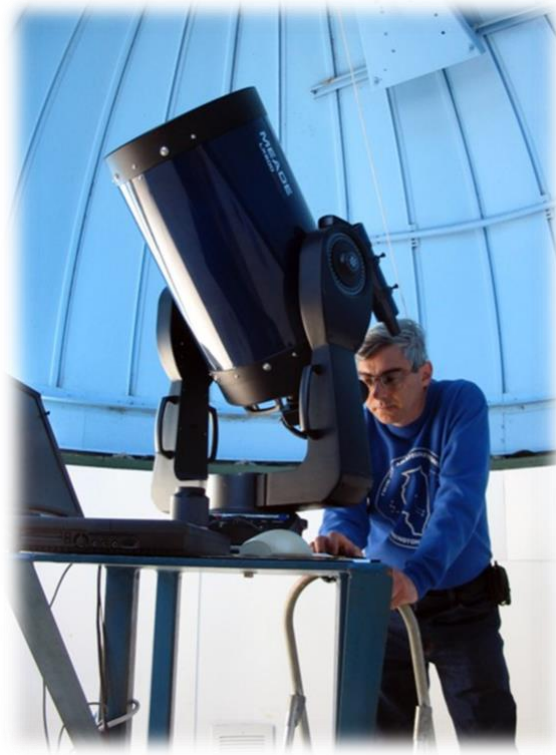
There were other interesting events during this time as well. Of especial note was the 2000 Annual Meeting – the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the TCAA. Some 50 club members attended the festive banquet, and “well over 100” were present (including members of the general public) to listen to Dr. Ray Villard talk about the Hubble Space Telescope. Dr. Villard was then the director of the Press Information Office of the Space Telescope Science Institute of Baltimore, Maryland.

Bob Cuberly and Sandy McNamara wrote monthly newsletter columns around this time as well dealing with telescope technology and observing clubs relating to celestial objects among the constellations, respectively. Jean Memken and Mike Rogers continued their periodic reviews of astronomical sites around the world including observatories and planetariums. Mike provided articles about NASA space missions from time to time. On May 6, 2000, Mike set up the club’s Yahoo! listserv; he had created the club’s first website a few years earlier.

### ***Telescope Troubles: 2001-2003***

By August 2001, it was clear that trouble was brewing with the C14 telescope’s declination motor. A suggestion was made to replace Mike Rogers’ personal 14-inch Celestron with a club-owned 12-inch Meade LX200 “GoTo” telescope. With the advent of GoTo capacity it was

becoming very easy to find celestial objects using a micro-processor-driven instrument. All that would be required is pointing the telescope at two known stars, centering them in the eyepiece, pressing an “align” button, and from there the telescope would be able to automatically find any object in the system’s database of thousands of objects that currently were above the horizon. This certainly was more appealing than pointing a telescope via finder and then using star hopping techniques to find the object – at least to some members. Few members at this time were sufficiently well informed about the use of setting circles, so a GoTo telescope was important.



**Figure 50.** *William Carney at SGO’s 12-inch Meade LX200 telescope*

Given several club members’ previous experiences with Mike Roger’s 8-inch Celestron GoTo telescope acquired in the late 1990s, the membership agreed to purchase such a telescope for SGO. Fundraising for a new telescope began during December 2001. Within a month \$1,000 had been raised, and within two months a total of \$2,000 had been raised from the membership toward the \$4,250 purchase price. A short-term bridge loan was provided by Dan Miller to cover the rest of the purchase price as fund raising continued. The new telescope was ordered in February 2002 and arrived in March. It was installed in the SGO during June 2002 and was returned to Meade the next month due to a problem with the focuser. Michael Rogers’ C14 was

reinstalled temporarily so it could be used with the summer public observing sessions. The 12-inch came back from Meade in August and was reinstalled in September 2002. Due to continuous fund raising and a very generous membership, the loan note held by Dan Miller was paid off by November of that year. All told, 13 members of the TCAA contributed at grand total of \$2,975 to the purchase of the telescope. The rest of the funding came from the club treasury.

With the re-installation of the Meade LX200 telescope, problems were noted with the vibration of the pier. When the telescope was moved, vibrations were clearly visible through the eyepiece of the telescope; nonetheless, the vibration quickly stopped. Despite this fact, efforts were made to stabilize the pier. A network of steel cables was attached to the pier just under the dome floor. These cables were run to the outer wall of the observatory in the hope of reducing the vibrations. They had the unfortunate effect, however, of transmitting vibrations of people moving around inside the observatory to the telescope. The cables were removed shortly after this connection became apparent.

By the summer of 2003 Carl Wenning returned to active participation in the club.<sup>80</sup> Having used the SGO telescope for the first time during that summer, Carl noted in a September 2003 article for *The OBSERVER* that the telescope's optics were not as good as he had expected. Still, it was too late to do anything about it as the initial warranty on the instrument had long since expired. He further noted that for a viewer working alone, the pier vibration, while unfortunate, was not all that deleterious to visual observing. He noted too that once the telescope had reached its intended target, the vibration quickly damped out and that the viewing quality – while limited by the quality of the telescope itself – returned.

Despite these problems, several TCAA members made regular use of the SGO to conduct visual observations. Astrophotography was “out” due to the problems associated with the pier, and the fact that the telescope used an altazimuth mount. This latter circumstance resulted in field rotation during long exposures making anything but the simplest forms of astrophotography impossible. Still, William Carney, Carl Wenning, and a few others observed with renewed vigor as time and sky conditions permitted. It was no longer unusual to see hitherto unviewed objects, or to see many dozens of objects during a single evening. Amateur astronomy had really begun to change again with the advent of the GoTo capacity of this telescope.

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<sup>80</sup> In 1994 he took charge of the fledgling Physics Teacher Education program at ISU. From around 1997 onward he was overwhelmed with planetarium work (now including a gift shop and several student workers) in conjunction with running the growing physics teacher education program at ISU. In November 2000, a new planetarium director was hired (Tom Willmitch) relieving Carl of his heavy work burden. Nonetheless, it took Carl several more years to return to regular participation in the club. He did so in 2003.

This period was beset by yet another “trouble.” Long time club member Eugene Sutton passed away and his death went unnoticed by the club. In failing health beginning in the early 1990s, he contributed a large number of his books to the TCAA library during July 1992. In increasingly poor health, he rarely attended club functions thereafter. He passed away on January 20, 2001, and his death wasn’t discovered until several months later to the great sadness of club members who knew him.

### ***Difficult Times – Moving Toward Recovery: 2003 - 2004***

Because of significant societal changes following the advent of such things as personal computer technology and new forms of telecommunication in the mid 1980s, the membership of the TCAA began to wane once again. The “explosion” of the Internet in the 1990s was yet another nail in the coffin of community social and service groups such as the TCAA. No longer content with socialization and getting information from amateur astronomers, many members of the general public began to work with their own desktop computer programs to replace the planetarium visit and to look at online images from the Hubble Space Telescope rather than peer through amateur instruments.

During the presidency of Daniel Meyer, efforts were made to develop club meetings that featured special speakers and activities. The club programs for 2003 included talks about the International Dark Sky Association by Peoria Astronomical Society’s (PAS’s) Rich Tennis, Mars and other solar system objects by ISU Physicist Dan Holland, presentations about the CLC by Rebecca Wenning, Cosmos planetarium program by ISU Planetarium director Tom Willmitch, MayaQuest by Rebecca Wenning, Poetry under the Stars (with space music) by Rebecca Wenning, and Greek Astronomy by Carl Wenning. Unfortunately, the membership turnout for these events – including the traditional June picnic – was disappointing.

On the other hand, great successes were had as part of the education/public outreach events provided by the active members. These included school visits and public observing sessions at SGNC and Astronomy Day at the mall. The nucleus of the club took a field trip to Millikin University on August 22, 2003, under the leadership of Dan Miller who worked there. The next night, members took part in the PAS/TCAA Star Party at Mackinaw Valley Vineyard. On August 30<sup>th</sup>, the club held a “wildly successful” Mars watch program at SGNC at which some 300 showed up. The Illinois Dark Skies Star Party started in 2002, with Sandy McNamara being the first TCAA member to attend in 2003. Roy Lawry went to Nebraska Star Party in 2003 as well.

During the autumn the club participated in the first ever SGNC “Chautauqua” that continues today as Autumn Fest. Again, the same nucleus of members showed up for these events while the rest of the membership seemed happy to pay their dues but not participate in many events. This led to considerable frustration among some of the club’s core members and might have led in part to the resignation of President Dan Meyer during the latter half of his second year in office. Following his departure in the mid 1960s, newly returned former club member Lyle Rich took over as president leaving the vice president position temporarily vacant.



**Figure 51.** *Observing Venus in the daytime with Dave Osenga at SGNC Autumn Fest*

With the advent of a new millennium, the changing nature of the TCAA began to become obvious. After more than thirty years of being a close knit, strongly interacting group of members, the club had become a loosely interacting group of individuals, many hardly known to one another. No more than 5-10 members were attending monthly meetings that had been held at the ISU Planetarium for many years, with the majority of the turnouts being on the lower end of that range. The traditional June picnics that had been attended by 20-30 members for years, dwindled to the point that they were being attended by only 10-12. Attendance at the Annual Meeting, held each February, had pretty much remained the same at about 25-30. Participation in the Astronomy Day events at Eastland Mall remained level at about 5-7 members. In most cases, only core members attended members-only and public observing sessions. The annual holiday

party in December was small, and in some years was dropped altogether. Only a dedicated core of members, observers mostly, made effort to be present at these events. During this time, the membership had been in the range of 50-60 households. Dues paying members were common enough, but most benefited from membership only through *The OBSERVER*. This was an amazing turn of events in light of the fact that the TCAA had a good observatory outfitted with a reasonable telescope with direct access available to the membership through the club's key holder program. Loaner telescopes were also available due to club acquisitions and donations. During the spring of 2004, the Board of Directors decided that something had to be done about the lack of member attendance at the club's events. It was decided to combine meetings with public observing sessions at Sugar Grove Nature Center in the hope that a combined program would bring out more members. They did not. Any pretense of a meeting was dropped shortly thereafter, and the club became almost exclusively an observing oriented club with social events restricted to the February Annual Meeting, the June Picnic, and the December Saturnalia/Christmas party.

Carl Wenning once again became historian of the TCAA in 2004. Writing in the April 2004 issue of *The OBSERVER*, he lamented the apparent loss of the club's two historical albums<sup>81</sup> – scrapbooks containing historical pictures, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia. He, at the same time, noted that not all was lost; that he had retained some important records in his possession such as the original meeting minutes from the 1960s, handwritten notes, signature logs, and all available copies of *The OBSERVER* that would serve as the basis of this edition of the *History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers 1960-2010*.

There were several significant education/public outreach events during this time. On April 17, 2004, the core of the club participated in Astronomy Day at Eastland Mall. A sunrise transit of Venus on June 8 occurred with 50-60 more people showing up to the east of Clark Aviation at the Central Illinois Regional Airport. An article appeared in *The Pantagraph* the next day. One of the larger turnouts at Sugar Grove Nature Center occurred following the June 19<sup>th</sup> picnic and POS during which Carl Wenning and Duane Yockey used flags to recreate and then explain the workings of Stonehenge. About 75 members of the general public showed up. Bringing a tear to members' eyes was the fact that Sandy McNamara attended her last club function on that date. She was departing the club for a new job in Indiana. Like Bertha, Weldon and Carl before her, the club recognized Sandy with a Lifelong Honorary Membership. Carl conferred the award noting

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<sup>81</sup> Most fortunately, Dan Miller found the two historical scrapbook albums in his possession on Easter morning, April 4, 2010. It turns out that Sandy McNamara had handed off the albums to Michael Rogers in the summer of 2004 as she was preparing to move to Indiana. Michael never looked to see what was inside the box. Michael handed off the box of TCAA materials to Dan Miller when he was preparing to depart town for a new job in the summer of 2009. Dan had not looked in the box either until nearly a year after he had received it from Michael.

how Sandy – like Bertha and Weldon before her – had been the “heart and soul of the club” for many years.



**Figure 52.** *Sunrise transit of Venus as viewed from Central Illinois Regional Airport*

The membership was entertained by a number of excellent invited speakers during this time. On August 21 Tom Holbrook from University High School gave a talk about global positioning systems; on October 16 Jerod Gross from Roanoke-Benson High School and a former NASA/JPL employee spoke about recent studies of Jupiter and Saturn; on November 13 Shaukat Goderya, a club member from the ISU Physics Department, talked about Space Physics. ISU Physics Department chairman Richard F. Martin spoke about space physics at the 2003 annual meeting, and former club member Barry Beaman spoke about education and public outreach at the 2004 annual meeting held at SGNC.<sup>82</sup> Efforts were begun in 2004 by Mike Rogers to work with Bloomington Public Library on a regular basis. One BPL library employee, Karen Moen, joined the club and latter catalogued the club’s library housed in Sugar Grove Observatory.

One of the club’s earliest members, Donna Miller, passed away on October 22, 2004. Wife of Eugene and mother of Michael, she passed following several years of illness that kept her confined to home. Donna had been a member of the club since 1961 but became less active starting in the early 1980s. Eugene (Gene) had died years before. Both Donna and Gene were shining examples of how parents can work with a child as a family unit to learn about the joys of

<sup>82</sup> In attendance were Taylor Cisco and his wife Yvonne.

amateur astronomy. In 2007, the Eugene & Donna Miller Family Award was created by the TCAA and named in their honor.

In October 2003 William Carney began pushing Astronomical League observing programs that were to influence the active membership dramatically over the next several years. His two-part series “Observing Programs” in the October and November issues of *The OBSERVER* started an effort among club members that has not yet dropped off. It moved the club along to recovery.

#### ***Education/Public Outreach and Service: 2005 - 2006***

From 1999 through 2003, Carl Wenning worked closely with the Prairie Aviation Museum to assist with the development of its proposed Challenger Learning Center. He was named a “champion” in this cause and took on a number of important leadership roles. Asked to commit to “just a few meetings,” Carl stayed on board long enough to write and secure the CLC charter for central Illinois during October 2001, assisted with fund raising from 2001-2003, and was present for the Center’s opening in December 2003. Just a bit more than a year later, in 2005, the TCAA started off with a “bash” at the CLC with a January 29 mission. Continuing to assist with the growth of the CLC at Prairie Aviation Museum, later in 2005 TCAA members Carl Wenning and Shaukat Goderya were awarded a \$50,000 NASA/Space Telescope Science Institute grant to help develop two national curricula for the 50 or so simulators across the USA, Canada, and Great Britain. This effort ultimately would lead Rebecca and Carl Wenning to having dinner with Grace Corrigan, mother of Challenger 51-L astronaut Christa McAuliffe, on Friday, February 24, 2006.



**Figure 53.** *TCAA members on a Challenger Learning Center Mission, January 29, 2005*

The year 2005 was a fresh start in many other ways for the TCAA. During the February Annual Meeting, The club conferred membership in the G. Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers upon William Carney. When the award was presented, it was rightly noted that this recognition was long overdue. No member in the TCAA had been named to the Schuette Society since 1997 – eight years. Upon conferring the award, President Lyle Rich noted how William had held several offices, how he had contributed “ceaselessly and tirelessly” to the membership through its numerous education and public outreach activities, and how he had won numerous Astronomical League observing awards such as the Messier, Lunar, Binocular Messier, and Urban awards.

On April 25, 2005, David Levy of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 fame met with club members at SGNC to do some observing; unfortunately, the sky was overcast. Still the membership in attendance benefited from an evening of discussion. The day before and the day after David presented talks at ISU’s Bone Student Center and Milner Library, respectively. Several club members attended these events as well. Just two days before David’s visit with the membership, Duane Yockey traveled to the NCRAL 2005 convention in Sturgeon Bay, WI, an event that would before long have significant “consequences” for the TCAA.

During the spring and summer of 2005, the club was happily moving along providing education/public outreach efforts. President Lyle V. Rich – a member from the earliest years of

the club had only recently returned to town<sup>83</sup> after many years of government and Navy work – died quite unexpectedly from a pulmonary embolism. Vice President Kalyanaraman (Kal) Kumar – a temporary employee of State Farm Insurance Company from Chennai, India – became president. Under Kal's leadership, the club smoothly continued its efforts.

With the ISU Planetarium having been opened on September 1, 1964, the planetarium projector was in dire need of repairs. When Carl Wenning had been planetarium director, he got the College of Arts & Sciences to commit \$30,000 to the projector's refurbishment shortly after the disappearance of Halley's Comet in 1986. Still, this was not enough. In 2005, with Tom Willmitch as Planetarium Director, the TCAA took the lead in conducting fundraising campaign for ISU Planetarium that consisted of a direct mail campaign and a raffle. An Intes 6-inch f/10 Maksutov telescope OTA from Russia (list price \$1,799) was donated anonymously to the planetarium during early solicitation efforts, and this was used as a basis for the raffle. By the time the raffle was held on September 3, the club had raised \$2,935 on behalf of the planetarium. Club member Neale Lehmkuhl was the winner.

As the year drew to a close, an interesting feature started showing up in *The OBSERVER* that would also have long-term consequences for the club. During 2005, AL observing club updates started making a regular appearance in the newsletter. Messier, Herschel 400, Asteroid, and Comet reports were made on behalf of William Carney, Jean Memken, Michael Rogers, and Brian Barling. Before long, this small set of notifications would propel the membership on to making significant advances in observing. Despite those things clambering for the attention of amateur astronomers, several members of the TCAA continued to observe the heavens in the old fashion way – they viewed it! During the period from 1995-2005, TCAAers were bedazzled by the observing prowess of William Carney (asteroids and comets), Sandra McNamara (Herschel 400 observing project using non-automated methods), and Rebecca Wenning (provisional Messier certificate completed at 11 years of age).<sup>84</sup>

Starting in 2006, Carl Wenning and Duane Yockey renewed efforts teaching adult education at SGNC. This first course resulted in an overflow registration and a new member by the name of Dave Osenga. Joining the club later that year were Ginny Underwood and Gail Nelson who also

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<sup>83</sup> Past members have returned in various ways over the years, especially by attending Annual Meetings. Included in this listing are Judy Walker Nonie; Sue Remsburg (ended up working for NASA), Barry Beaman (ended up becoming president of the Astronomical League and variable star observer in Rockford, IL), David B. Williams (notable AAVSO member and twice president from Whitestown, IN), Taylor Cisco (City Colleges of Chicago – District Office, Program Compliance Officer), Lyle Rich (US Navy and government work), Bill Blunk (high school physics teacher who retired in 2005 after working for many years in Joliet, IL), and Warren Light (worked in Houston, TX).

<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 8 for a complete listing of Astronomical League observing and NASA Service award recipients.

attended the winter adult education course at SGNC. Joining on his own at this time was Lee Green.

Never to be outdone traveling, on March 29, 2006, Roy and Barb Ostberg, Sharon MacDonald, and Carl Wenning<sup>85</sup> observed yet another total eclipse of this sun, but this time aboard ship in the Mediterranean Sea just northeast of Crete. In addition to traveling through Athens, they visited the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea, and twice traveled to Turkey – ancient Ephesus by ship and Istanbul by air.

