



The Refractor

The Bulletin of the Eastbay Astronomical Society
Founded in 1924 at Chabot Observatory, Oakland, California

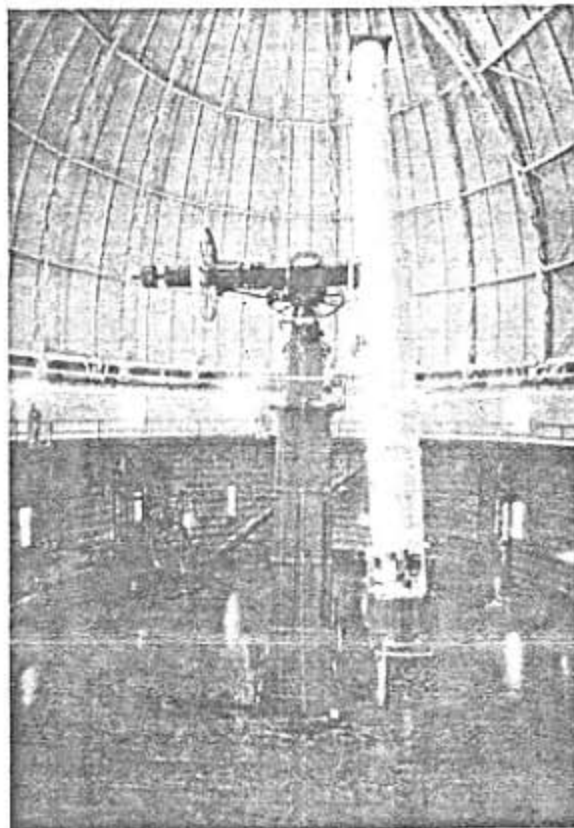
Volume 71, Number 9, May 1995

The Birth, Near Death, and Resurrection of an Astronomical Research Institution: Yerkes Observatory 1892-1950

Saturday, 13 May, 7:30 P.M.
Physics Classroom, Chabot Observatory
4917 Mountain Boulevard, Oakland

Donald Osterbrock
Professor of Astronomy
Lick Observatory, University of California,
Santa Cruz

This story begins in 1892, when George Ellery Hale and President William R. Harper of the very new University of Chicago persuaded Charles T. Yerkes to donate money for the founding of Yerkes Observatory; but actually, Professor Osterbrock will start with Hale's youth, which set the stage for all his astronomical activities. Of the title of this talk, "birth" represents the first director, Edwin B. Forst, a very lovable person but not much of a scientific driving force; and the "resurrection" was the work of the third



ends in 1950, when Struve left Yerkes for Berkeley. Osterbrock is now working on a book with the same title, which should be published in 1997, the centennial of the beginning of operations of Yerkes Observatory.

Donald Osterbrock is Emeritus Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics at UC Santa Cruz. He was Director of Lick Observatory from 1973 until 1981. Dr. Osterbrock earned his Ph.D. in astronomy at the University of Chicago. (In those days, the entire faculty and graduate students in astronomy were at Yerkes Observatory, giving him an inside look at the subject of his talk.) After short periods at Princeton and CalTech, he joined the faculty at the University of Wisconsin for a 15 year stint including 12 years as Professor



director, Otto Struve, one of the most prodigious research workers of all time, for whom published research results were the only thing that really counted. The part of the history to be described and illustrated

of Astronomy before returning to California as Director of Lick. His impressive record of service to the astronomical community includes a term as President of the American Astronomical Society.

Among Dr. Osterbrock's many awards is the Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal, highest honor of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, awarded in 1991. This prestigious honor recognized his contributions toward the understanding of the astrophysics of gaseous nebulae and of active galactic nuclei, the study of the history of astronomy, and the education of graduate students. Recipient of honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Chicago and Ohio State University, Dr. Osterbrock also is an associate of the Royal Astronomical Society; and he has recently received the Antoinette de Vancoeurs Memorial Medal of the University of Texas.

He has also made major contributions to the study of the history of astronomy. He has written many historical articles and several books. The first of these books concerned the early development of American astrophysics: *James E. Keeler, Pioneer American Astrophysicist. Eye on the Sky* (co-authored with John Gustafson and Shiloh Unruh) is a look at the first century of Lick Observatory. *Pauper & Prince: Ritchey, Hale, & Big American Telescopes* was published in 1993.