During April, eight TCAAers attended the NCRAL 2006 meeting in Appleton, WI. In doing so they were following the lead of Duane Yockey who had attended the year before and noted the pleasure of doing so. Following his lead, seven club members joined him for this event – Dan Miller, Carl Wenning, as well as Michael Rogers and Jean Memken along with their three children. In discussions at that meeting, the TCAA leadership put forth an offer to host NCRAL 2010 in recognition of the club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Dan Miller, working with the Challenger Learning Center, helped to organize Family Science Day in cooperation with CLC's Janet Moore on September 24, 2006.<sup>86</sup> Numerous club members participated in this event, with displays inside and outside the ballroom at the Bone Student Center on the ISU campus. Michael Rogers put up a computer display, Carl Wenning a telescope optics display. Dan set up a telescope for viewing the sun, as well as a new TCAA display stand. Dave Osenga took responsibility for staffing the TCAA display.

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<sup>85</sup> Agnes Wenning, Carl's mother, also traveled along as she did back in 1994 to see the total solar eclipse from Potosí, Bolivia.

<sup>86</sup> Janet was hired into the position of Lead Flight Director in 2003 with the opening of the Center. She had worked previously in the ISU Planetarium during her four undergraduate years. Besides presenting more than one hundred programs yearly, Janet almost single-handedly opened the Planetarium's gift shop – exhibiting precisely those sort of skills needed in her new teaching and administrative positions at the CLC.



**Figure 54.** *Family Science Day in cooperation with the Challenger Learning Center*

Starting with the September 2006 issue of *The OBSERVER*, a new feature – Observers’ Logbook – was started to document the many observations of club members beyond those directly associated with Astronomical League observing programs. Among the first items noted was an August Perseid meteor shower observing program at Weldon Springs SRA at Clinton, now an annual tradition. Carl worked carefully with Park Interpreter Carol Thompson to present this event. Springing from this event was a new member, Marty Morris, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade schoolteacher in Clinton, IL. The club would subsequently present annual spring or autumn observing sessions at Weldon Springs that consisted of a presentation, constellation study, and telescopic viewing.

Annual meetings during this time brought back some old memories and presented innovative ideas. A member from the very earliest days of the club, David B. Williams, spoke about variables during his 2005 presentation, and Dr. Roger Phillips, Director of the McDonnell Center for the Space Sciences in Saint Louis, spoke about the MESSENGER mission to Mercury in 2006.

***Travels and Recognitions: 2007 - 2009***

Not to be outdone by eclipse chasers Barb and Roy Ostberg, Sharon MacDonald, and Carl Wenning, and other astronomical travelers such as the Memken/Rogers family who also travelled the globe during vacations to see astronomical sites, plenty of the other club's members undertook astronomical travel during 2007 and 2008. During 2007 Duane Yockey traveled to Iceland with a *Sky & Telescope* tour group to view auroras, but saw little more than clouds, snow, and ice. Even if the sky were clear, it was unlikely that the group would have seen anything. Unbeknownst to the group, the sun had just begun to enter into an extended sunspot minimum that didn't start to acquiesce until late 2009.

Carl and Duane went to Moorhead, MN, to attend NCRA 2007 meeting on March 18-19 to confirm the offer of the TCAA to host the 2010 meeting. Carl was greatly surprised to win the 2007 NCRA Service Award announced at the business meeting. The TCAA Board of Directors had nominated him to receive the 2006 prize, but it went to a more worthy recipient. Carl was shocked when his name was announced as he was not aware that remaining nominations were rolled over into the next year. Carl received a nice plaque in recognition of his efforts with the TCAA, with the Challenger Learning Center, and his work through the ISU Planetarium.

Dan Miller, John Werner, and Michael Rogers took a group of Millikin University students to New Mexico from May 22-29, 2007, to conduct observations of truly dark night skies. Always excited to travel to new places, see new things, and acquire the latest bit of observing and photographic equipment, Dan was honored with membership in the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers during the 2008 Annual Meeting.

Claudio Pérez Matzen, chairman of the Physics Department at Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación in Santiago, Chile, visited the SGO along with Carl on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Claudio had befriended Carl in 2006 when Carl traveled to Chile doing consulting work for the Chilean Academy of Sciences.

Lee Green visited McDonald Observatory at Fort Davis, Texas, during August 2007. John Werner traveled to Australia October 14-26 on a business trip but took time out to observe the constellations when he could. Not to be entirely outdone, several of our members attend the DAAC Jamboree just north of Decatur on October 6. Other members merely gazed at the stars to do their "travel" to faraway places during this time. With monthly members-only observing sessions (MOOS) and monthly public observing sessions (POS), the core membership was fully engaged. In addition, the club was involved in yet another adult education course at SGNC during January and presented an Astronomy Day event at Barnes & Noble booksellers during spring.

During the winter and spring of 2007, Carl, the club's historian, again saw the "handwriting on the wall."<sup>87</sup> It was announced at this time that long-time club member Lenore Trainor was suffering from cancer. She had not been seen for a number of years but was among the club's great observers and astronomical travelers the decade before. Family life was taking more and more of her time when cancer struck. Knowing that the loss of such members also meant the loss of club history, Carl started "Profiles in Amateur Astronomy" with the June 2007 issue of *The OBSERVER*. It was his effort to chronicle the history of the club in terms of individual members. Unfortunately, Lenore passed away August 3 before she was able to respond to his questions.

During the summer of 2007 John Werner started to construct a personal observatory on a farmstead just south of Streator, IL. It was outfitted with a 9.25-inch GoTo telescope and included a number of cameras for astronomical imaging. Just around this time members began to acquire more and better astrophotographic equipment. By this time Lee Green had acquired a C14 SCT along with an SBIG-10 astronomical camera. Images of successes appeared from time to time thereafter in *The OBSERVER*.

The club took advantage of several opportunities during 2007 to develop resources and abilities. Of particular note, under the leadership of Lee Green and Dan Miller the club applied for and received membership in the *NASA Night Sky Network*. The program provided complementary kits dealing with astronomical topics for used in education/public outreach. Thanks to dedicated efforts by these two leaders, the club was able to acquire all available kits within two years due to the frequency of education/public outreach offerings.

During the summer of 2007 and continuing into 2008, the Board of Directors developed a 5-year plan for the TCAA addressing four identified goals: (1) improving membership services, (2) improving club identity and presence, (3) expanding the club's web site with additional features, and (4) improving fund raising.

During this interval, Lee and Carl attended the Illinois Dark Skies Star Party at Jim Edgar – Panther Creek State Park northwest of Springfield in 2007. At that time they observed under "magnitude 6" skies. Carl and Duane would do this during 2008, but the views of the sky were more "usual and ordinary" – not atypical for views obtained at SGNC.

Annual meetings during this time were held in Turner Hall's room 104 at ISU under the leadership of Jean Memken who was faculty advisor to the Catering Club. The Annual Meeting banquet speaker in 2007 was Dr. Casey Watson from Millikin University who spoke about

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<sup>87</sup> See Daniel 5:1–31

cosmology. In 2008, three of the club's photographers – Lee Green, Daniel Miller, and John Werner – spoke about processes for successfully photographing the night sky.

Included among the many objects successfully photographed were a number of faint but interesting comets at this time. During 2007, Comet Holmes literally “exploded” onto the scene. On October 23, it brightened nearly a million times within a few hours; it was easily observed even under city skies with the use of binoculars. During 2009, TCAAers tracked a green comet, Comet Lulin. William Carney was having a heyday at this time observing and recording many comets using the telescope at SGO. Most of these comets were faint such as comets LINEAR and NEAT, but William was fortunate enough to have observed Comet McNaught, a hard-to-see comet from the northern hemisphere and the brightest during the past 40 years.

Like years before, the core membership was strongly committed to amateur astronomy, including education/public outreach. Members also took time out for a bit of fun. On January 19, 2008, sixteen members traveled to Peoria to see the new Carl Zeiss planetarium projector. Planetarium director Sheldon Schaefer gave an hour-long presentation. Lee Green initiated a series of public talks at the Bloomington Public Library known as *Starlight Nights: Conversations with Amateur Astronomers*. Several club members participated in these small monthly events. The TCAA moved its Adult Education program from SGNC to Heartland Community College. Carl Wenning took the lead, first presenting during the months of January in 2008 and 2009. Lee Green took the lead for yet another series in January 2010. During February 2008 Dan Miller, John Werner, Lee Green, and others presented programming at State Farm Insurance Company (Millennium Girls). On the 20<sup>th</sup> of that month, the club hosted a “frigid” viewing session at Fairview Park for a total lunar eclipse.



**Figure 55.** TCAAers visit the renewed planetarium at Lakeview Museum in Peoria

Club members continued to travel for astronomical trips during 2008. During February Carl and Duane traveled to Santiago, Chile, to visit with Claudio Pérez Matzen who had visited with Carl during 2007. Claudio arranged for Duane and Carl to observe from El Ingenio in the Andes Mountains to the southeast of Santiago. Claudio later drove them to Combarbalá where they were the first official visitors at Observatorio Cruz del Sur – a new tourist observatory for amateur astronomers where they had two nights of access to a new 16-inch Meade telescope. While in Chile they both completed the Southern Sky Binocular Award and most of the observations required for the Southern Sky Telescopic Award. Several additional required observations of objects very low in the southern sky were complete upon their return to Illinois.

From May 31-June 8, 2008, Dan Miller and John Werner traveled with a group of students from Millikin University to Machu Pichu in Peru. Just two months before, John completed construction of his personal observatory, Farm View Observatory. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, several club members travel to the observatory near Pontiac, Illinois, for a tour and an evening of observing. The next month, August, Carl Wenning completed a series of observations of Jupiter and its moon Ganymede. He was able – with a series of only eight observations – to determine the mass of Jupiter to within 2.9% of its accepted value. The process was chronicled in a series of two articles Carl wrote for the club newsletter. He also began a series of monthly reflections filled with heartfelt advice based on his life's experiences in a series known as *StarGeezer*. The columns appeared alongside a series of stylized drawings of the *StarGeezer* created by club member Terry Lee Wright.

During the latter part of 2008 Lee Green arranged for more public programs – in addition to the monthly MOOS and POS at SGNC – at Bloomington Public Library. The series was titled, *Classroom for Kids*. Another activity in which the club found itself involved was Autumn Fest – a celebration of autumn at SGNC – which featured daytime solar viewing and, thanks to a recommendation by William Carney, viewing of Venus. At this event, one of the club's earliest members stopped by for a peek – Warren Light. It was later noted by the club's historian that Warren's contributions of books initiated the TCAA library.

The next year – 2009 – was the International Year of Astronomy. *Classroom for Kids* was held on the fourth Saturday of each month throughout the year from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. with the November/December programs being combined into a single event due to the holidays. Programs almost always included a PowerPoint presentation along with hands-on, minds-on activities. The turnout was usually small with typically 5 or fewer kids and 2-3 adults in attendance.

In recognition of IYA 2009, several club members wrote regular columns in *The OBSERVER*. Carl Wenning wrote a multipart series The Life and Times of Galileo; Lee Green continued his Constellation of the Month series, and Bobby Arn wrote a series about astronomical imaging. Tony Cellini, having returned to the club after a several-year hiatus, regularly showed his handy work through several short articles. Carl also wrote a series titled Optimizing Views of Deep Space Objects. Astronomical imaging successes by Bobby Arn, Lee Green, William Carney, and Tony Cellini were notable, and many of their images graced the pages of *The OBSERVER*. For the first time in many years, TCAAers began to provide contributions more broadly to the newsletter and on the club's listserv. Duane Yockey, Lee, and Carl attended the one-man play *Galileo* at IWU during the autumn. This was a continuation of the historical emphasis during the 2009 IYA. Also continuing this theme was 2009 Annual Meeting speaker Dr. Linda French from IWU who spoke to the club about the work of John Goodricke.

In compliance with the club's 5-year plan, during February 2009 the club's treasury reached the \$5,000 goal set to back up the efforts of the NCRAL 2010 conference. On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Lee Green and Carl Wenning met Space Shuttle astronaut Scott Altman in Pekin in an effort to highlight the TCAA's desire to have him speak at the NCRAL conference. Efforts were undertaken in 2009 to finally develop a professional looking club logo. Earlier versions<sup>88</sup> had either been drawn by hand or created with word processing software. Over the summer of 2009, the first professional version of the TCAA logo was developed through the efforts of Dave Osenga who had a friend, Emily Henard, who did the final production. By late autumn, John

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<sup>88</sup> See Appendix 9 for the three official logos of the TCAA over the years.

Werner found a supplier, *dk designs* of Downs, IL, to provide polo shirts with the embroidered TCAA logo.



**Figure 56.** *Lee Green with NASA astronaut Scott Altman*

Several club members traveled to NCRAL 2008 in Port Arthur, Wisconsin, and to NCRAL 2009 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to further develop an understanding of what it means to host a regional convention. During the summer of 2009, travels continued. Lee Green traveled to Arizona to visit Lowell Observatory and to Chicago to attend an astronomical imaging workshop during June. During November, Daniel Miller and John Werner traveled to Kansas to view the Leonid meteor shower, having changed their observing position from Indiana, in order to find clear skies. While they did find clear skies, the “meteor storm” they had hoped to observe did not materialize. Unfortunately, some of club members’ trips at this time were one-way. Michael Rogers and Jean Memken moved to Missouri in July to begin new careers in teaching.

In order to promote NCRAL 2010, several TCAAers traveled to various events across Illinois to spread the word during 2009. John Werner gave a short address at Astrofest during September. Bobby Arn, Dan Miller, Duane Yockey, and Carl Wenning gave presentations at the Illinois Dark Skies Star Party during October. Lee Green attended the DAAC *Astrojam* to promote the meeting during September and Carl did the same by attending the November CUAS meeting.

The club's Meade LX200 telescope housed in Sugar Grove Observatory finally failed during April of 2009. The telescope continued to do its "China dance" (as property manager William Carney called it) and got to the point that it was no longer economically feasible to repair. During 2008 the telescope had been sent out again for repairs with Meade informing the TCAA that it would no longer service this instrument under the terms of previously renewed service contracts. It was agreed that following NCRAL, if the club were in a proper financial standing, that part of the treasury would be used to purchase a replacement telescope. During the summer of 2009, the Board of Directors agreed on the need for a new observatory but decided to delay any significant efforts until after the NCRAL 2010 meeting when the club's financial status would be clearer.<sup>89</sup>

The number of Astronomical League observing awards conferred during this time period was exceptional. Between 2007 and the Annual Meeting of 2010, eighteen AL awards were either earned or awarded, not counting the various levels such as provisional or honorary, and silver or gold.

### ***The Semi-centennial Year: 2010***

On Thursday evening, February 4<sup>th</sup>, fifty years to the minute that the TCAA came into being, Historian Carl Wenning held a solitary vigil outside the doors of the Normal pool cabana starting at 7:30 p.m. He spent 30 minutes thinking about the past and reading aloud the minutes of that first meeting. He thought about the great generation who founded the TCAA and laid the foundation that had been built upon for the past half century. Reminiscent of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at this same location, Carl read aloud part of the current history as it approached completion. He said a few silent prayers....

Two nights later, on Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, the club's golden anniversary was celebrated formally with a gala affair at Ewing Manor & Cultural Center in Bloomington. About 30 members and guests were in attendance. Some of the club's earliest members – David B. Williams, Bill Blunk, and Barry and Carol Beaman – were present. Also in attendance was Vernelle Armour, son-in-law of John and Bertha Kieviet. Sharon MacDonald also made an appearance. The evening began with an informal reception over hors d'oeuvres, and the strains of a piano music provided by Kerry Meyer, a friend of Dave Osenga. A banquet meal was served "down the spiral staircase" and early member Barry Beaman delivered a keynote address speaking about the early years of the club and his work at the IWU Behr Observatory. He finished his talk with a description of what worthwhile work amateur astronomers can still do today.

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<sup>89</sup> Past TCAA President Bob Finnigan graciously donated his 1973 vintage C14 telescope to the TCAA in August 2010 to fill the telescopic void.



**Figure 57.** Dinner banquet at Ewing Manor 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

As part of the club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, the TCAA hosted the NCRAL 2010 regional meeting on April 16-17, 2010, at the Holiday Inn & Suites in Bloomington. The theme of the meeting was *Generations: Past, Present and Future of the Telescope*.

Participants learned about the beginning and evolution of the telescope – hearing about the people and their scientific instruments that have expanded our understanding of the universe. The gathering provided a peek at the future of modern astronomy by unveiling current and planned developments in space science. The meeting featured invited speakers external to the TCAA: Charles D. (Tony) Keyes, Space Telescope Science Institute, Baltimore, MD; Jimmy Simek, NASA-Glenn Research Center, Cleveland, OH; Michael E. Bakich, *Astronomy* magazine, Milwaukee, WI; and Daniel Holland, ISU Physics Department, Normal, IL. TCAAers Carl Wenning, Dan Miller, Bobby Arn, and John Werner also provided talks.

Unique local resources provided for a variety of interesting Friday evening activities. The Challenger Learning Center generously ran a mission for our meeting that enlightened participant to the complexities of space exploration. About half of the attendees took part in a “retro astronomy” night by taking a meal at the Steak and Shake Restaurant in north Normal, watching *Earth versus the Flying Saucers* (1957) at the Normal Theater, and attending a live planetarium program at ISU presented by former planetarium directors Carl Wenning and Mike Bakich.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Mike and Carl were classmates at Ohio State University during the early 1970s.



**Figure 58.** *NCRAL 2010 formal group photograph taken by Bobby Arn*

At the end of the meeting, the planning committee publicly honored Carl Wenning, NCRAL 2010 chairperson, registrar, and speaker coordinator, with a framed embroidered meeting logo. He accepted it on behalf of all those who helped present the gathering and acknowledged their contributions. On April 20<sup>th</sup> he again personally and publicly thanked the planning team who held 17 planning meetings and managed the work on the days of the event:

- Lee Green – web site manager and co-registrar
- Dave Osenga – public address, projection, backdrop
- John Werner – promotion and marketing, astrophotography contest
- William Carney – door prize manager
- Duane Yockey – treasurer, accountant, and hotel liaison
- Dan Miller – public address, projection, assistance with astrophotography contest

He noted the presentations of Dan Miller, Bobby Arn, and John Werner who gave excellent mini talks dealing with a wide variety of topics. He also acknowledged assistance provided by others from time to time and at the meeting: Brian Barling, Ed Duran, Paul Pouliot, and Tom Wieland who, along with others, worked the registration desk. He also thanked Bobby Arn for serving as official photographer of this event. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that Carl also gave an hour-long presentation dealing with Galileo and his telescopes.

Carl noted that as TCAA historian, he truly felt that NCRAL 2010 was a crowning achievement in 50 years of TCAA history. He stated that our founders, John & Bertha Kieviet, would be quite proud of our service and accomplishments.

### ***Epilogue to the First 50 Years***

So ends the first 50 years – a half century – of the existence of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers. Anyone who has ever been an active member of this club can be proud of the fact. The club has expanded the awareness of members and non-members by its many years of public service. The club has certainly influenced some of its younger members to pursue further education by expanding their horizons beyond the small world in which they live. The club has also provided its members with friendships that will last a lifetime. Each member of this club can recall the past with pride, can live in the present to its fullest in harmony with other members, and can look forward to a future full of promise.

The purposes for which the TCAA was formed were to “promote in every way among its members and the general public an interest in, and knowledge of, astronomy and its allied sciences; advance amateur astronomy and observational techniques; render assistance to other individuals or organizations working in the same or related fields; and do everything necessary and proper to further such on a formal or informal basis.”<sup>91</sup> Given the club’s 50-year record, there is no question that the members – past and present – have filled that mandate with distinction. The future, like the past of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, is bright.

### ***Winds of Change (2010-2020)***

The semi-centennial year of the TCAA, 2010, represented in many ways a mix of beginnings and endings. Following the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Meeting on February 6, 2010, at Ewing Manor, the club’s summer was filled with the usual and ordinary member education and public outreach activities conducted mainly at Sugar Grove Nature Center. It also saw the beginning of a “renaissance” of a type rarely seen in an astronomy club.

The sixth decade of the club’s existence (2010-2019) included explosive growth in terms of observatories and equipment. Some, but not all this growth, was propelled by an early member who has asked to remain anonymous. That person, who was the source of so many *winds of change* that propelled the club to new heights, will be referred to as *Anonymous* throughout this section of the club’s history.

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<sup>91</sup> This paragraph is, in part, a paraphrase of the TCAA’s current Bylaws that are based on the club’s original constitution.

***Sugar Grove Observatory Updates***

William Carney spent the summer of 2010 residing Sugar Grove Observatory (SGO) and replacing crushed stone surrounding the base of the building. Erosion had made the original gravel base less effective in preventing rainwater seeping into the building. In the ten years since its construction in 2000, weathering had caused hardwood planks covering the exterior to warp. Separations between the planks were allowing wind, dust, rain, and snow to enter the observatory's interior. These problems hardly seemed to be of much concern as the Meade 12-inch LX200 telescope mount was dysfunctional and the observatory was seeing little use other than for the storage of unused loaner telescopes.

There were occasional discussions about replacing the observatory with a ground level roll-off-roof observatory following the NCRAL 2010 meeting hosted by the TCAA in May because the club now had some \$5,000 in untapped reserves. Carl Wenning indicated to the Board of Directors that he was willing to make a considerable donation to pay for such an observatory. Still, nothing happened. Sugar Grove Observatory, and even the club, was facing an existential problem until Carl heard a "voice out of the past" on the other end of a phone call on August 2, 2010.

On the other end of the line was Bob Finnigan, former club member and past president. Bob figured prominently in the history of the club during the 1970s and 1980s. Carl had not heard from Bob for nearly 30 years. Bob noted that he was now several years into retirement and wanted to get back into amateur astronomy – especially the area of astrophotography. Bob informed Carl that he had recently purchased a Celestron 11-inch telescope on a German equatorial mount but was having problems with astrophotography using a DSLR camera. Carl told Bob that TCAA members such as Lee Green, Tony Cellini, John Werner, and Dan Miller were actively pursuing this aspect of the hobby and were having successes. Perhaps they might provide some sort of assistance. This conversation resulted in Bob's return to the club and to a series of improvements at SGO that revitalized the club.

Bob later asked Carl about SGO, the dome of which he (Bob) had purchased in the mid 1970s and that had once capped his Marie-Antoinette Observatory at Downs. The dome had been donated to the TCAA after Bob moved away from Downs. Carl related the building of SGO ten years earlier and told Bob of the problems encountered with the Meade LX200 12-inch telescope.

During this conversation, Carl mentioned that before the 12" Meade was housed at SGO, member Mike Rogers had loaned his Celestron 14-inch telescope for use under the dome at the time of its opening. He noted that the club later purchased a new Meade 12" telescope to take

advantage of new goto technology. This latter telescope had, over several years, experienced substantial mechanical difficulties. It had been performing a “China dance” (William Carney’s words) from time to time when the telescope would begin moving on its own without warning. It then had to be turned off, restarted, and realigned before it could be used again. The telescope had been returned to Meade two times for warranty-related repairs and had become dysfunctional once again. Meade was not willing to stand behind the instrument any longer. They refused to allow the club to extend the original warranty a third time.



**Figure 59.** Lee Green using Meade 12” to show Venus during the daytime at Autumn Fest.

Carl also lamented to Bob about the poor image quality produced by the 12” telescope. The club, Carl noted, had accepted the telescope without a critical review of its optical quality. While this did not matter so much with diffuse celestial objects such as nebulae and galaxies, objects like planets and the moon were unacceptably and perpetually slightly out of focus. Another problem stemmed from a wobbly steel “cage” used as a pier atop the 30’ column of concrete. This produced large vibrations in the telescope whenever someone moved within the observatory or the telescope itself was moved. As a result of these problems, SGO was at the point where the telescope was almost completely unusable when Bob rejoined the TCAA.

Hearing of these problems, Bob suggested that he could donate his unused 1973 C14 telescope to the club. If the club was willing to clean up the optical tube assembly and refurbish the yoke mount, the club could have it at no cost. The Board of Directors quickly decided to have the optical tube assembly (OTA) refurbished and to accept the donation. Efforts also would be made to repair the dysfunctional yoke mount. Dan Miller noted that he had a used “mono pier”

that he would donate to replace the steel cage between the observatory's concrete column and any telescope mount. Within a few weeks, things began to happen.

William Carney shipped the C14 to California for a complete rebuild. (The telescope was returned about two months later cleaned and the mirror re-aluminized and overcoated. The repair and shipping cost amounted to \$757 – reasonable for a telescope OTA that would cost nearly \$3,800 purchased new.) Dan Miller repaired an unused C14 yoke mount he had (taken from the telescope once owned by Mike Rogers and previously housed in SGO) using parts from Bob's yoke mount.

The repaired C14 mount operated poorly by modern standards. *Anonymous*, desiring for a more advanced mount, purchased a CGE Pro for the SGO upon which was placed the refurbished C14. Carl worked with machinist Jim Dunham and others to install Dan's "mono pier" to hold the new CGEM mount, thereby replacing the wobbly steel cage that had been used earlier.

By early December 2010, SGO was up and running again, but this time with the ability to accommodate two telescope configurations. A choice could now be had between using the refurbished C14 and Bob's Takahashi 130mm apochromatic refractor with its SBIG STL-11000 eleven-megapixel camera (and sometimes a QSI583C camera). The 130mm refractor would be mounted in tandem with a companion refractor outfitted with an auto-guider. A "quick change" mounting mechanism meant that the observatory could serve as both a visual and photographic facility.

In addition, Lee Green and Bob also had made the telescope operable by remote control using wireless networking. They conducted astronomical imaging first from the second floor, then the ground floor of the observatory, and a brief time later from the warmth of the Nature Center building. This was a sea change – so markedly different was the SGO in comparison to the situation months before. What had been a dysfunctional observatory housing a broken telescope was approaching "state of the art." What a difference a few months of effort had made!

### ***SGO: Visual, Photographic, or Both?***

By the end of 2010, Sugar Grove Observatory was back in operation as a hybrid facility. That is, it served photographic as well as visual uses. Bob Finnigan, with Lee Green's assistance, took numerous astronomical images from SGO before 2010 came to an end. It was soon clear that the newly refurbished and recently installed C14 telescope had a problem with "mirror flop." The shifting mirror made it unsuitable for long-exposure photograph but especially when the German equatorial mount did a meridian flip. Still, it was fine for visual work. The replacement mono-pier

made the visual telescope comparatively “solid” because most of the prior shimmering had all but disappeared. The German equatorial mount, though also solid, was less than suitable for use with the telescope operating in visual fashion. As the telescope was aimed at different points in the sky, the eyepiece would often be found in inconvenient locations for an observer. The mount’s long declination shaft with its many counterweights also was an inconvenience for visual observers as it was often in the way.

Bob’s Takahashi 130mm (5”) refractor, despite being of excellent optical quality, had too short a focal length to take “close up” images of deep space objects, and something had to be done if astronomical imaging was to be more fruitful. The C14 suffered terminal failure when its focusing assembly literally fell apart and could not be easily repaired. The C14 was removed from the mount and moved to storage. The Board agreed that the C14 was not worth repairing and was declared “unwanted” properly. Tim Stone eventually offered to take the telescope off the club’s hands in exchange for a donation of \$200. The Board of Directors approved.

Shortly thereafter, propelled by Bob’s and Lee’s initial successes in astrophotography, Anonymous funded acquisition of a recently developed Takahashi 250mm short focus reflector designed for astrophotography and, with a particular digital camera, provided an impressive 2.5° field of view. The duo continued to image with the new telescope and an SBIG camera. After spending most of 2011 experimenting with the new telescope, they found that they could not eliminate significant coma near the edge of the field. After an independent test was conducted by a Takahashi representative in Texas, it was agreed that the telescope optics were flawed. It would take many months before a replacement telescope could be produced.

Anonymous offered to purchase a 11-inch Celestron HD telescope to at least temporarily replace the faulty Takahashi. Anonymous also arranged for the purchase of a Paramount ME mount to replace the CGE Pro. Gone was the CGE Pro hand controller for use with visual observations. The Paramount ME had no hand controller and could be operated only with computer. The switch of telescopes and mounts was completed on January 24, 2012. Some of the club’s visual observers grew concerned that the SGO was growing less suitable for visual observing due to the “permanently-installed” telescope with its SBIG camera and a mount that could be controlled only with the use of a computer.

Again, propelled by successes with the now perfected Takahashi 250mm, Anonymous proposed the purchase of a larger-aperture, longer-focal length telescope. Following approval of the TCAA Board, Anonymous acquired a 17” PlaneWave modified Dahl-Kirkham telescope for SGO. The PlaneWave telescope was installed at SGO on July 17, 2012. With earlier expectations

that SGO would be used for both visual observations and photography, some visual observers again expressed concern.

### ***Construction of Prairie Sky Observatory***

At the January 2012 TCAA Board of Directors meeting, cognizant of concerns expressed by several visual observers about SGO becoming an exclusively photographic observatory, Carl Wenning suggested that the club build a new observatory. He renewed his offer to pay for the construction of a 16' x 24' roll-off-roof observatory (RORO). This time he placed a dollar value on his proposed donation, and noted that Backyard Observatories of Lodi, Ohio, could build the observatory for that price. The Board of Directors, sensitive to the concerns of visual observers, responded positively to the offer and consented to Carl's proviso that he would be allowed to name the observatory. Anonymous immediately backed the effort by agreeing to pay for the required concrete work (and later for "hardening" the walls against potential high winds). The Board gladly accepted the additional offer. That same month, Bob and Carl met with SGNC Director Angela Funk and her husband and Funks Grove Cemetery Association Board Member Eric Funk to discuss the possibility of a RORO at SGNC. Meeting with a tentative approval, the proposal was written up and forwarded to Angela. She in turn forwarded it to the Funks Grove Cemetery Association, owner of SGNC.

Following a year of negotiations over propriety, location, ownership, access, public outreach, maintenance, possession, and so forth, the Funks Grove Cemetery Association Board of Directors approved the addition. They agreed to a 15-year renewable memorandum of agreement with the TCAA that provided approval for the TCAA to proceed with the construction of the RORO. On June 8, 2013, the legal agreement between the TCAA and the SGNC was signed during a groundbreaking ceremony held at SGNC. President Tom Weiland signed the agreement on behalf of the TCAA. There was a ceremonial groundbreaking with a shovel. Within a few weeks, construction work on the new observatory would begin.

Carl contacted Backyard Observatories about building the approved observatory. Backyard Observatories provided Carl with architectural drawings that could be shared with the McLean County Zoning Commission. Because the drawings were from Ohio, the architectural plans had to be redrawn and receive a sign-off from an Illinois-certified architect. Bob took care of this requirement and dealt with the McLean County Zoning Commission. Because the TCAA was building a new observatory over the area of two former grain silos with a pre-existing contiguous concrete base, the observatory's "footprint" would have no impact on the site's rainwater

absorption. As a result, the idea of a rainwater retention basin was removed from consideration. Bob got the necessary permit issued much to the TCAA leadership's relief.

The roll-off-roof observatory built by a two-man crew – Scott Horstman and Don Cilibraise from Backyard Observatories – from July 21 through July 23, 2013. The construction process was video recorded using time lapse by TCAA member Tony Cellini. (See <https://bit.ly/2P0nYOU>.) Before Scott and Don left three days later, the replacement Takahashi 250mm astrograph was in position on a Paramount ME mount on the observatory's southern pier. Later that evening, the Takahashi 130mm refractor was placed on a new Astro-Physics mount (provided by Anonymous) on the observatory's telescoping north pier (also provided by Anonymous). "First light" for the new observatory occurred that same evening, July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Bob Finnigan and Tim Stone photographed M27 with the replacement Takahashi 250mm reflector and an SLR camera, while Carl Wenning and Troy Berg viewed Messier objects with Bob's 130mm refractor now on the telescoping pier with an Astro-Physics German equatorial mount with hand controller.

The new RORO was officially dedicated and opened to the membership on September 28, 2013. Vivian Hoette, director of educational outreach at Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, and now a TCAA member, was keynote speaker for the ceremony. Carl took this opportunity to formally announce the name of the TCAA's new RORO – Prairie Sky Observatory (PSO). Approximately thirty TCAA members and guests were present for this event, including



**Figure 60.** *The Dome of Sugar Grove Observatory*

four members of the general public who just happened to show up. Visual and photographic observations could now begin in earnest at PSO.

### ***Changes at SGO and PSO***

While the PSO was originally envisioned to contain both visual and photographic telescopes, this idea proved to be untenable.

First, the walls of the

observatory were too high to provide access to most of the sky by low-sitting visual telescopes.

Second, with four observing placements for telescopes, the room was too cramped despite the redesign of the observatory that made for a smaller observing room.

Carl Wenning had purchased an 18" Obsession telescope in August 2010 anticipating its installation in a future observatory such a roll-off-roof observatory. After the PSO was built three years later, he recognized that there just wasn't enough room in the PSO, and that with tall side walls, conditions there weren't right to observe with his 18" telescope. The RORO was fated to become an all-photographic facility.

In April 2014, the club's 11" Celestron HD visual telescope rested upon a new AstroPhysics 1100 mount on PSO's west pier. It was added to provide at least some opportunity for visual observations. Butted up against the west wall, most of the western sky was unobservable with the 11". Only about half of the eastern sky was observable due to the high wall to the east. As a result, the telescope was rarely used for its intended purpose. In June 2015, an AG Optical 16" short-focus astrophotographic telescope was installed on PSO's east pier. This was a wide field astrographic telescope unsuitable for visual observing.



**Figure 61.** *The Meade 12" with its wobbly cage pier.*

Over the ensuing year, numerous updates and improvements were made at PSO. These include a six-point latch-down system designed to keep the RORO from losing its roof during high winds (including potential tornadoes) to say nothing of the hardened walls that were built into the original structure at the request of *Anonymous*. Other updates included improved electrical wiring and lighting, computers, and computer programs, aiming models, mounts, and telescopes.

In January 2016, the PlaneWave 17" telescope in SGO was moved from SGO to the PSO's south mount so that observers wouldn't have to worry about constantly moving the dome to keep the sky in view for the telescope. Eventually, PSO would come to hold a second PlaneWave telescope, this time a 20" telescope on a rising mount that would help it to look over the high walls of the observing room. Minor adjustments were also made to increase the comfort of observers, including the installation of various networks and heaters in the observing room, and doorway porch made of flagstone (2014). PSO was used very heavily at this time by Bob and a returning member from the 1980s, Tim Stone. Tim had been experimenting with

astrophotography from his home in Bloomington using a small refractor. When he heard what was taking place in the club, he immediately returned.

After the 17" telescope was moved to the south position of Prairie Sky Observatory from its original position in Sugar Grove Observatory, it was replaced with the club's Celestron 11" HD telescope. Before long, a Coronado 90mm H $\alpha$  telescope was placed in tandem with it.

When non-member Bill Mammen donated a high-quality Meade 12" telescope to the club later in 2016, it replaced the Celestron 11" and it was moved to PSO along with the H $\alpha$  telescope. The Meade 12" was installed on an AstroPhysics German equatorial mount. The telescope was of exceptional visual quality, but was less than ideal for visual observers due to the type of equatorial mount holding it. Regardless, at this point SGO was "set aside" for visual observers with photographic observations having been moved entirely to PSO.

During December 2016, two workers from Ash Dome came from Plainfield, Illinois, to inspect and update the SGO dome that was then more than forty years old. The dome was in excellent condition despite its age according to the workers. The slot was reconfigured so observers no longer had to worry about moving the bottom section out of the way (it could now be cranked out providing zenith to horizon access) and the dome was motorized so that it could be turned. What a relief to visual observers!

Despite the improved dome situation, the Meade 12" on a German equatorial mount was untenable. The protruding declination axis and the resulting cramped conditions, the uncomfortably low and often inconveniently located eyepiece produced a desire to replace this telescope with something more advantageous to visual observers. Finally, in May 2017, Carl Wenning donated his portable 2006 CPC 11" goto telescope on an altazimuth mount to the club (having earlier sold his 18" to a 4-H Summer Camp in Michigan where former member Darren Drake used it.) The CPC 11" was immediately and permanently installed in SGO, the 12" Meade having been moved to the north position of PSO. The CPC 11" has since proven to be a superb instrument for visual observing. This telescope has remained in place ever since providing for an excellent situation for visual observers. Today, many visual observers are being trained in its use.

### ***Construction of Waynesville Observatory***

In a conversation between Bob Finnigan, Tim Stone, and Carl Wenning at PSO one evening, the need for a longer focal length telescope was addressed. Carl pointed out that the club's astrophotographers were taking pictures of the same celestial objects time and again – the Orion Nebula, the Heart and Soul Nebula, and so on. These are large objects on the face of the sky, but

Carl argued almost jokingly that a 24" telescope with a long focal length such as that provided by an f/10 or f/11 telescope was needed for close-up views of smaller appearing celestial objects. Such a telescope would provide the image scale than our other short focal ratio telescopes could not provide and would open astrophotographers to a whole new universe of possibilities. The suggestion was met with somewhat more than passing interest.

After several months of discussion in the first half of 2017, *Anonymous* came forward with an offer to build a new observatory and pay for the necessary equipment. The pitch for a new observatory was made to Director Angela Funk for the TCAA to build a new observatory on the grounds of SGNC. Knowing that we would likely meet with some resistance, *Anonymous* sweetened the deal with an offer of \$50,000 to build a structure that could hold offices and a classroom, with a domed observatory at one end. The TCAA would bear the added cost for purchasing the dome and telescope. With Angela's support, Tim Stone, Bob Finnigan, and Carl Wenning met with the Funk's Grove Cemetery Association Board (the owners of SGNC) and made the pitch to them. Following our presentation and peppering the presenters with questions, the Board indicated they would consider the proposal and get back with the TCAA shortly. After a few days, the Board announced that they had decided *against* allowing the TCAA to build an observatory. They wanted to preserve the farmstead appearance of the Nature Center to the extent possible.



**Figure 62.** Aerial shot of SGO taken with Tony Cellini's drone: 20", 17", 16" and 11" telescopes in place.

The SGO looked like a farm silo and the PSO like a tool shed, so they were okay. The newly proposed observatory would not fit the motif, however, so the proposal was rejected despite the tantalizing offer of \$50,000 for building offices and a classroom.