Join us for

DINNER WITH THE SPEAKER

5:30 P.M., 13 May 1995

EVE'S HUNAN RESTAURANT

5620 College Avenue, Oakland

Please call Betty Neall at (510) 533-2394 no later than Friday, 12 May to confirm your place.

EAS Banquet A Big Success

Forty-five members and friends attended the EAS Annual Banquet at the Oriental Tea House in San Leandro. The food was excellent and everyone had more than enough to eat.

Bob Schalck received the 12th Helen Pillans Award for more than two decades of service to the EAS and the astronomical community.

SuperNova Awards went to Alan Roche for his Rube-Goldberg contraption to catch the water pouring into the Chabot Library

and Debbie Dyke for helping bail out the Library during the biggest storm in decades.

A sudden case of pneumonia sidelined our scheduled speaker so Dr. Chris McKay from NASA Ames stepped in with a neat lecture about the Cassini probe to Titan.

Festival at the Lake

Oakland's annual Festival at the Lake will be held in Lakeside Park the first weekend in June. This will be our 7th time at this unique event. Due to changes, we expect the hours to be shorter, (7 rather than 8 hours per day) but we will still need volunteers on all three days. This is one of the premier cultural festivals in our area each year. We expect to have full details by the 11 May EAS Board meeting.

G. Bruce Blair Award

The Western Amateur Astronomers has voted to present the 1995 G. Bruce Blair Medal to famed comet discoverer Don Machholz, of Colfax, California. Don was honored for his two decades of work in comet hunting, and in popularizing amateur astronomy. The award will be presented During the Riverside Telescope Makers' Conference.

Born in Portsmouth VA, 7 October 1952, and received his first telescope, a 2-inch refractor, on his 13th birthday. Later he got a 6-inch Criterion Dynascope with which he found all the Messier objects in a single year, 1968-9. Later in 1972-74 he tried his hand at astrophotography, eventually getting a few of his astrophotos published. On 1 January 1975 Don decided to try comet hunting. He found his first comet on 12 September 1978 after logging 1700 hours of observing time. The next came after 1742 hours of observations. So far Don has found nine comets in 5600 hours. The search for new comets continues at a rate of 270 hours a year from a new observatory that he built on six acres of land he owns near Auburn where he works as a laser technician. Don is also the Comet Recorder for the ALPO. He has also written two books, *A Decade of Comets*, and one on the Messier Marathon (1995), which is based on his work in helping to develop and run this enjoyable world-wide activity.

Astronomy Day at Chabot

EAS members are encouraged to come to Chabot on Astronomy Day, Saturday, 6 May to help with the crowds we are expecting.

Conrad will have the Observatory open from 2 to 5 P.M. for Hydrogen α Solar viewing, but could also use some help. There will be an Open House from 7 to 11 P.M. (or later) with the telescopes initially showing the Moon then other objects as the sky darkens.

The Telescope Makers' Workshop will be open from 7 to 10 P.M. and there will be a half price "Sky Tonight" planetarium show at 7:30.

The Russian space station MIR is expected to be visible beginning 20° above the western horizon at 8:30:30, culminating at magnitude -0.6 32° up in the southwest and disappearing in the south about 8:33:44.

Volunteers and telescopes are needed to help make these activities available for the public. The Starry Nights Gift Shop will be celebrating its Tenth Anniversary with a Special Discount of 10% on everything in stock. This may be combined with a 10% EAS or COSC member discount to provide a 20% discount. Teachers are entitled to a special 2% Educator's Discount.

If you can't make it to Chabot, try to get to one of the other sites listed on the enclosed flier.

U.S. Geological Survey Earth Science Day

On Saturday, 29 April there will be a mini open house from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. at the USGS office at 345 Middlefield Rd. in Menlo Park. This will be a rare Saturday opportunity to buy maps and see what goes on there.

To reach USGS take the Dumbarton Bridge across the bay then left on Willow Road to Middlefield. Turn right on Middlefield then left at the first street (Linfield) 1 block to Homewood. Watch for the signs. Parking is very limited due to construction so one will probably want to park along Linfield.