Not to be stymied in the effort to build a new observatory, the TCAA led by *Anonymous* began looking elsewhere. After a few weeks of searching and several conversations, it was agreed that the Waynesville farm of Ernie Finnigan, Bob Finnigan's brother, would be ideal. It was in much darker setting than SGNC, had an obstruction-free southern horizon, and a resident caretaker. After agreeing to a \$10,000 agreement for a 50-year lease on a small plot of land to the south of

the Finnigan residence, efforts began in earnest to make the new observatory a reality. A proposal was prepared, and Tim Stone presented it to the DeWitt County Zoning Commission and then Board. The proposal was approved.

By September 2017, concrete was being poured that included two rectangular pads, three circular pads, and a walkway. Building construction immediately followed. First, there were two buildings and one dome. One building was an observer's room, the other a RORO. The RORO quickly saw the placement of the Takahasi 250mm reflector and the AG Optical 16" short-focus telescope. Both were moved there from PSO. The club's 20" was moved from PSO to the dome. Within a brief period of time, a second dome was in place and the club's new 24" f/11 telescope was placed there on a custom-built yoke mount. The 24" yoke mount was installed in October 2018, and the telescope somewhat later. The observatory was soon complete, but it took well over a year to make the 24" telescope operational.



**Figure 63.** *Waynesville Observatory on February 8, 2022.*

### ***PSO Revisited***

The Board agreed with the move of the 20" telescope to WO, that PSO would be reconfigured once again. This time PSO would serve as an astronomical imaging training facility. The view was that once observers learned the basics at SGO, they would advance to using the better equipment and conditions at WO. The 17" would remain in place at SGO. The club's H $\alpha$  solar telescope replaced the AG Optical 16" and the 11" Celestron HD was left in place on the west mount. A new 14" telescope was acquired for the north mount replacing the 20".

### ***Publications***

In addition to “producing” observatories and buying telescopes and cameras during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the TCAA also produced numerous publications. Erin Estabrook (a non-member volunteer working for member and long-time TCAA Treasurer Duane Yockey) assembled newsletters at the start of this decade, while members wrote the content. During the early part of the decade, Lee Green, Mark Honzell, Tony Cellini, Tom Weiland, and Carl Wenning were the sources of most of the articles. During the latter part of the decade, Jamey Jenkins, Darren Erickson, and Tim Stone became significant contributors. Amazing articles recounted trips to Chile, Brazil, England, and elsewhere in the Caribbean, and all over the USA and trips for national and regional meetings and star parties. There were excellent feature articles about observatories, observing aids, observing logs, powers of the telescope, eyepieces, the evolution of amateur astronomy, spherical astronomy, space missions and satellites, and constellations of the months just to name a few. Included were regular columns such as Mark’s *The Fledgling Astronomer* and Carl’s *How Time Flies*, *Monthly Reflections*, *The Night Shift*, and *Profiles in Amateur Astronomy*. Lee, as NASA Solar System Ambassador, wrote regularly about space missions and observing techniques. While these early columns have since disappeared, Carl’s *AstroBits* that first appeared in July 2012 continues unabated to the present time. ***The OBSERVER*** captures the history of the club in fine detail. (The TCAA’s newsletter is the primary source for this history and can be consulted for details. It would behoove members to read back issues for the wealth of information and detail available not only about our club’s past.)

Carl Wenning took over editorship of ***The OBSERVER*** from Erin Estabrook in January 2014. Carl continued editorship through March 2021, having prepared 87 issues consisting of some 2,100 pages and 1,200,000 words. This only goes to show the depth of his interest in writing. Of course, he was aided by a few astronomy club members as well. In 2017, Carl received from the Astronomical League its annual Mabel Sterns Newsletter Editor Award for excellence. He had earned the runner up award a year earlier.

The ***TCAA Guidebooks*** started appearing before 2010. However, by the end of the decade there were ten extant. All are today available on the TCAA website as some are rather massive tomes. For instance, TCAA Guide #1 – *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy*, runs 56 pages. TCAA Guide #10 – *Introduction to Spherical Astronomy*, runs 42 pages. For the sake of posterity, here is a complete listing of the TCAA Guides produced at this time along with their authors. In all cases the works were authored by Carl Wenning with but two exceptions, Jamey Jenkins and Lee Green being the other contributors.

1. <i>Introduction to Amateur Astronomy</i> (56 pp)	6. <i>Having a Successful Observing Session</i> (7 pp)
2. <i>TCAA Membership &amp; Benefits</i> (16pp)	7. <i>Buying Binoculars &amp; Telescopes</i> (15 pp)
3. <i>Astronomy as a Hobby</i> (14 pp)	8. <i>Optimizing Deep Sky Observations</i> (11 pp)
4. <i>The Art of Sky Interpretation</i> (16 pp)	9. <i>Astrophotography 101</i> (stem, 3 pp)
5. <i>Coordinating Observing Sessions</i> (5 pp)	10. <i>Introduction to Spherical Astronomy</i> (42 pp)

**Figure 64.** TCAA Guides written by Carl Wenning, Jamey Jenkins, and Lee Green.

Carl also wrote *The Great Eclipse*, a guide for the August 21, 2017, total solar eclipse visible from southern Illinois. This guide was sold by the ISU Planetarium, the Challenger Learning Center, and the TCAA as a fund raiser.

The TCAA joined up with Bloomington Offset Process, Inc. (bopi) starting in 2017 to publish 2,000 full-color *Family Friendly Public Viewing Session* bi-fold brochures for the past several years. This is part of bopi's *Print4Good* campaign and contributed greatly to getting people to turn out for these events. The brochures were typically disseminated through SGNC and the ISU Planetarium with the assistance of director Tom Willmitch.

A publication not to be forgotten is the [TCAA website](#) set up and maintained by Lee Green. This site is a repository for many of the club's newsletters and most important documents and serves to keep the membership and the public apprised of the club's activities. Another publication, the [TCAA Facebook page](#), was similarly set up and maintained by Carl Wenning who posted regularly about naked-eye celestial events including passages of the International Space Station. The Facebook page was the club's "public face" during the time when the general public was most interested in celestial phenomena such as Comet NEOWISE that showed beautifully in both morning and evening skies of 2020 – the year of the COVID-19 pandemic when the club had canceled all its public outreach and education activities from March onward.

We would be remiss if we did not mention Tim Stone's annual calendar first available in 2017 through 2020. Each month of the calendar featured an impressive image that Tim took with TCAA telescopes.

### **Organizational Structures**

The club's leadership has wisely put into place several "structures" to help administer the club so that it will always be true to its mandate of providing membership education and public outreach. The club has from time to time amended its bylaws to make the actions of the club

better conform to this mandate. During this interval, the club continued to revise its 5-year plans that provide direction to the club in the long term. In 2017, the TCAA's Board developed a set of job descriptions for Board members, officers, and chairs – each in charge of various aspects of the club's management. These structures continue to serve the club well.

### ***Education and Public Outreach***

The TCAA membership has throughout the club's existence been heavily involved in education and public outreach – education of its own members and reaching out to the public sharing our knowledge and joy of astronomy. The club's many events include adult education courses, public talks and observing sessions and open houses at SGNC and for small groups such as Rotary, school visits, special observing sessions for transits and eclipses, Family Science Day, and participation in *Autumn Celebration* at SGNC.

This period began with adult education course offered by Lee Green and Dave Osenga in 2010. The club's most active members immersed themselves in *Family Science Day* at ISU from 2012-2014 offered in cooperation with CeMaST. Carl Wenning introduced *Universe Sampler I* in 2015 and presented *Universe Sampler II (Introduction to Amateur Astronomy)* in 2016. It was from the former course that TCAA Guide #1 originated. This work later became a book for the course by the same name which was offered under an NCRAL membership recruitment mini grant in 2019 that was attended by a mix of 36 new and prospective members. Unfortunately, the program was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic during the winter of 2020. A very complete description of *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* appeared in the 2020 issues of the [Northern Lights](#) newsletter published by the North Central Region of the Astronomical League. Following the leadership of Vivian Hoette at Yerkes Observatory (and now a TCAA member), Mark Boulware and Carl Wenning hosted a *SkyNet* course for youth during the summer and autumn of 2016. During March of that year, they attended a workshop at Yerkes Observatory under the leadership of Vivian.

*Public Observing Sessions* – The TCAA has been hosting family-friendly public viewing sessions at SGNC since before 2000 when the Sugar Grove Observatory was built. The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was no exception. Programs continued unabated until 2020 when the year was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were also other unique events, the most significant of which was the Great American Eclipse of August 21, 2017. A significant group of TCAAers headed to Camp Ondessonk just south of Ozark, Illinois, for presentations and viewing.

Carl Wenning presented two different eclipse talks to audiences of several hundred and several members worked together to present three eclipse workshops.

### ***Service to Others***

One of the hallmarks of the TCAA has been the membership's willingness to assist others. For instance, we worked with IWU astronomer Dr. Linda French to update the Mark Williams Observatory. The TCAA sold its Celestron 11" OTA, CGE Pro mount, QSI-583c camera, and Lodestar guider to IWU for \$9,600. We installed and trained IWU personnel in its use. Dan Miller removed 16" Ealing telescope summer 2012 to make this switch out possible.

Bob Finnigan and Carl Wenning traveled to Yerkes Observatory on October 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 2013 at the invitation of Vivian Hoette, coordinator of educational outreach. They were asked to advise YO staff on the acquisition of a new imaging system for the 40" refractor. Bob and Carl spent two evenings with the telescope, had a chance to view the heavens. After realizing that the imaging plane was roughly 12" square, they felt it was impossible to recommend a CCD imaging camera that would provide sufficient field of view.

The TCAA hosted a number of summer mini conference in 2014, 2015, 2016, (none in 2017 due to August eclipse), CUAS took lead in 2018 with Amateur Astronomy Summit. After that, the summer mini conferences came to an end due to a lack of willingness of other hosts to take the lead.

While the TCAA started its Facebook page in 2010, it wasn't until about 2017 that it began seeing heavy use with emphasis on "ocular astronomy." Carl Wenning posted several times each week to the point that there were sometimes as many as 3,000+ views of a single post.

In September 2018, efforts were begun to hold quarterly membership "socials" at the ISU Planetarium in an effort to resurrect regular club meetings. These were interpreted in 2020 by the COVID pandemic and meetings were moved online in 2021 using Zoom technology.

### ***Total Solar Eclipse of 2017***

The author of this work would be remiss if he did not include at least a modicum of information about the August 21, 2017, total solar eclipse that crossed over southern Illinois and which many TCAA members observed. This was an event the TCAA membership had looked forward to seeing for decades. About two years prior to this event, the TCAA heard about Camp Ondessonk, a church camp just outside of the Shawnee National Forest of southern Illinois. David Leake of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society alerted the TCAA about the need for a

public talks at the camp. Because Carl Wenning had written a guide about the total solar eclipse, he was thought to be the best person for the task.

After detailed planning, a cadre of TCAA members traveled to Ozark, Illinois, a day prior to the event. Later that day, Carl gave plenary talk to about 500 campers who had come to the site to view the eclipse from the centerline. That evening, TCAAers presented two workshops for campers as well. Carl gave a second and final talk on the morning of the eclipse to another huge group, and then the countdown began. The threat of clouds was significant and growing as the humidity and temperature quite high. Still, the sky held out and we were able to view totality through a high layer of thin clouds that didn't seem to affect the visibility of the sun's corona with several bright streamers. (Others in Carbondale were not so lucky; a cloud blocked out the sun right at the time of totality.) Several prominences were visible. Everyone cheered at the time of totality and were elated following the event.

The drive home took place later that day but was also an event worthy of note. It took most members six or more hours to get home for a trip that should have taken three at the most. The number of people who had moved into the path of totality had to represent one of the largest mass movements of the population in the history of this nation. The roads were jam packed and moving very slowly after the eclipse.

To get a better understanding of this amazing event, be certain to read the first-hand reports about the eclipse in the club's newsletters.

### ***Affiliations***

*Astronomical League* – The TCAA's involvement with the Astronomical League continued over the decade with members completing various observing programs, service projects, and a few winning Master Observer status. These achievements can be found in the Appendices of this work. Two members went on to earn major awards. John Werner won the astrophotography contest at the ALCon EXPO 2011 national convention. Carl Wenning received the Mabel Sterns Newsletter Editor Award in 2017 for publishing *The OBSERVER*. This is the second time at our club's newsletter editors has been so recognized. Jean Memken and Michael Rogers won the inaugural Mabel Sterns Award in 1998.

*North Central Region of the Astronomical League* – The TCAA has been a member of the Astronomical League for many years. As such, it is an affiliate of the North Central Region. The TCAA hosted NCRAL 2010 at a hotel east of BMI celebrating the TCAA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The TCAA again hosted NCRAL 2016 at Heartland Community College in preparation for the

August 21, 2017, total solar eclipse visible from southern Illinois. Carl Wenning was elected NCRAL Region Rep in 2016 at our event; Carl also started NCRAL on Facebook at this time. At the 2017 Regional Convention in Lanesboro, Minnesota, Carl Wenning was elected NCRAL Chair for the first of three, two-year terms. He will serve in the capacity until May 2023. Carl Wenning, working with TCAA member Jim Gibbs, re-started the *Northern Lights* newsletter in 2016. Carl continues to serve as editor for the publication, putting out quarterly issues each year since 2016. Both Carl Wenning and Lee Green received the prestigious NCRAL Region Award – Carl in 2007 and Lee in 2020. The Award is conferred annually for outstanding service to amateur astronomy and the Region. Achievements of both can be found on the [Awards page](#) of the NCRAL website. The TCAA received the Region's membership-recruitment mini-grant in 2019 and the affiliate-recruitment mini-grant in 2020. Each grant was in the amount of \$250. The first grant funded a four-class *Introduction to Amateur Astronomy* course where some 36 participants received benefits such as printed TCAA guidebooks, free planetarium visits, viewing sessions, and a year-long complementary membership in the club. The second grant funded interaction between the TCAA and the nascent ISU Astronomy Club. Unfortunately, both grants were interrupted by the pandemic of 2020. Starting in March, the Board of Directors wisely saw fit to cancel all TCAA public and club activities until such time as the pandemic ended. The restrictions lasted through the remainder of the year.

*International Dark-sky Association* – The International Dark-Sky Association is a United States-based non-profit organization incorporated in 1988 by founders David Crawford, a professional astronomer, and Tim Hunter, a physician/amateur astronomer. The TCAA from time to time makes use of their resources to protect sky darkness at night.

*NASA Night Sky Network* – The *Night Sky Network* is a nationwide coalition of amateur astronomy clubs bringing the science, technology, and inspiration of NASA's missions to the general public. We share our time and telescopes to provide you with unique astronomy experiences at science museums, observatories, classrooms, and under the real night sky.

*National Aeronautics and Space Administration* – The NASA *Solar System Ambassadors* program is a public engagement effort that works with motivated volunteers across the nation to communicate the science and excitement of NASA's space exploration missions and discoveries with the people in their communities. To date, the TCAA has three solar system ambassadors among its ranks: Lee Green, Tom Willmitch, and Sandullah Epsicokhan.

***Epilogue Two***

Without a doubt, there is much more that can be said about the TCAA's first sixty years as a club. This work is a mere summary. Details about the club's members and activities are best gleaned from the record contained in the club's newsletter, *The OBSERVER*, that has been published uninterrupted for many years. Despite that fact that this record is incomplete and possibly even contains some errors and oversights, I hope that it serves the purpose of making TCAA members feel part of a multi-generational effort to share the love of astronomy with one another and the public.

Carl J. Wenning  
February 10, 2022

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### ***Appendix 1: The Twin Cities' First Astronomy Club***

Lee Green, working on behalf of the TCAA's history committee established in 2008, reported to Historian Carl Wenning that there was an astronomy club in Bloomington that predated the TCAA. According to an email from Lee who had been working with the McLean County Historical Society, "Bill [LaBounty] found an H. O. Hoffman in a 1914 [*Pantagraph*] clipping which listed him as a minister who lived on Roosevelt and Locust. He had an observatory in his backyard that was later sold.<sup>92</sup> They put the scope in Edwards School [on the site of the current Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church on W. Market]. Apparently, this article also mentioned an astronomy club that he formed." A later follow-up review of that article showed that the club was established a few years prior to Hoffman's death in 1908.



The informal group was a closely-knit group of Hoffman's personal friends, many of whom were likely members of the "Most Worshipful Grand Lodge" of the State of Illinois, Free and Accepted Masons, in Bloomington. Hoffman served as Grand Chaplain of that group and had an extensive social network. Unfortunately, the group seems to have disbanded shortly his death and his telescope sold to Edwards Grade School. (This school was constructed at the intersection of Market and Allin Streets in Bloomington in 1903; it was closed around 1969). According to the *Pantagraph* report, dalliances with a female house worker – whether with him or someone else – besmirched his ecclesial character. Shortly thereafter he was considered a social outcast.

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<sup>92</sup> *Pantagraph*, May 29, 1914, page 9, column 3: "**School Board is to Sell Observatory – Historic Structure Dedicated to Study of Astronomy is Soon to Pass Into History – Owned by City Schools.** The members of the board of education of the city schools during the regular sessions this evening will receive bids for the sale of the Hoffman observatory which stands on the rear of the H. O. Hoffman lot at the corner of Locust and Roosevelt avenue. The sale of this property calls to the minds of many Bloomington residents, especially those interested in scientific matters, the organization of the Astronomical Society many years ago by Rev. H. O. Hoffman and a number of his friends. The observatory was built, and a fine telescope installed, and the members of the organization spent many hours there in research and study of the celestial spheres. **Board Bought Property.** Several years ago the society found that they were unable to maintain the observatory longer and it was offered for sale and purchased by the board of education. For a time it was used by the school, but in later years, from the fact that few of the science instructors took keen interest in astronomy, the telescope was of but little use. **Telescopes stored.** A little later on the telescope was removed from the observatory and has since been stored in the Edwards school. When the property was purchased by the school board it was agreed that the observatory was to remain on the Hoffman lot until Mr. Hoffman, now deceased, or some of his heirs and legatees should order it removed. Mr. Rolla Hoffman, a son, who now desires to make some improvements on the property, has requested that the building be removed. Consequently the board members have offered it for sale. It is probable that the telescope may be sold later on."

***Appendix 2: Historical Vignettes and Tributes***

Historian's note: This *History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers 1960-2020* does not adequately pay tribute to the club's most important and influential members. Some of the following vignettes were written shortly after various members' deaths; others are statements in their own words. The "in their own words" articles were completed for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the TCAA. The vignettes are presented here to give a clearer picture of what various individuals did for the TCAA during their membership years.

**Bertha Kieviet In Her Own Words**

Some of the early history of the club came from the memory of co-founder Bertha Kieviet. Carl Wenning once had the distinct pleasure of sitting down with her for several hours to talk about this early history – people, places, and things. (This interview was recorded for posterity's sake.) The following reminiscence was handwritten by Bertha for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers in 1985.

"I was at the first meeting with John in February 1960 to organize an astronomy club. We were very surprised at the large group of people that came, who had read in the newspaper that an astronomy club would be organized in the Bloomington, Normal area. We didn't know that there were so many people interested in astronomy living in the area. A club was organized, and officers were elected at the next meeting.

I am an amateur astronomer and am interested in any phase of it. In the past 25 years I have learned a lot about astronomy and have met a lot of wonderful people. I enjoyed all the meteor, eclipse and comet viewings, day or night and in cold or hot weather. The social anniversary parties and picnics have made the club members closer and friendlier. I'm looking forward to when we will be able to build our own observatory."

Bertha Kieviet

### **John and Bertha Kieviet – a Daughter Remembers**

While going through some of my sister's things (Valeria passed away on January 1, 2010, ed.), I came across a cover letter addressed to my father, dated February 25, 1954, from the Illinois Department of Registration and Education. This letter informed him that that a certificate of registration was enclosed. This certificate stated that he could "practice your profession" until July 5, 1954, at which time he would have to renew his certificate.

I'm assuming that the certificate was his architectural license. As you are probably aware, my father never attended college, but through the use of tutors and independent study, was able to successfully pass the state tests necessary to become a licensed architect.

My mother's family lived on a farm near what is now Blue Island, Illinois. My father and grandfather were friends with a neighbor of my mother's family and often visited them. I don't know the specifics of their first meeting, but they did meet through the neighbor. The date of their wedding was May 27, 1934.

The main thing I remember hearing about the wedding was my mother's comment that Daddy had to go to work the next day. At the time he ran an elevator at what was then St. Luke's-Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago. It was during the depression, and I think he worked there for three years without a day off and was happy to have the job. But I can remember my mother saying, with all of those people out of work, you'd think they could have given John the day after his wedding off! They were married at my mother's parent's home. It was a small wedding with one attendant each.

Kora Kieviet Searcy  
June 8, 2010

**A Tribute to John & Bertha Kieviet**

by Carl J. Wenning

John and Bertha Kieviet are the benefactors of all of the hundreds of club members and the thousands of the general public who have been fortunate enough to view the skies through one of our club members' telescopes. They did more than this, however. They brought together a diverse group of individuals with a singular interest – a love of the sky and things in it – and provided deep roots to ensure stability and future growth. The TCAA became my family when I was a stranger – a newcomer to the Twin Cities. The TCAA has been the source of many of my life's closest relationships. For this I am eternally grateful to John and Bertha.

I did not know John well. I joined the TCAA in September 1978 and he passed away less than three years later. From what little I know of him,

he was a rather formal member of the “greatest generation.” I can remember well how, at the first meeting I attended, he was wearing a suit jacket and a bow tie. He wanted to see the meeting run according to strict parliamentary procedure and stick with the traditions established years earlier. Others, however, had a much more casual view and wanted nothing less than “out with the old and in with the new.” No more reading of the past meeting minutes; no more reading of the Vital Statistics; no more stodgy procedures. It is sad that squabbling and controversies like this marred his last years in the club. But so it was. The instigators of change are now gone, and the club continues along its present course.



I did know Bertha much better than John. While not the leader that John was, during her remaining years Bertha shepherded the club through thick and thin and became a revered elder statesman. She held the club together when it was closest to flying asunder due to issues surrounding the incorporation of the TCAA and management by a Board of Directors. A very dedicated individual, she continued to attend club meetings until her death many years later. She, like John, was a bit taken aback by the membership's desire to grow and expand and change with the times. She was fond of reminding the membership "the club was never to be a money-making operation." Despite this feeling, she supported the club in whichever course it took. The club of today is her legacy just as much as it is John's.

John and Bertha both inspired me. They were inspirational individuals – "the old guard" in the face of "the young Turks" – more willing to build than to destroy. As such, they were the fundamental source of the history of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers. By constantly turning my attention to the past, they made me aware of those things that served as the foundations of the TCAA. I revered them and saw their wisdom. I longed to know more, and so the club's written history came into being.

While our club's founders – John and Bertha Kieviet – are now part of history, they have not been forgotten. They continue to serve as an inspiration to those who knew them, and to those who get to know them through the club's recorders and living memories. They are now stars in the celestial firmament.

### **G. Weldon Schuette in His Own Words**

Weldon Schuette wrote the following reminiscence for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers in 1985. He was an outstanding member of the TCAA from 1961 until his death from an apparent nighttime heart attack or stroke in 1986.

My interest in astronomy started back in 1932, the year I first observed a partial eclipse of the sun. I then learned the names of stars and constellations and did some astrophotography. In 1934 I saw a Nova or “new star” in Hercules. Again, in 1942, I independently discovered a first-magnitude nova in Puppis one November morning while standing reveille in the Army at Camp Blanding, Florida. I didn’t report it, however, thinking that others may surely have seen it, but I read in next month’s *Sky & Telescope* that the first discoverer was from Argentina, and he had observed it as about first magnitude – the same as I did. (It did get brighter, to 0.5 magnitude.) In 1944, while aboard a troop ship on the Atlantic, I estimated the ship’s position on the ocean from the stars. The stars also guided me once while walking out of a dark, strange town in Holland (under black-out conditions of the war zone) to my company area. (I had missed my ride back while on a pass to another city.) The year 1957 brought the appearance of Comet Arend-Roland with its 10-degree tail in the western evening sky (my first sighting of a real comet). Later that year I saw the first man-made satellites, the Sputnik I rocket and Sputnik II.

In 1961, I joined the TCAA and drove from my home in Gibson City for three years to attend meetings here in Bloomington-Normal. Much of the time I supplied schedules for man-made satellites. I was a member of “Moon-watch” in the mid 1960s. In 1964 I accepted an architectural position in Normal and moved here. I journeyed to Florida in March 1970 to see a total eclipse of the sun and also to the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec in July 1972 to see one. Clouds interfered both times but the darkness – which was especially sudden and dark in Florida – was interesting. I also traveled to Florida to see four manned launches into space. I was elected in 1971 to a TCAA office as vice-president. Thereafter, I have been Secretary, President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Treasurer. I also edited the TCAA “Observer” in the last ten years. I unexpectedly received an Honorary Membership from TCAA members in February 1984, which I appreciate very much.”

G. Weldon Schuette

### **A Tribute to G. Weldon Schuette**

by Carl J. Wenning

Weldon Schuette was born on January 17, 1917, on the family farm just northeast of Gibson City, Illinois. He was the second of two boys born to George and Ethel Scott Schuette. Weldon was named after his father George but used his middle name throughout most of his adult life.

The interest in astronomy that Weldon had as a youth was piqued by his observations of a partial solar eclipse in 1932. He was then only fifteen years of age. Using exposed, fully developed black and white film, he observed the eclipse with fascination. Afterwards, he began studying star maps and constellations. His first star map was one he obtained in elementary school. On certain clear nights Weldon would lie in ditches along the roadside to get a good view of the heavens and to avoid bothersome lights. From time to time he would startle passersby, emerging from the shadows of the ditch when they least expected it.

Purchase of a small mail order telescope was soon to follow. Weldon began to prepare star maps of his own for every hour of the night. He observed stars, planets, and other items that he marked on his star maps. Undoubtedly, his interest in astronomy was only increased by reports of a grade schoolteacher who saw and talked glowingly about the 1910 appearance of Comet Halley. Weldon longed to see spectacular objects in the sky, and he was rewarded by the appearance of Nova Herculis in 1934.

A second nova entered Weldon's life while he was standing for reveille while in the Army in 1942. On the morning of November 9<sup>th</sup> he observed a first-magnitude star in the constellation of Puppis just to the east of Canis Major. An observer in Argentina had observed the nova three hours earlier. Weldon was possibly the first person in the northern hemisphere, and the second person in the world, to recognize the nova for what it was. Weldon did not report the nova as he felt others certainly would have already noted it and, besides, it was hard to get word out from a military installation during the height of World War II.

Weldon was fond of reciting the story retold here in Sharon MacDonald's words, "I recall (I hope correctly) that when, in the army, Weldon first observed the nova in 1942, he was standing at attention during morning inspection, he couldn't react, say anything, or tell anyone, he just had to stand there and take it all in without exhibiting any emotion or response - those in charge likely to show little interest or understanding about what was happening, much less have a sense of humor about the struggles of an amateur astronomer in Weldon's position! I remember Weldon's smile and his laughing about the situation when he told us the story."

After completing his military tour in England, France, and Germany, and his hitch in the Army, Weldon returned home to the grassy prairies of Illinois. Taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, he went to the University of Illinois to study architecture. He graduated in 1950. During this time, according to Weldon's own words, he "lost interest in astronomy." This interest was to be rekindled in 1957 with the launch of Sputnik.

Weldon observed satellites because it was "something (he) could figure out. It was simple" for him. Upon coming across Sputnik predictions in the local papers from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, he noted that his own predictions were more accurate. He contacted the Smithsonian people and provided better predictions. They asked him for his calculations and methodology.



His technique was simple. He developed an analog computer that consisted of a polar projection of the earth and a clear, rotatable laminate upon which he drew one orbital track of the satellite based upon knowledge of the satellite's orbital inclination and period. The track had tick marks of time to indicate the location of the satellite in its orbit since its last south-to-north equator crossing. With knowledge of the longitude of this crossing, he could rotate the laminate surface to indicate the ground track. With knowledge of the time of the equator crossing, he could tell where the satellite would be at any point in time. When the satellite entered one of several

“acquisition circles” for central Illinois, he knew the satellite would be visible and how high up and what direction in the sky to look for it. He used this process to predict the sightings of satellites for the next 30 years.

In 1960 the Twin City Amateur Astronomers formed under the able leadership of John and Bertha Kieviet. Weldon heard about the club through *Pantagraph* newspaper accounts while living in Gibson City, caring for his aging and sickly mother.

In 1961 Weldon joined the TCAA, regularly commuting from Gibson City for meetings and other club functions. This continued for three years until the death of his mother in 1964. At this time he moved to the Twin Cities after securing a job with Middleton and Associates as a draftsman where he was to remain for life.

That Weldon loved astronomy was evidenced by his numerous trips around the country to observe solar eclipses and to watch the space program develop. He traveled to Florida and eastern Canada to view total solar eclipses. He witnessed one occurring in northern Florida. It occurred under cover of clouds. Though he did not directly observe the eclipse, he was deeply impressed by the “sudden darkness” surrounding the event. Numerous trips were made to Florida to see Apollo moon launches and shuttle launches.

The most loved portion of sky watching for Weldon was that of satellite observation. He saw the Sputnik I rocket, Sputnik II and III and their rockets, Echo I (which he sighted over 1,000 times<sup>93</sup>), Echo II, Pageos, Skylab, Salyut 6 and Salyut 7, space shuttles, and the MIR space station. According to Weldon’s own estimate, he observed satellites over 2,500 times since his first sighting of Sputnik in 1957.

The club and its members were the object of love for Weldon. This we know because he spent so much time working on its behalf and participating in its activities. Only two times since 1970 did he fail to attend club meetings – the reason being trips to see space shots in Florida.

Weldon was an integral member of the family known as the Twin City Amateur Astronomers. He held every major elected office and was an officer without break from 1971 to his death in 1986. He served as Treasurer for many years. He re-instituted the club newsletter, *The OBSERVER*, in 1975 and was editor until his untimely death. He never missed an issue, nor had one ever come out late. For ten years he single-handedly kept up the grounds of the club’s Fissel Farm Observatory. After club co-founder John Kieviet passed away, Weldon always drove

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<sup>93</sup> Barry Beaman mentioned in 2010, “Weldon Schuette was a satellite observer. One night he stopped by Behr Observatory while I was observing variable stars. After about 10 to 15 minutes of small talk, Weldon commented that he had just made his 1,000<sup>th</sup> observation of the Echo satellite.”

Bertha to meetings because she couldn't drive at night. That was Weldon, serving the TCAA and others in many ways, large and small, some of which I am sure we will never know. His dedicated work on behalf of the club was without comparison.

In February 1984, Weldon was granted lifelong honorary membership in this august body – a title that he truly deserved and relished. He was the first of the club to recover Comet Halley and the last to bid it farewell. Only in June 1986 did he complete an odyssey of many years by finishing his observations of all 110 Messier objects. He was to receive his Messier citation in September 1986 but, unfortunately, death intervened. Weldon suddenly and unexpectedly passed away on August 19, 1986, while at home, probably suffering either a stroke or a heart attack. Three days later, Weldon was laid to rest at Drummer Township Cemetery in the hometown of his childhood, Gibson City, IL. Weldon was a graduate of the University of Illinois with a degree in architectural engineering. He was employed as a draftsman with Middleton Associates, Inc., Normal. He was dearly loved and highly revered by his fellow club members. Honors were paid to him – honors that he justly deserved. The club saw fit to institute a special society – the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers – to honor one of their own in a way that the membership felt best exemplified the arduous work and dedication, the prowess and knowledge of Weldon Schuette. The award was created by an act of the club on January 17, 1987, what would have been Weldon's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **A Tribute to Aubrey & Miriam Johnson**

by Carl J. Wenning

Perhaps the most genteel people ever to belong to the club were Aubrey and Miriam (nee Grieg) Johnson. I had the distinct pleasure of meeting them when I first began participating in TCAA events during the autumn of 1978. At that time Aubrey was the club's librarian, and he and Miriam rarely missed a meeting. They were inseparable.

Being in their mid to late 80s at that time, they were not regular observers. They just had an interest in space, especially since the advent of space flight in the early 1960s. Aubrey's interest was also sparked by his views of Halley's Comet in 1910, and he was always happy to recite his views of the comet's tail that "stretched clear across the sky" and telling of stories of hucksters who took advantage of peoples' ignorance of things astronomical.



Few TCAAers ever got to know the Johnsons as well as my family and I did. My daughter Rebecca, particularly, was one of their favorites. We visited with Aubrey and Miriam several times in their home and learned lots more about them that fascinated us to no end. They were such gracious hosts. I'll never forget Miriam's menagerie of ceramic animal miniatures. She gave a pair of cats to Rebecca one evening.

Their personal stories were very interesting. Miriam was a concert-qualified pianist who shared her musical skills with children through her lessons. She was the granddaughter of Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg of *Peer Gynt* fame (though the Americanized version of her birth name was Gregg). Aubrey was an electrical engineer with naval experience as a radioman during WWI; he spent his professional life working for power companies. Both lived and grew up

in Chicago and moved to Bloomington in the 1970s to be near their only child – a son, Aubrey Jr. – who had moved to Normal several years before.

Aubrey and Miriam were in the Biograph Theater in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago on the hot summer evening of July 22, 1934. Sitting near them in the movie house was Public Enemy #1, John Dillinger. Shortly after they departed the theater, they recalled hearing the gunfire of the FBI that ended Dillinger's life in a nearby alleyway.

Aubrey was the club's first and only "Comet Halley Two Timer." Having observed it as a youth, Jim Baker was able to get Aubrey out to visit with "a 76-year-old friend" during the 1986 apparition of the comet. Aubrey was presented with a suitable plaque during early 1987.

Aubrey and Miriam loved each other dearly, having been married for some 65 years at around the time of their deaths. Miriam passed away from cancer at 88 years of age. We had Aubrey over to our house a time or two after that to commiserate with him, lift his spirits, and cheer him up. Though we were able to share a few laughs, Aubrey died of a broken heart less than a year later. He was 96 years old, and the most senior of any TCAA member ever.

Both are interred near the south end of the graveyard in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington – the same cemetery as United States Vice President Adlai E. Stevenson.

**A Tribute to Ayne J. VandenBrook: An Exemplary Life Tragically Cut Short<sup>94</sup>**

by Carl J. Wenning

The membership of the TCAA is like family to me. That was perhaps never more so than with a young amateur astronomer by the name of Ayne (pronounced Ann) Jean VandenBrook from West Chicago, IL. Born Ann VandenBrook, Ann had her given name legally changed to Ayne while still in high school. She said that the new spelling “set her apart.”



Anyone who knew Ayne realized that she didn't need setting apart. Ayne was one amazing person. Ayne came to ISU during the autumn of 1984, and I met her that semester when she came to the planetarium. After a Friday evening program she had attended with a friend, she remained behind and continued talking with me until long after the program had ended. I don't recall what we talked about other than some of the astronomy concepts in the program that evening. Because of her abiding interest in astronomy and in the work of the planetarium, I asked her to consider assisting me as a volunteer. She immediately agreed to do so without hesitation.

Ayne worked with me throughout her first three years at ISU but found less and less time to do so during her last year maintaining as she was a nearly perfect grade point average.

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<sup>94</sup> For additional information about this amazing lady, see the January 1990 issue of *The OBSERVER*.

Nonetheless, her support of the planetarium was nothing short of exemplary. During her first year she really learned how to operate the planetarium projector, identify constellations, relate stories about their mythology, and identify locations of various objects in space as well as explain them using all the resources of the planetarium's special effects panels. This was an amazing feat in light of the fact that Ayne was totally blind in one eye and legally blind in the other.

Anyone who knew Ayne also knew that she had a congenital birth defect of the eyes known as bilateral coloboma. Coloboma occurs when a baby's eyes do not develop properly during pregnancy and results in missing or malformed parts. Despite this problem, Ayne did not allow the coloboma to limit or define her. What did define Ayne was her extraordinary personality, scholarship, service, and observing skills.

Her greatest contribution to the ISU Planetarium was assisting me during the autumn of 1985 and the spring of 1986 with the passage of Halley's Comet. The planetarium's attendance that year reached an all-time high of 27,000 that has not been matched at any time during the planetarium's 45-year existence. Programs on those Friday and Saturday nights would start at 7 p.m. and due to the demand rarely finished before 1 a.m. Without her support, there is simply no way I could have managed.

Ayne was actively engaged in amateur astronomy during this time as well. She and I often spent evenings together under the stars viewing Messier objects using the Planetarium's Celestron 8-inch Schmidt-Cass telescope. She continued working on her Messier certificate and was awarded both the provisional and honorary certificates in November 1988. A year later she would be gone forever. After she graduated in May 1989, she purchased a 10-inch Coulter Odyssey on a Dobsonian mount<sup>95</sup> to continue observing over the summer.

Ayne was a chemistry major who had developed an interest in "water chemistry" during her time at ISU. When she graduated, she did so at the very top of her ISU class. She was named one of 13 Robert G. Bone Scholars<sup>96</sup> that year and received the additional recognition – *with distinction* – given to only to the top 3 of the 13 awardees. This was the very highest accolade accorded to any undergraduate at ISU at that time or since.

That autumn Ayne began graduate school in Chemistry at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Within a few weeks she phoned me and seemed so forlorn. She had lost her ISU support network and wanted to quit graduate school. She had recently contracted a bad case of

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<sup>95</sup> Always the scientist, Ayne counterbalanced her telescope with fossils taped to the bottom of the mirror holder!

<sup>96</sup> Two other TCAA members received the Bone Scholar recognition in subsequent years, Donald F. Johnson, President 1988-1990, and Rebecca E. Wenning, newsletter editor 2004-2006.

gastroenteritis and was feeling quite down about herself and her prospects. Little did I realize it that a few weeks later she would, in a profoundly depressed state, drop out of graduate school. While seeking a job in Columbia, MO, on November 7, 1989, she ended her life. It wasn't until I attended Ayne's funeral and met her aunt that I learned of Ayne's true problem. She had been profoundly depressed while a child and for many years had been on medication. During her time at ISU she found that with the support network of people that she had she no longer needed her medication. Only when that network was withdrawn did she need help again. She refused to return to her medication because it would impede her ability to drive the car that she needed to get around. Unfortunately, this was a mistake that Ayne could not survive. Hers was an exemplary life cut tragically short.