Editor III

Ellis Myers suffered what is thought to be a mild stroke in Virginia while on a month-long vacation. He is expected to be in the

hospital for about two weeks. Cards may be sent to his home address which is 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA, 94556.

EAS Officers

President: Carter Roberts	(510) 524-2146
Vice President: Phil Crabbe II	(510) 655-4772
Secretary: Kevin Cox	(510) 528-2181
Treasurer, Membership: Don Stone	(510) 376-3007

Articles and photos for *The Refractor* are encouraged. Due to all the events the end of May and beginning of June, the deadline for the June issue is 19 May. Because of the illness of our editor, this issue was prepared by Carter Roberts with assistance from Don Stone. Items for next month may be brought or sent to Don at Chabot or emailed to Carter at croberts@mojave.wr.usgs.gov. If possible, text should be on a 3.5" disk. We can handle most formats.

Yerkes photographs in this issue taken by Carter Roberts in 1993.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 6 May Astronomy Day
- 11 May 7:30 P.M. EAS Board meeting in Chabot Exhibit Rm. Members welcome.
- 13 May 7:30 P.M. EAS Lecture meeting.
- 26 to 29 May. Riverside Telescope Makers' Conference, Big Bear Lake.
- 2 to 4 June. Festival at the Lake.
- 8 June, 7:30 P.M. EAS Board meeting.
- 10 June, 9:30 A.M. NCHALADA.
- 10 June, 7:30 P.M. EAS Lecture meeting. Gibor Basri, Do Brown Dwarfs Exist?
- 19 August, FPOA-AANC Star-B-Que at Fremont Peak State Park.
- 30 August, EAS Star Party for EBRPD.

NCHALADA XXXV11

37th Meeting of the
Northern California Historical Astronomy
Luncheon and Discussion Association

Please join us in two interesting
discussions on historical astronomy

NCHALADA (continued)

Saturday, June 10, 1995
Planetarium Classroom, Chabot
Observatory & Science Center,
4917 Mountain Blvd. Oakland CA 94619

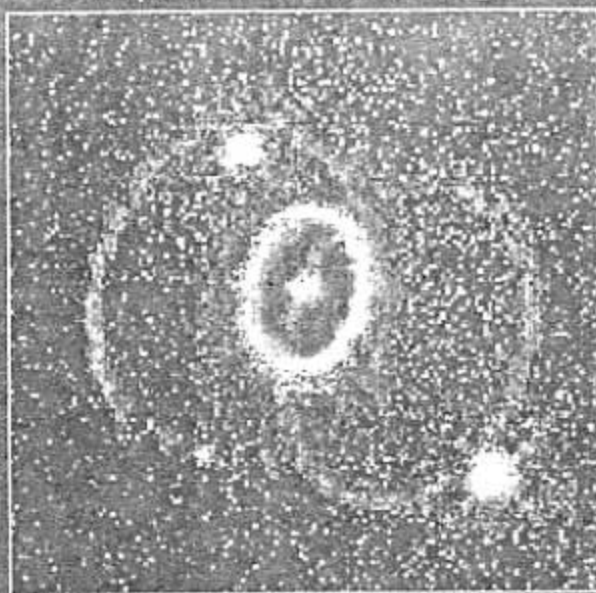
9:30 A.M. Morning Discussion, starting with
refreshments. Astronomical Aspects of
Great Earth Explorers. Chair: Dr. John
Westfall, Director, Association of Lunar
and Planetary Observers

Noonish. Informal lunch at a local
restaurant followed by an informal
business meeting

1:30ish - 2 P.M. Afternoon Discussion,
ending about 5 P.M. Polynesian Astronomy
& Navigation. Chair: Bruce R. Mehlman

For information contact:
Norman Sperling,
Everything In The Universe,
185 John Street, Oakland, CA 94611,
(510) 547-6523

Supernova 1987A Rings



Hubble Space Telescope
Wide Field Planetary Camera 2



From the Best of Hubble collection



Eastbay Astronomical
Society, Inc.
4917 Mountain Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94619

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 3660
Oakland, CA

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
Time Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly

Eric Myers ©1995
Editor
215 Calle La Moza
Moraga, CA 94556-1603