In memory of Ayne, her parents gave Ayne's telescope to the ISU Planetarium. That telescope has been used by planetarium directors and the general public, schoolteachers, and their students, to view the wonders of the heavens that amateur astronomers know best how to share.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ayne's telescope is now on indefinite loan to the TCAA.

### **Eugene Sutton in His Own Words**

The following reminiscence was handwritten by Eugene Sutton for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers in 1985. Gene was an older and somewhat frail member of the TCAA during his most active years in the 1970s and 1980s. Still he had an active – if not overactive – mind. (He once mentioned that he heard of a UFO that had exploded in orbit above earth. He suggested that we track the parts backward in their orbits and use that information to reassemble the UFO!) Still, Gene was well liked by the membership. He was a member of the TCAA until his death from Parkinson's disease in 2001.

“I have had a general interest in astronomy for a number of years. I read Lee's *Measuring the Universe* several years ago. In 1967 I heard a radio broadcast saying that a formal class in astronomy was going to be held at Lakeview Center in Peoria. I went there at the appointed time, registered, and attended the class. Afterwards I joined the Peoria astronomy club and the Peoria Academy of Science. In 1968 I attend the national Astronomical League convention in Chicago. In 1971 I attended the Northwest Region Astronomical League convention in and hosted by the Peoria Astronomical Society.

I came to Normal in 1969, and in the early 70's joined the TCAA. I have attended several viewing parties and events with the TCAA, including the 1974 Northwest Regional Convention in Chicago, Fermi Lab in 1973, a trip to Ohio, a trip to Yerkes Observatory, and a trip to Adler Planetarium and Field Museum in Chicago. I have helped on many construction projects. I have assisted with lectures the last two years, 1983 and 1984, at Comlara Park.”

Eugene P. Sutton

### Robert J. Poorman in His Own Words

Bob Poorman was an active member of the TCAA during the 1990s. While in his late 70s at the time, he vigorously involved himself with club functions. He seemed most content, however, reviewing the contents of the *RASC Handbook* that he acquired annually. Always seeking information, he frequently called on members of the TCAA for “further information.”

“When I was 3 or 4 years of age (circa 1913 or 1914), I was introduced to basic sky observation by my father who taught me to recognize the Big Dipper, Cassiopeia, and the Little Dipper, in that order. When I was in high school, the family subscribed to *Nature* – a magazine, which had a page or two devoted to astronomy, and each season a new sky map was presented. This enabled me to learn of many more constellations and asterisms. I might mention that in those days we did not have the light pollution and emission pollution to contend with, and on most nights the sky did appear black, and the stars and planets really did shine out like diamonds. In college (INU) I had a one-semester course in astronomy. However the course, which was taught by a Ph.D. from the Mathematics Department, was a descriptive course involving a minimum of math. We made several sky observations not involving a telescope, and we made one visit to the Adler Planetarium which was then (1932) a very new institution. I bought my first telescope, a 3-inch reflector, five years ago (1989), and last year (1994) I bought a 10-inch Dobsonian. These have opened up a much bigger sky for me, but I still have a lot of discovering to do.”

Robert J. Poorman

### Bill Blunk in His Own Words

“Carl, I have read your excellent account of the history of the TCAA. I enjoyed it very much. I was interested to hear that Barry Beaman and Warren Light, as well as Dave Williams are still



occasional visitors to TCAA functions. I recall at least one club viewing at Warren’s folks farm, near Shirley. Barry, of course, was instrumental in getting the club access to the Wesleyan Behr observatory to use their 6” refractor. Bob Mayo, Hank Janecek, Dave Williams, Lyle Rich, and I (and possibly others) spent several Saturday’s salvaging parts from the old observatory before it was demolished. We took them to the

Fissel farm with the idea that we might one day build a TCAA domed observatory, but that did not happen. (Image above: Bill (left) with Lyle Rich.)

Here are some additional recollections I have that may improve the accuracy of a small part of the “early years” accounts of TCAA. (Historian’s note: Additions have been made to the body of the main narrative.)

- ☆ I recall Hank Janecek’s 4.25” Newtonian and certainly Bob Mayo’s 8”. I believe that Mike Ryder had a 2.4” alt-azimuth mounted Unitron refractor, however. You might check with Mike, who lives in Oregon, IL, last I heard. Russell Blakney, a good friend of Bob Mayo and a well-known projectionist at the Normal, Irvin, and Castle theaters in Bloomington also had a homemade 4.25” Newtonian. You previously noted John Kieviet’s homemade 6” that gave many of us our first good look at Jupiter.
- ☆ Lyle Rich was also a participant in the Dec. 1961 Geminid meteor count with Hank Janecek and me. Lyle and I did most all of our astronomy together, just as the 4 “older” boys, Dave Williams, Mike Ryder, Taylor Cisco, and John Bryan did. Near the bottom of page 4 you mention the 4 boys (Dave, Mike, Taylor, and John) but somehow insert Lyle, as a fifth. Lyle and I pretty much observed by ourselves or with adults (John Kieviet, Hank Janecek, and Bob Mayo). I suspect Lyle and I were viewed as “underclassmen” by the other 4 boys and did not

often observe with them except at public club functions, though we were all friendly at club meetings and public viewings.

- ☆ Another event omitted were several Saturday morning meetings at the Normal pool building (in winter) to help club members get started grinding their own telescope mirrors. I am not certain what year it was, but likely 1962 or 1963. I recall John Kieviet and Hank Janecek gave their time to help a small number of budding ATM's get started. We probably met half a dozen or more times, on Saturday mornings in the pool building. I eventually completed that 4.25" f/5 RFT mirror and mounted it with the help of Bob Mayo. Bob was a machinist for GM&O railroad and had a metal lathe in his garage. We spent many evenings there doing various astronomy-related projects from boring the axles for the Fissel farm roll-off roof building to assembling my RFT with a sled focuser, threaded for a big WWII surplus Erfle eyepiece. (I still recall it was 32 TPI, Bob taught me how to use the lathe to cut threads. I now have a metal lathe in MY basement and continue to make scope and mount parts – all thanks to Bob's instruction!) Back to the TCAA ATM meetings, besides my mirror, I believe that Mike Ryder was working on an 8". I do not know if he ever finished it. John Bryan made a 4.5" that he mounted in a cardboard tube. He later sold it to Lyle for low cost. Lyle did not grind a mirror. Lyle left the OTA with me while he was in the Navy. I mentioned he needed to reclaim it when he attended my retirement party in 2004, but by then he had a nice Meade scope and was no longer interested. The old scope has a turned-down edge but works OK if the outer .25" is masked.

Those are about the only corrections/additions I can contribute to your excellent work. The early members of the TCAA were a varied, interesting, and enthusiastic group. I treasure memories of those people and events of nearly 50 years ago and appreciate all that those early mentors did to shape the lives of us younger members. I used my handy little RFT to demonstrate a Newtonian reflecting telescope in my physics classes each year for my 35 years of teaching in Joliet."

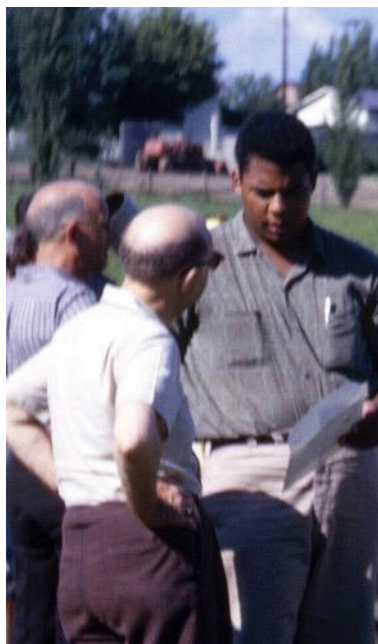
Best regards,  
Bill Blunk  
4 Jan 2010

### Taylor Cisco in His Own Words

I consider it an honor to have been asked to write my reflections on the Twin City Amateur Astronomers (TCAA). The sixties was a great time to be active in amateur astronomy. In addition to observing the planets, variable stars, lunar eclipses, and partial solar eclipses, we had the pleasure of witnessing magnificent displays of the Aurora Borealis and naked eye tracking of Echo satellites. Those activities transpired during the exciting birth of the space age.

My mother had read the invitation in *The Daily Pantagraph* and had suggested I should attend a meeting. I had a strong interest in rocketry, but we did not know of any rocket clubs in the Bloomington-Normal area. I thought her suggestion was a good idea because the club might teach me about the planets and stars mankind would explore. Therefore, I joined during the first months of the club.

I met David Williams at the TCAA. David attended Normal Community High School and I went to Normal University High School. I do not think we would have known each other if the TCAA had not been created. We became good friends during the high school years. David and I got together frequently because he lived approximately a block west of me on Dale Street. We usually had root beers from the stand that was a few yards east of my house. David, I, and the others brought A&W root beers to the Fissel farm observatory as we made drawings of lunar craters and rills. We left those beverages behind during our trips to the Behr Observatory and the Northmoor Observatory. Most of my TCAA activities were in support of David's enthusiastic projects.



College disrupted my attendance at TCAA meetings. I graduated from high school June 1962 and started college in September at New Mexico State University (NMSU), Los Cruces. I heard and then saw a bolide while off-campus. I returned to Normal in 1963 because appropriations for the Co-op Program at White Sands Proving Grounds had been reallocated from the Nike Zeus Program to fund the development of the Nike X antimissile-missile. I worked full-time at Nelson's Copy Shop to earn money for school and then enrolled for classes at Illinois State University (ISU) in September 1963. After enrolling for classes at ISU, I resumed my attendance of the TCAA. I used the Ozalid process I learned from the Copy Shop to make instant, letter-sized reproductions of telescopic images of the partial eclipse.

My subscription to *Sky & Telescope* was not disrupted. I still have those old journals. The earliest issue in my library is volume XIX, number 6, from April 1960. I used them a couple of years ago as references for edits I had made to the article Transient Lunar Phenomenon in Wikipedia. Over the years, I have used those issues for other writing projects.

My attendance at TCAA events declined as the seventies approached. It was not due to a waning interest in astronomy. There were demands from various jobs, ISU clubs, especially those directly related to my major, and the civil rights movement. I was vice president of the ISU Physical Science Club for a year, active in the math club, and a few semesters later became the president of the ISU Chapter of the National Association for Colored People (NAACP). From August 1967 through August 1968, I lived in Chicago to earn money for college as an Engineer's Aid at the Naval Ordnance Station, Park Forest, Illinois. My participation in TCAA became very sporadic after I returned to ISU in 1968. My last activity was a report I presented to the TCAA in 1969 about proposals to use observations of the asteroid 1566 Icarus to test the effectiveness of Einstein's general relativity theory and Dicke's scalar-tensor theory.

I remember only a few names. Whenever I drove to see my daughter during her college years in Kansas, I would always think of Galesburg and John Kieviet as I left Illinois. I remember speaking with Hank Janacek and Weldon Schuette. Weldon had a lot of interesting stories. The one that I still remember was his peculiar claim to have seen, from Normal, the glow of rocket launches from Cape Canaveral. It may not be preposterous. While I was attending NMSU, I saw the daylight launch of a Corporal missile during a tour of White Sands Proving Grounds. The amazing aspect of that event was the unexpected brilliance of its exhaust flame. It seemed to be as bright as a welder's torch. The Corporal was much smaller than the rockets NASA had been using for the Apollo Moon program. Television has never conveyed the dazzling brilliance of exhaust flames from Saturn boosters. I met Nerio Calgaro while we were ISU physics majors.

One of the great cultural qualities of the TCAA, and its associates, was its active commitment to strengthening anyone's interest in astronomy – regardless of education, gender, age, and ethnicity. It was quite an honor for us, as teenagers, to have the keys to observatories, in the absence of adult supervision. The mutual respect and trust between youngsters and adults was a product of the implemented goals of the club. As the first African American to join TCAA, I can state unequivocally that all members interacted without any racial biases. I have always been proud to have been a member of the TCAA. The image of Saturn and its rings adorned the first membership cards and I had kept mine long after I had become inactive.

Taylor A. Cisco, Jr.  
January 20, 2010

### Mike Ryder in His Own Words

It is hard to believe that the club is 50 years old, and apparently still going strong! I think I joined TCAA as a high school freshman and continued my membership throughout high school (1959 to 1963). (Does that make me a charter member?) To this day astronomy is one of my two



main “hobby” interests (amateur radio being the other), and enthusiasm for both began around 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Twin City Amateur Astronomer meetings were something I greatly looked forward to attending as a high school student.

Although never a serious observational amateur, as an “armchair astronomer” I have continued to subscribe to either *Sky & Telescope* or *Astronomy* magazines over the years, and most of the non-fiction books in my home are on astronomy topics. My initial interest in astronomy was generated through my friendship with David B. Williams, and I see from an Internet search that he is still very active in astronomy, especially with AAVSO.... Other friends who may or may not have been members of TCAA were John Bryan, Bill Shadid, and Gary Frankeberger. These three were high school friends with whom I have lost contact, and I may be mistaken about their TCAA affiliation....

Back in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 1958-59, Bill Shadid and Gary Frankeberger, got me interested in electronics, specifically amateur radio. We continued those interests throughout high school, recruiting a few others as time went on, I think. As I said before, although never really seriously into either hobby (I was never a guy who had hours every day to delve into any hobbies – just too busy), those two science-based fields of study still remain my favorite pastimes.

Mike Ryder  
January 10-11, 2010

### Barry Beaman in His Own Words

Prior to meeting David Williams at the beginning of my junior year at Illinois Wesleyan I had, mostly, conducted my astronomy pursuits alone. When David invited me to join the TCAA, my life changed much for the better. Suddenly I had a group of people who shared my interests and encouraged me to join them in observing and learning activities. It was the beginning of a glorious adventure that continues today, almost 50 years later. Those wonderful activities



included learning to observe variable stars with David, Hank Janecek, Bill Blunk and others, doing public outreach with the members, machining projects with Bob Mayo, helping to build the Beehive Observatory, going to summer evening picnic star parties at the Beehive, and many more activities.

In 1966 I married Carol Gray, joined the Air Force, and moved away never to reside in the Bloomington area again. But the TCAA has continued to support Carol and me by inviting us back to special events and to speak occasionally. Bob Finnigan brought his C14 to Rockton and conducted a viewing session for the NCRAL meeting when the Rockford Amateur Astronomers sponsored it.

It was a special thrill to present the first Mabel Sterns Award for society newsletter excellence to the TCAA at the Astronomical League Convention in 1998 at French Lick, Indiana. Your editors were Jean Memken and Michael Rogers, and Sandy McNamara received it for the editors. It's always great to receive an award, but it is really special when it is the first time the award is given. All of you in the TCAA should be proud of this award because, while it is focused on the editors, the editors can only excel if they are provided with sufficient, high-quality reports to edit. The TCAA quite obviously does that. Thank you!

Congratulations to the TCAA for a prosperous and exciting first fifty years. I hope your second fifty years are much the same and would like to help you celebrate that distant anniversary, but by then I will be 117 years old and, if still around, probably not very mobile.

Barry B. Beaman  
President 1994 – 1998  
Astronomical League

*Appendix 3: In Memoriam ~ Requiescant in pace*

Name	DOB-DOD <sup>98</sup>	Profession	Interesting Notes
<a href="#">John H. Kieviet</a>	b. 22 Oct 1908 d. 28 Oct 1981	Architect	Co-founder of the TCAA along with his wife Bertha. Held office of president longer than any club member; John & Bertha Kieviet Founders Award named in their honor. Graduated Lindblom High School, Chicago, June 24, 1926. He never attended college.
<a href="#">Bertha L. Kieviet</a>	b. 24 Feb 1912 d. 6 Oct 1994	Homemaker	Co-founder of the TCAA along with her husband John; no shrinking violet, Bertha remained active in the club until the very end; first lifelong honorary member; first inductee of G. Weldon Schuette Society; John & Bertha Kieviet Founders Award named in their honor. A “heart and soul” of the club during the years following John’s death.
<a href="#">(George) Weldon Schuette</a>	b. 17 Jan 1917 d. 19 Aug 1986	Architectural draftsman	G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers named in his honor. Independent discoverer of Nova Puppis 1942; satellite watcher extraordinaire having developed an amazing analog computer for making predictions of over flights; held every club office. Another “heart and soul” of the club.
<a href="#">Miriam J. Johnson</a>	b. 3 Nov 1905 d. 2 Dec 1993	Homemaker and private piano teacher	Musician and granddaughter of Edvard Grieg, the world-famous composer of <i>Peer Gynt</i> fame. Both she and her husband Aubrey were present the night John Dillinger was gunned down outside the Biograph Theater in Chicago! Perpetually in love with Aubrey.
<a href="#">Aubrey N. Johnson</a>	b. 5 Dec 1897 d. 22 Mar 1994	Electrical engineer	Club’s only “Comet Halley Two-Timer;” served in Navy during WWI as radio officer aboard ship; died at 96 years of age of a broken heart; oldest TCAA member in the history of the club.
<a href="#">(Earl) Eugene Miller</a>	b. 31 Jul 1930 d. 21 Jan 1991	Construction	Among the very earliest members of the TCAA; father of member Mike Miller; member of the TCAA from 1961 until this death, Gene was at twice president; Eugene and Donna Miller Family Award named in their honor.
Donna R. Miller	b. 8 Apr 1932 d. 22 Oct 2004	Homemaker	Among the very earliest members of the TCAA; mother of Mike Miller; member of the TCAA from 1961 until her death. Donna

<sup>98</sup> All birth and death dates confirmed with the US Social Security Administration.

			frequently helped with fund raising projects during early years of the club; Eugene and Donna Miller Family Award named in their honor.
Ayne Jean VandenBrook	b. 25 Sep 1965 d. 7 Nov 1989	ISU student & planetarium volunteer	Though legally blind (completely blind in one eye and partially sighted in the other due to a birth defect known as bilateral coloboma), Ayne worked very successfully as an ISU Planetarium volunteer for 5 years, earned her Messier certificate (#804), and graduated Summa Cum Laude in Chemistry from ISU as Robert G. Bone Scholar "with distinction."
<a href="#">Eugene P. Sutton</a>	b. 20 Jan 1918 d. 15 Jul 2001	World War II veteran and a retired factory worker from Caterpillar.	Earned degree in Psychology from Bradley University post WWII. He was with us for all events, and rarely ever missed. Died at 83 from Parkinson's Disease; donated body to science; remains interred 31 Jul 2002.
<a href="#">Lyle V. Rich</a>	b. 13 Jan 1947 d. 26 Aug 2005	Captain (USN); later a federal employee working on encryption codes among other things.	Among the very first astronomy club members, having left the club after graduating from college. Spent years in Navy and as a federal employee; returned to club upon retirement, becoming president within two years; only club officer ever to die in office.
<a href="#">Dr. Thomas J. Moore</a>	b. 28 Jul 1911 d. 24 Dec 1990	Dentist	An erstwhile observer; collected astro-nomical items of higher quality; a "consummate hobbyist" according to his daughter; an active TCAAer from 1969-1985.
<a href="#">Howard L. Southerland</a>	b. 5 Jan 1910 d. 27 Nov 1991	Manager of Bloomington Wastewater Treatment Plant	Active observer as retiree; well known for his "big binoculars." Bloomington Wastewater Treatment Plant was named in his honor.
<a href="#">Rev. Lloyd G. Strouse</a>	b. 7 Feb 1898 d. 11 Jul 1972	Methodist Minister	Along with wife Hazel, Lloyd hosted observing sessions at Oakland School in Bloomington during 1960s; inventor of the mysterious "horizograph." Born in Whiterock, IL; passed away in Rockford, IL
<a href="#">Lenore M. Trainor</a>	b. 28 Sep 1956 d. 3 Aug 2007	Nurse, homemaker	A nurse who joined TCAA as a result of an adult education course taught by Sharon MacDonald and Carl Wenning; became a dedicated observer making trips to the American west to get to dark sky conditions; attended many star parties. Born in Peoria.

<a href="#"><u>Robert J. Poorman</u></a>	b. 23 Mar 1910 d. 15 Dec 2002	Unknown	A retiree who became very interested in amateur astronomy in his later years.
<a href="#"><u>Norma Verlee Fese</u></a>	b. 7 Nov 1921 d. 24 Dec 2009	Bookkeeper at Hall's Tog Shop in uptown Normal.	While never formally a member of the TCAA, Norma gave the club its name. Norma died nearly 50 years after the founding of the club and was likely the last living adult organizer.
<a href="#"><u>Robert (Bob) B. Mayo</u></a>	b. 28 Feb 1923 d. 19 Dec 2007	Machinist	Employed in the GM&O railroad car shops in Bloomington where he worked frequently with carriage wheels. Moved to Whatcom, WA, after retirement.
<a href="#"><u>Henry F. (Hank) Janecek</u></a>	b. 14 Dec 1924 d. 14 Apr 1995	Chemical engineer	Worked with expandable foams. Moved to Lucas County (rural Toledo), OH, after retirement.
<a href="#"><u>Russell G. Blakney</u></a>	b. 18 Jan 1901 d. 17 Jul 1973	Movie projectionist	A well-known projectionist at the now historic Normal Theater, as well as the Irvin and Castle theaters in Bloomington.
<a href="#"><u>Michael T. Turner</u></a>	b. 12 Jun 1944 d. 2 Dec 1987	Agricultural researcher	A short-term but highly involved member who died from a brain tumor. A family friend of Bertha Kieviet, and a "transplant" from Wyoming.
Robert P. Ryburn	b. 20 Aug 1933 d. 31 Jul 2016	High school shop teacher	An avid maker of musical instruments. Also a telescope builder who fitted mirrors made by member Joe DeHoff.
<a href="#"><u>Michael E. Miller</u></a>	b. 25 Oct 1955 d. 15 Aug 2016	Security guard	A very active club member from 1961 until the early 1980s. Mike served as president 3 times, vice-president 4 times, and for many years as club historian. Crucial in early Astronomy Day events.
<a href="#"><u>Howard "Bill" Mammen</u></a>	b. 16 Feb 1945 d. 15 Sep 2019	Physicist	Bill, in recognition of a large material donation to the club in 2015 received TCAA lifelong membership in 2016. He passed away shortly thereafter.
<a href="#"><u>Dr. Roy C. Ostberg, MD</u></a>	b. circa 1941 d. 18 Mar 2018	Ophthalmologist	Roy (along with wife Barb) was a world traveler in his past time. He traveled with TCAA members on several total solar eclipse expeditions. He was an avid skier having traveled to some of the remotest parts of the earth for skiing. It's no surprise that he passed away while traveling in Nairobi, Kenya, after a short illness.
<a href="#"><u>Kora Kieviet Searcy</u></a>	b. 14 July 1946 d. 5 Dec 2020	Paralegal	When never an active member of the TCAA per se, Kora was the daughter of TCAA founders John & Bertha Kieviet. She was a source of much of the information about the founding and early years of the TCAA as it related to her parents.

<a href="#">Richard F. "Dick" Wentzel</a>	b. 12 Mar 1930 d. 1 Jan 2020	Photographer & Substitute Teacher	After serving as a sergeant in the Army during the Korean Conflict, Dick returned home to Ohio to work in the family photography business, and later in other photography businesses mostly in California and Colorado. After retiring, he became a popular substitute teacher, retiring from that job at age 85. Dick enjoyed many activities including scuba diving, boating, flying, travel, cruising, and RV-camping. He was especially known for his great cooking and lighthearted jokes. Dick was a dear friend of the club. He would accompany his daughter, Lisa, to TCAA meetings, often bringing a bottle of wine or cookies to share. He would sit patiently and listen to the proceedings and every now-and-then would interject a quip of some kind to keep the mood light. After the meeting was over, he'd invariably have a joke ready for everyone. He'd tell the joke, we'd laugh, and he would head on out to his car with a smile on his face.
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**Appendix 4: Major Officers of the TCAA by Year<sup>99</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
1960	John Kieviet	Hank Janecek	Judy Walker	Eileen Jetton
1961	John Kieviet	Hank Janecek	Judy Walker	Eileen Jetton
1962	Hank Janecek	William Gramm	David B. Williams	Bertha Kieviet
1963	Hank Janecek	John Kieviet	David B. Williams	Bertha Kieviet
1964	Robert Mayo	Hank Janecek	David B. Williams	Bertha Kieviet
1965	Robert Mayo	Hank Janecek	Barry Beaman	Bertha Kieviet
1966	Lloyde Strouse	Robert Mayo	John Kieviet	Hank Janecek
1967	Lloyde Strouse	Robert Mayo	John Kieviet	Hank Janecek
1968	Hank Janecek	Lloyde Strouse (?)	Donna Miller	Warren Light
1969	John Kieviet	Robert Mayo	Donna Miller	Bertha Kieviet
1970	John Kieviet	Robert Mayo	Donna Miller	Bertha Kieviet
1971	Eugene Miller	G. Weldon Schuette	Donna Miller	Bertha Kieviet
1972	Eugene Miller	John Kieviet	G. Weldon Schuette	Lloyde Strouse
1973	John Kieviet	Roger Studer	G. Weldon Schuette	Bertha Kieviet
1974	John Kieviet	T. Dale Stone	G. Weldon Schuette	Robert Finnigan
1975	John Kieviet	Tim Stone	G. Weldon Schuette	Robert Finnigan
1976	G. Weldon Schuette	Tim Stone	Hank Janecek	Gary Rosenbaum
1977	Gary Rosenbaum	Robert Finnigan	G. Weldon Schuette	John Kieviet
1978	Robert Finnigan	Bertha Kieviet	G. Weldon Schuette	John Kieviet
1979	Robert Finnigan	Carl J. Wenning	G. Weldon Schuette	Brad Welch
1980	Carl J. Wenning	Michael E. Miller	G. Weldon Schuette	Gary Skinner
1981	Michael E. Miller	Gary Skinner	Robert Lazzaretti	G. Weldon Schuette
1982	Gary Skinner	Carl J. Wenning	G. Weldon Schuette	G. Weldon Schuette
1983	Gary Skinner	James Baker	Linda Wade	G. Weldon Schuette
1984	Sharon MacDonald	James Baker	Carl J. Wenning	G. Weldon Schuette
1985	James Baker	Michael McCall	Carl J. Wenning	G. Weldon Schuette
1986	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald	James Baker	G. Weldon Schuette
1987	Kevin Brown	Michael McCall	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald
1988	Donald F. Johnson	James C. Moncher	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald
1989	Donald F. Johnson	James C. Moncher	Kevin Brown	Carl J. Wenning
1990	James C. Moncher	Michael E. Miller	David S. Portree	Garth Bock
1991	James C. Moncher	Michael E. Miller	Avo Vill	Sharon MacDonald
1992	Michael E. Miller	Sandra McNamara	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald
1993	Michael E. Miller	Sandra McNamara	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald
1994	Sandra McNamara	Brian Barling	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald
1995	Brian Barling	Michael E. Miller	Carl J. Wenning	Sharon MacDonald
1996	Jean Memken	William R. Carney	Carl J. Wenning	Sandra McNamara

<sup>99</sup> During the first few years of the TCAA, the actual offices of Secretary and Treasurer were titled “Recording Secretary” and “Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer” respectively. In addition, under the revised constitution of 1982 the offices of Secretary and Treasurer were combined into one. Only one individual held this dual office in 1982. After that date, the dual office was split into its prior form. After the club’s incorporation in 1984, the club’s presidents and vice presidents were chosen from among the Board of Directors. In many cases, the club’s secretaries and treasurers were not on the Board leaving the club with 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> directors who held no other office per se.

<b>Year</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
1997	Avo Vill	Sandra McNamara	Sandra McNamara	Sandra McNamara
1998	Avo Vill	Michael Rogers	Avo Vill	Sandra McNamara
1999	Avo Vill	Michael Rogers	Avo Vill	Sandra McNamara
2000	Daniel Miller	Vince Burdette	Michael Rogers	L. Duane Yockey
2001	Sandra McNamara	Brian Barling	Michael Rogers	L. Duane Yockey
2002	Sandra McNamara	Daniel Miller	Michael Rogers	L. Duane Yockey
2003	Daniel Meyer	Neale Lehmkuhl	Carl J. Wenning	L. Duane Yockey
2004	Daniel Meyer	Lyle V. Rich <sup>100</sup>	Carl J. Wenning	L. Duane Yockey
2005	Lyle V. Rich	Kal Kumar <sup>101</sup>	Michael Rogers	L. Duane Yockey
2006	Daniel Miller	Brian Barling	Carl J. Wenning	L. Duane Yockey
2007	Lee Green	Michael Rogers	Carl J. Wenning	L. Duane Yockey
2008	Lee Green	Daniel Miller	Carl J. Wenning	L. Duane Yockey
2009	Lee Green	Daniel Miller	Carl J. Wenning	L. Duane Yockey
2010	Dave Osenga	Daniel Miller	Lee Green	L. Duane Yockey
2011	Dave Osenga	Tom Weiland	Lee Green	L. Duane Yockey
2012	Tom Weiland	Dave Osenga	Lee Green	L. Duane Yockey
2013	Tom Weiland	Dave Osenga	Lee Green	L. Duane Yockey
2014	Tom Weiland	Dave Osenga	Lee Green	L. Duane Yockey
2015	Tom Weiland	Dave Osenga	Lee Green	L. Duane Yockey
2016	Tim Stone	Robert Finnigan	Carl Wenning	Dave Osenga
2017	Tim Stone	Darren Erickson	Carl Wenning	Dave Osenga
2018	Tim Stone	Tim Willmitch	Carl Wenning	Dave Osenga
2019	Tim Stone	Tom Willmitch	Carl Wenning	Dave Osenga
2020	Tim Stone	Tom Willmitch	Carl Wenning	Dave Osenga
2021	Tim Stone	Tom Willmitch	Lisa Wentzel	Dave Osenga
2022	Sunil Chebolu	Tom Willmitch	Lisa Wentzel	Dave Osenga

<sup>100</sup> Also completed unexpired term of prior president who resigned midterm.

<sup>101</sup> Also completed unexpired term of prior president due to his death.

***Appendix 5: Board Members of the TCAA by Year***

The Board of Directors came into being with the registration of the TCAA as an incorporated body in Illinois during June 1984. Their purpose is to manage the operations of the club and serve as legal fiduciaries. Under the TCAA's Bylaws, only the President and Vice President must be elected from the Board of Directors. Many Board members have served over the years as 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> director, holding no elected office such as Secretary or Treasurer.

1984	Sharon MacDonald, James Baker, Carl Wenning, William Carney, and Bertha Kieviet
1985	James Baker, Michael McCall, Carl Wenning, Weldon Schuette, & Sharon MacDonald
1986	Carl Wenning, Sharon MacDonald, James Baker, Weldon Schuette, Bertha Kieviet
1987	Kevin Brown, Mike McCall, Sharon MacDonald, William Carney, and Al Timke
1988	Donald Johnson, James Moncher, Carl Wenning, Sharon MacDonald, and Kevin Brown
1989	Donald Johnson, James Moncher, Kevin Brown, Carl Wenning, and Sharon MacDonald
1990	Jim Moncher, Richard Carter, David Portree, Mike Miller, and Garth Bock
1991	Jim Moncher, Mike Miller, Garth Bock, Avo Vill, and James Wall
1992	Sandra McNamara, Tim Maurer, Tony Cellini, Michael Rogers, and Mike Miller
1993	Michael Rogers, Michael Miller, Sandra McNamara, Tim Maurer, and Carl Wenning
1994	Sandy McNamara, Bruce Osterberg, Carl Wenning, Mike Miller, and Brian Barling
1995	Brian Barling, Mike Miller, Carl Wenning, Eugene Sutton, and Sandy McNamara
1996	William Carney, Sandra McNamara, Jean Memken, Lenore Trainor, and Carl Wenning
1997	Sandy McNamara, William Carney, Michael Rogers, Lenore Trainor, and Avo Vill
1998	Avo Vill, Michael Rogers, William Carney, Bob Cuberly, and Dan Collins
1999	Avo Vill, Michael Rogers, Bob Cuberly, Duane Yockey, and Steve Blair
2000	Dan Miller, Vince Burdette, Bob Cuberly, Duane Yockey, and Brian Barling
2001	Sandy McNamara, Brian Barling, Jim Baker, Duane Yockey, and Dan Miller
2002	Sandy McNamara, Dan Miller, Dan Meyer, Jim Swindler, and Duane Yockey
2003	Carl Wenning, Duane Yockey, Dan Meyer, Jim Swindler, Neale Lehmkuhl
2004	Lyle Rich, Duane Yockey, Dan Meyer, Kal Kumar, and Carl Wenning
2005	Duane Yockey, Kal Kumar, Mike Rogers, and Lyle Rich and William Carney
2006	William Carney, Brian Barling, Duane Yockey, Dan Miller, and Neil Lehmkuhl
2007	Lee Green, John Werner, William Carney, Dave Osenga, and Mike Rogers
2008	Terry Lee Wright, Dave Osenga, William Carney, Lee Green, and Dan Miller
2009	Brian Barling, Carl Wenning, Dan Miller, Dave Osenga, and Lee Green
2010	Dave Osenga, Dan Miller, John Werner, Duane Yockey, and Lee Green
2011	Dave Osenga, Tom Wieland, Dan Miller, Tony Cellini, and Paul Pouliot
2012	Tony Cellini, Dan Miller, Dave Osenga, Paul Pouliot, and Tom Weiland
2013	Dave Osenga, Tom Weiland, Tony Cellini, Paul Pouliot, and Lee Green
2014	Bob Finnigan, Dave Osenga, Tim Stone, Tom Weiland, and Carl Wenning
2015	Tom Weiland, Dave Osenga, Bob Finnigan, Tim Stone, and Carl Wenning
2016	Tim Stone, Bob Finnigan, Carl Wenning, Dave Osenga, and Tom Weiland
2017	Tim Stone, Jim Gibbs, Dave Osenga, Carl Wenning, and Darren Erickson
2018	Tim Stone, Tom Willmitch, Dave Osenga, Carl Wenning, and Justin Meyer
2019	Tim Stone, Tom Willmitch, Dave Osenga, Carl Wenning, and Scott Wade
2020	Tim Stone, Tom Willmitch, Dave Osenga, Scott Wade, and Sunil Chebolu

2021	Tim Stone, Tom Willmitch, Dave Osenga, Scott Wade, and Sunil Chebolu
2022	Tim Stone, Tom Willmitch, Dave Osenga, Sunil Chebolu, and Dana Sawyer

### ***Appendix 6: Minor Officers of the TCAA by Year***

#### Newsletter Editor/Lead Writer

One of the most challenging jobs of the TCAA is that of Newsletter Editor/Lead Writer for *The OBSERVER of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers*. Contributions for the newsletter have sometimes come from club members, but especially the secretaries, historians, presidents, and treasurers of the club. In the list below, second names usually represent major contributions as lead writer.

David B. Williams	1961-1965
G. Weldon Schuette	1975-1986
Gary Skinner	1986-1987
Jim Moncher/Sandy McNamara	1987-1993
Michael Rogers/Jean Memken	1993-2003
Rebecca Wenning/Carl J. Wenning	2004-2006
Erin Estabrook/Carl J. Wenning	2006-2014
Carl J. Wenning	2014-2021
Sandullah Epsicokhan	2021-present

#### Historian

The office of Historian was created by a special vote of the membership during the summer of 1980. It was Bertha and John Kieviet who developed a historical scrapbook for the club's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1985. She filled this album with lots of personal photographs. Immediately prior to the club's silver anniversary, Carolyn Wenning added a second scrapbook and took time to label all the photographs.

Bill Zaffiri	1980
John Kieviet	1981
Bertha Kieviet	1982-1983
Carolyn Wenning	1984-1985
Susan Baker	1986
Carolyn Wenning	1987
Mike Miller	1988-1989
David Portree	1990
Mike Miller	1991-1992

Carolyn Wenning	1993
Donna Miller	1994
Mike Miller	1995-1996
Carl J. Wenning	1997
Avo Vill	1998-1999
Bob Cuberly	2000
Jean Memken	2001-2003
Carl J. Wenning	2004-present

### Observatory and Property Managers

The office of Property Manager was formally created in 2001 essentially to serve as a caretaker of the club's material properties such as Sugar Grove Observatory, the collection of loaner telescopes and accessories, and the club library. Prior to that, various individuals served in the separate capacities as Property Manager and Observatory Manager to serve as caretakers of club materials and the Marie-Antoinette Finnigan Observatory at Downs, IL, respectively.

#### *Marie-Antoinette Observatory Manager:*

Mike Miller	1992-1999
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#### *Library and Telescopes Property Manager:*

Sharon MacDonald	1991-1997
Sandy McNamara	1998-1999

#### *General Property Manager (Sugar Grove Observatory, Library, Telescopes):*

Sandy McNamara	2001-2004
William R. Carney	2005-2012

#### *General Property Manager (Sugar Grove & Prairie Sky Observatories):*

Tony Cellini	(2013-2014)
Tim Stone	(PSO, 2017; WO, 2017-2022)
Scott Wade	(PSO, 2017-present; WO, 2022-2023)
Carl Wenning	(SGO, 2017-present)

***Appendix 7: TCAA and Astronomical League Award Winners*****TCAA Award Winners**

**Lifelong Honorary Membership:** This designation is reserved for those TCAA members who have provided exceptionally meritorious services to the club in terms of contributions of time and resources.

John & Bertha Kieviet	(1980)
Weldon Schuette	(1984)
Carl J. Wenning	(1988)
Sandra McNamara	(2004)
Robert Finnigan	(2011)
Bill Mammen	(2016)
Tim Stone	(2018)

**G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers:** This award recognizes a TCAA member who has demonstrated great skill in observing, dedication to the club's education and public outreach efforts, and commitment to providing service to the membership. While holding the AL's Messier Award is recommended, it is not required by the Standing Rule that established this award in 1987.

Bertha Kieviet	(1987)
Carl J. Wenning	(1988)
Sharon MacDonald	(1989)
Donald F. Johnson	(1990)
James Moncher	(1991)
Sandy McNamara	(1994)
Lenore Trainor	(1997)
William Carney	(2005)
Daniel Miller	(2008)
Michael Rogers	(2009)
Lee Green	(2010)
Tony Cellini	(2011)

Tim Stone	(2017)
Lisa Wentzel	(2018)
Dave Osenga	(2022)

**John & Bertha Kieviet Founders Award:** This award is conferred upon a TCAA member to recognize demonstrated leadership to the club. Those so recognized need not have been a president of the club. If leadership is interpreted in terms of service to the membership, this is as close as the TCAA comes to having a distinguished service citation.

Brian Barling/Sandy McNamara	(1996)
L. Duane Yockey	(2007)
Carl J. Wenning	(2009)
William R. Carney	(2011)
Lee Green	(2012)
Tom Weiland	(2015)
Tim Stone	(2016)
Scott Wade	(2022)

**Eugene & Donna Miller Family Award:** This award acknowledges the strong efforts by a family to participate in the club as a unit. One or more parents are recognized for their efforts to instill within their children interest in and dedication to amateur astronomy.

Michael Rogers/Jean Memken	(2007)
Daniel and Paulette Miller	(2009)
Paul Pouliot	(2010)
Mark & Bryce Heiniger	(2015)
Mark & Dede Boulware	(2016)
Peter & Sharon Kates	(2017)
Scott & Stacey Wade	(2019)

#### **Astronomical League Award Winners**

**Recipients of Mabel Sterns Newsletter Editor Award for Excellence – *The OBSERVER***

Michael Rogers/Jean Memken (1998)

Carl J. Wenning, 2<sup>nd</sup> place (2016)

Carl J. Wenning, 1<sup>st</sup>, place (2017)

### **North Central Region Astronomical League Award Winners**

#### **Service Award**

Carl J. Wenning (2007)

Lee Green (2020)

#### **Mini Messier Marathon** (See *Northern Lights* newsletters for details.)

**Spring:** Venkat Chander, Sunil Chebolu, Joshua Gardner, Mike Gardner, Dana & Darren Sawyer, Tim Stone, Carl Wenning, Lisa Wentzel

**Summer:** Venkat Chander, Sunil Chebolu, Tim Stone, Carl Wenning, and Lisa Wentzel.

**Autumn:** Sunil Chebolu, Tim Stone, Carl Wenning, and Lisa Wentzel.

**Winter:** Devanand Chatrathi, Tim Stone, Carl Wenning, and Lisa Wentzel.

### **North Central Region Astronomical League Leadership**

Carl J. Wenning, NCRAL Chair (2017-2023)

Carl J. Wenning, *Northern Lights* Editor (2016-present)

Jim Gibbs, *Northern Lights* Co-Editor (2016-2017)

**Appendix 8: AL Observing Club & Night Sky Network Service Award Recipients<sup>102</sup>**

Note: Where two years are listed for the Astronomical League observing clubs, the first year indicates the date of the provisional award and the second year indicates the date of the honorary or advanced award. An asterisk behind a year indicates that the award had been earned but not yet presented at the time of publication.

<b>Advanced Binocular Double Star:</b>	Lisa Wentzel	(2017)
<b>Analemma Program:</b>	Dave Osenga	(2015)
<b>Asteroid Program:</b>	William R. Carney	(2008)
<b>Binocular Double Star Program:</b>	William Carney	(2012)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2016)
<b>Binocular Messier Program:</b>	Lenore Trainor	(1996)
	William R. Carney	(2005)
	Terry Lee Wright	(2007)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2009)
	Lee Green	(2009)
	David Hahn	(2010)
	Duane Yockey	(2010)
	Dave Osenga	(2012)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2016)
<b>Binocular Variable Star Program:</b>	Lisa Wentzel	(2020)
<b>Caldwell Program:</b>	Lisa Wentzel	(2017) (silver)
<b>Carbon Star Program:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2013)

<sup>102</sup> Source: <http://www.astroleague.org/awards/search>. Note that not all awards that had been earned and applied for up to this point in time (December 2009) have been awarded.

<b>Comet Observer's Program:</b>	William R. Carney	(2008/2009)
<b>Deep Sky Binocular Program:</b>	William R. Carney	(2009)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2010)
	Lee Green	(2012)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2017)
<b>Double Star Program:</b>	Sandra McNamara	(2000)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2008)
	Lee Green	(2013)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2017)
<b>Globular Cluster Program:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2010)
	Lee Green	(2010)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2018)
<b>Herschel 400 Program:</b>	Sandra McNamara	(2001)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2008)
	William Carney	(2009)
	Lee Green	(2009)
	Brian Barling	(2013)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2017)
<b>Herschel II Program:</b>	Carl Wenning	(2013)
<b>Lunar Program:</b>	William R. Carney	(2000)
	Gerry Schroeder	(2002)
	Terry Lee Wright	(2007)
	Brian Barling	(2009)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2009)
	Lee Green	(2009)
	David Osenga	(2009)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2016)

<b>Master Observer Award:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2010)
	Lee Green	(2012)
	William Carney	(2014)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2018)
<b>Messier Program:</b>	Robert Finnigan	(1974) <sup>103</sup>
	G. Weldon Schuette	(1977)
	Gary Rosenbaum	(1977)
	Tim Stone	(1978/1979)
	Carl J. Wenning	(1985/1986)
	Gary Skinner	(1986)
	Darren Drake	(1986/1987)
	Kevin Brown	(1986/1987)
	William R. Carney	(1986/1987)
	Donald F. Johnson	(1987/1987)
	Allen Timke	(1987/1988)
	Joseph DeHoff	(1987/1988)
	Robert Ryburn	(1987/1988)
	Roger Gramm	(1988)
	James Moncher	(1988/1988)
	Sharon S. MacDonald	(1988/1988)
	Ayne J. VandenBrook	(1988/1988)
	Brian Barling	(1993/1995)
	Sandra L. McNamara	(1993/1994)
	Lenore Trainor	(1997)
	Rebecca E. Wenning	(1997) <sup>104</sup>
	David Hahn	(2010/2010)
	Lee Green	(2010/2010*)
	Dave Osenga	(2012/2012)
	Bryce Heiniger	(2016/2018)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2016/2016)

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<sup>103</sup> Completed while a member of the Peoria Astronomical Society.

<sup>104</sup> Completed the day before her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, making her perhaps the youngest ever to earn this award according to then Astronomical League President Barry Beaman.

<b>Meteor Program:</b>	Terry Lee Wright	(2009)
<b>Open Cluster Program:</b>	Lee Green	(2012)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2020)
<b>Planetary Nebula Program:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2010/2014)
<b>Southern Sky Binocular Program:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2008)
	L. Duane Yockey	(2008)
<b>Southern Sky Telescopic Program:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2008)
	L. Duane Yockey	(2008)
<b>Stellar Evolution Program:</b>	Carl J. Wenning	(2016)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2018)
<b>Urban Observing Program:</b>	William Carney	(2003)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2009)
	Lee Green	(2009)
	Lisa Wentzel	(2019)
	David Osenga	(2020)

Education/Public Outreach Awards: The following TCAAers have or soon will be recognized by the Astronomical League for conducting education/public outreach activities. Awards are given for at the following levels: 10 hours, 60 hours, and 160 hours. All services must have occurred since 2006 in order to qualify. Many other club members qualify for the recognitions, but they have not yet applied to receive their service awards.

<b>Outreach Award:</b>	Lee Green	(2008/2008/2012)
	Bobby Arn	(2009/2010/2010)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2010/2010/2010)

The following TCAAers were recognized at the club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Annual Meeting by the NASA Night Sky Network for conducting education/public outreach activities.

<b>NSN Star Award:</b>	Lee Green	(2009/2010/2013*)
	Dan Miller	(2009/2010)
	Carl J. Wenning	(2009/2010/2011/2016/ 2020/2021)
	Bobby Arn	(2010)
	John Werner	(2010)
	Duane Yockey	(2010)
	Paul Pouliot	(2011/2012/2020)
	Tom Weiland	(2011)
	Eve Pouliot	(2012)
	Amber Pouliot	(2012)
	William Carney	(2013*)
	Daniel Miller	(2013*)
	Nataya Boulware	(2019)
	Bryce Heiniger	(2019)
	Vivian Hoette	(2019)
	Dave Osenga	(2020/2021)
	Sunil Chebolu	(2021)

NSN awards were discontinued in 2022.

**Appendix 9: TCAA Logos Over the Years**

The first adopted logo of the club was a hand-drawn, press-type lettered, black-and-white creation by Carl Wenning in 1985. The inclusion of the state outline was to distinguish the TCAA from any similarly named club in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota. The North Star indicated the location of the Twin Cities within Illinois.



Michael Rogers used word processing software to create this logo in the 1990s primarily for use with *The OBSERVER*. It soon found its way onto other club publications. Note the consistent use of the state of Illinois outline and a star to indicate the location of the Twin Cities in the heart of Illinois.

By order of the TCAA Board of Directors, this logo was professionally developed by Emily Henard and approved by the membership in 2009 as part of the club's 5-year plan. Dave Osenga was instrumental in this development work. The colors of the logo have no official meaning; however, they might be interpreted as connecting Earth to the sky much in the same way the TCAA does. The blue can be said to represent the sky of night and the gold the corn for which Central Illinois is so well known.



### ***Appendix 10: Contents of the Associated Historical DVD***

A digital videodisk (DVD) is being developed as a companion for this historical work. At the time of this book's publication, the DVD was not fully prepared. It is expected that the companion DVD will be published and distributed to the membership sometime in late 2021.

The author of this book developed the DVD with the assistance of Lee Green. Lee's contribution consisted of scanning some 280 early copies of the club's newsletter, ***The OBSERVER***, and gathering all extant electronic copies of the newsletters and assembling them all into a single electronic folder. His was a Herculean effort taking several months of part-time work to complete. Carl Wenning, working as both formal and informal historian of the TCAA, collected several thousand pictures of club activities over the years. Many club members contributed to this collection. What follows is a tentative listing of those files expected to be included in the digital record.

- ☆ *History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers 1960 – 2020*
- ☆ All known copies of ***The OBSERVER*** of the Twin City Amateur Astronomer
- ☆ Bylaws, standing rules, and other official documents
- ☆ Scans of the first four years of club minutes 1960 - 1963
- ☆ Scans of the club's two historical scrap books
- ☆ Janecek/Schuette scrapbook clippings
- ☆ Mike Ryder pictures
- ☆ Hundreds of individual picture files
- ☆ *Central Illinois Skies* columns Strouse et al. 1966 – 1967
- ☆ *Stars Over Illinois* columns by Wenning
- ☆ *A Bolivian Adventure* by Wenning 1994
- ☆ Brief histories of the ISU Planetarium and IWU Observatory
- ☆ Miscellaneous scans of diverse club-related material including architectural drawings of roll off roof observatories by Schuette

***About the Author – Carl J. Wenning, Ed.D.***

Carl J. Wenning began his efforts as an amateur historian during his undergraduate days as an astronomy major at Ohio State University in Columbus. Carl took a course dealing with the history of astronomy from Professor Philip Keenan, co-originator of the MK stellar classification system, OBAFGKM, along with Professor W. W. Morgan of Yerkes Observatory. During this course Dr. Keenan suggested to Carl that writing a history of OSU's McMillin Observatory (1896-1976) would be a valuable contribution to the history of astronomy in general and the University in particular. Carl conducted considerable work on the project, and eventually published an online version of that history.<sup>105</sup> From this effort, Carl began to understand the value of history and its relationship to the present. When offered the opportunity to become historian of the TCAA, he gladly agreed. Carl wrote and disseminated the first official history of the TCAA for its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1985.

Carl came to his first astronomy club meeting on September 21, 1978. Getting to know many of the foundational club members, he started to collect issues of *The OBSERVER* and interview club members for historical purposes. Only seven years later would he publish the first edition of *A Brief History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers*. After that event, he developed further editions (some unpublished) for the club's 35<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. Now, after being a member of the TCAA officially since 1979 (when he paid his dues for the first time after being elected vice president!), he has developed this fifth edition of the history of the TCAA for the club's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Carl J. Wenning  
August 1, 2010

<sup>105</sup>

[https://astronomy.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-08/emerson\\_mcmillin\\_observatory.pdf](https://astronomy.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-08/emerson_mcmillin_observatory.pdf)

Carl's accomplishments and service on behalf of amateur astronomy are too numerous to list in their entirety, but here are a few items that were mentioned by the TCAA Board of Directors when he was nominated for the NCRAL Service Award that he received in 2007 while attending the NCRAL convention in Moorhead, Minnesota. "As of this writing, he has been a member of TCAA for over three decades and has earned lifelong honorary membership. He has been inducted as a member of the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers by the TCAA. He has held a variety of offices since 1979 including President, Vice President, Secretary and Historian. As TCAA Historian, he contributed regular articles to our monthly newsletter, *The OBSERVER*. He has given hundreds of public presentations at TCAA observing sessions and events and has taught the astronomy course sponsored by TCAA. He was Director of the Illinois State University Planetarium from 1978 to 2001. During this time he spoke to some 250,000 visitors during school and public presentations. He has earned his Messier Award and a number of other observing awards from the Astronomical League. He has been a writer, traveler in search of eclipses, a fundraiser for astronomy and science causes, and has worn many other hats on behalf of astronomy."

A profile in amateur astronomy – a personal vignette about the author of this volume – was published in the November 2007 issue of *The OBSERVER*. It read as follows:

Carl Wenning's earliest recollection of astronomy goes back to a summer evening in 1957 when as a 4-year-old child he stood on a wire fence to the west of his grandfather's farmstead just southeast of Zens City, Ohio (known locally as Sharpsburg). His maternal grandfather pointed out Venus in the western sky. Even then Carl was amazed that anyone could know the name of celestial objects.



Carl J. Wenning at SGNC with his CPC1100 telescope.

Nowadays, Carl has a faint recollection of his grandfather spending an evening with him camping out under the stars on the south side of the house later that summer – or perhaps the next summer – with his grandfather pointing out constellations as the night moved on. Carl and his grandfather were “favorites” of one another. His grandfather passed away from leukemia on October 23, 1957, and both his life and his death affected Carl greatly. Carl’s lifelong interests in astronomy and beekeeping (!) came from his grandfather. In fact, it was due to his grandfather’s influence that Carl earned a B.S. in Astronomy from The Ohio State University in 1976, [an M.A.T. in Planetarium Education from Michigan State University in 1978] and served as ISU’s Planetarium director from August 1978 through June 2001.

Carl received his first telescope on Christmas Eve in 1963 when he was 11 years old. It was a black 80X Gilbert reflector – a toy telescope – given to him by his mother. Carl notes, “I can still remember looking past our Christmas tree through our large picture window at the waxing gibbous moon and Jupiter as they hung side-by-side low in the western sky late that night.” Carl’s mother learned of his interest in astronomy when he kept going to the old Andrew Carnegie Library in Celina, Ohio, and repeatedly borrowed and perused *Pictorial Astronomy* by Dinsmore Alter. She also noted his constant examination of a huge Sears & Roebuck catalog asking her to buy him a view-screen planetarium. Again Carl notes, “I had no idea that my dream for my own planetarium would be fulfilled 14 years later.”

A few years after that, she purchased another telescope for Carl – a white 100 power 2.4-inch refractor that kept him viewing the heavens for a few more years – until the day when he accidentally tipped the telescope over, it hit the sidewalk objective first destroying the objective! In high school Carl was able to purchase a slightly larger toy telescope – a 4¼ -inch reflector – using money from his part-time job.

Over the years – as an undergraduate astronomy major and with his subsequent professional association with the field of astronomy – Carl has always had access to telescopes – from the 32-inch reflector at Ohio Wesleyan’s Perkins Observatory near Delaware, Ohio, and Ohio State’s 16-inch classical Cassegrain telescope atop Smith Lab in Columbus to the 8-inch Celestron and 10-inch Odyssey telescopes at the ISU Planetarium. It wasn’t until later in life, in the summer of 2006, that Carl finally purchased a significant telescope of his own, an 11-inch Celestron CPC GoTo Schmidt-Cassegrain.

The first astronomy club that Carl ever joined was the Ohio State University Astronomy Club. He served in nearly every capacity in that club and started the *Eros* newsletter where he discovered his love for writing. For a brief while Carl spent time with the Columbus

Astronomical Society, but paid dues for but one year. He moved to Normal from Michigan State University in 1978 to start his job as planetarium director at ISU on August 21. Carl reflects, “My first trip to town was for a job interview on August 7<sup>th</sup>. I arrived in town late the evening before, and a beautiful and memorable gathering of Mars, Venus, and the crescent moon foreshadowed the lucky outcome of my job interview the next day.”

Carl started participating in TCAA events during September of that year. His first meeting with the membership occurred at IWU’s Mark Evans Observatory on the 21<sup>st</sup>; Pat McGee, the departing planetarium director, introduced Carl to everyone. After being elected Vice President at the annual meeting of 1979, Carl thought that it was reasonable that he should finally join the club!

When asked about his observing awards, Carl quipped, “While I have received a number of astronomy-related awards – the Messier standard certificate (August 1985) and honorary certificate (July 1986), the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers (1988), the Lifelong Honorary Membership in the TCAA (1988), and the NCRAL Service Award (2007) – the greatest honor I have had to date as an amateur astronomer has been to know the membership of the TCAA. I have had the pleasure of working with the brightest stars of our club including the likes of John and Bertha Kieviet – the founders of our club, Weldon Schuette – a truly outstanding amateur astronomer, Aubrey Johnson – our one and only “Comet Halley Two Timer,” Robert Finnigan, a highly dedicated observer, Sandy McNamara – the “heart and soul of the club” and...the list goes on and on. It is a distinct honor working with the current membership of the TCAA as well.”

When asked about his favorite memories Carl stated, “First and foremost, three family events come to mind: (1) holding up my one-year-old daughter Rebecca to the sky so she could see Halley’s Comet as it departed in the spring of 1986, (2) taking her out at five years of age to watch “dancing air” (auroras) during the winter of 1990, and (3) witnessing her complete the standard Messier certificate on September 16, 1997, one day short of her 12th birthday (making her one of the youngest people ever to earn the Astronomical League’s provisional Messier Award according to then president Barry Beaman). Other fond memories, in no particular order, are observations made with the 72-inch Perkins reflector at Anderson Mesa south-southeast of Flagstaff, Arizona; doing astrophotography with the 24”-36” Schmidt camera at Kitt Peak National Observatory; the observations of total solar eclipses [1994 in Potosí, Bolivia, and 2006 in the Mediterranean Sea northeast of Crete]; comets [Kobayashi-Berger-Milon (1975), West (1976), IRAS-Araki-Alcock (1983), Halley (1986), Hale-Bopp (1995), and Hyakutake (1996); the

titanic impacts of Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter (1994), the transit of Venus across the face of the sun in 2004, and auroras, etc. I also remember fondly having an unexpected lunch with W.W. Morgan at Yerkes Observatory and a surprise one-on-one breakfast with Halton C. Arp at Kitt Peak National Observatory and going through Percival Lowell's personal papers (including his many drawings of the "canals" of Mars) in the plate vault at Lowell Observatory. I also remember fondly my *History of Astronomy* course with Dr. Philip C. Keenan during my undergraduate days at Ohio State University. Lastly, I cannot forget those times I observed with Weldon Schuette, the TCAA outstanding amateur astronomer."