



The Refractor

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

Volume 84
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May 2008

May 19, 2008 event:

Memorial Service for EAS President Carter Roberts

Monday, May 19, 2008, 7:30 pm

*Speakers: Terry Galloway, Ray Wong,
 and others*

*Where: Chabot Space & Science Center
 Ask Jeeves Planetarium, Spees Building*

Our friend and club president, Carter Roberts, died on April 24, 2008, 20 minutes past midnight, at Summit Medical Center in Oakland, CA of complications resulting from colon cancer. The news of his passing has begun to echo throughout the world of amateur astronomy with several memorial articles for him already published, including Sky & Telescope Online, and the Chabot Space & Science Center's Volunteer Newsletter (and now this, his home club's newsletter.) Carter was a leader and a fighter in the cause of amateur astronomy, and a fierce advocate for the Chabot Space & Science Center, even from its days as just "Chabot Observatory." On almost any day of the week, he could be found at a JPA board meeting (Joint Powers Association, the managing body over CSSC), or the EAS (Eastbay Astronomical Society), or the AANC (Amateur Astronomers of Northern California), or RTMC (Riverside Telescope Makers Conference), or WAA (Western Amateur Astronomers), board meetings. On other days, he could be found taking pictures while attending Chabot events, or organizing and attending EAS/CSSC astronomy outreach events, supplying his personal telescopes to view the stars or Sun. His boundless energy and enthusiasm to bring astronomy to the public was legendary, and an inspiration to those who worked with him.

Carter was one of a handful of people in the world who made total solar eclipse chasing practically a profession. He would travel to the farthest reaches of the world to catch a few minutes of the thrilling "shadow time." From the baking deserts of Egypt to the frigid wastelands of Siberia, he would carry several cameras, lenses, tripods, telescopes, binoculars, film—and he did this 20 times throughout his life, which must be some kind of record. He received the nickname, "Inspector



Carter Worth Roberts
1947-2008

Gadget," in no small part for the ever-bulging breast pocket of his shirt, in which he kept pens, magnifiers, small tools, notes, and micro-metric rules, which he would whip out at a moment's notice to measure and calculate thread spacing on eye-pieces or filters.

Carter was truly one of a kind, and we, his friends, his colleagues, his *family*, are glad to have known him, for he made our world a far better place for having been here. ★

Anyone wishing to speak or give a presentation at the memorial should contact Dave Rodrigues at (510) 483-9191, or Don Saito at (510) 482-2913. Please leave a short message with your name and phone number, and we will contact you. Carter has no surviving family, but anyone wishing to make donations in remembrance of him are asked to make them to the Chabot Space & Science Center. The CSSC was Carter's greatest cause and mission in life, and it's high quality and survival through the years are due in no small part to his efforts.

Favorite Carter Stories

Everyone who knew him, has at least one. Here's a *few*.

TERRY GALLOWAY: Carter and I were on the Construction (called Architecture) Committee, Chaired by Larry Heuben. We had a crisis: there were so many errors in the drawings the contractors were ready to quit. Who should review the drawings and catch all the mistakes. We could get nobody. So Carter and I took that responsibility and we divided the huge roll of drawings equally. We would take home this huge roll and go through every page and all the Autocad layers to find all the mistakes. We did this every weekend for about a year. It was a much bigger job than we thought because there were so many errors. Commonly this review took ALL weekend - days and nights. Carter and I would then write detailed memos enumerating all the errors and suggesting fixes to get out of the problem. It was a very, very tough job: we got yelled at by both Larry Hauben, and by the contractors, since we were in the middle. Yes, there was some blood too at the committee meetings (but that is another story). But we made it through and caught *almost* all of them.

Just after the building was commissioned, all our telescope volunteers brought their beautiful telescopes to be placed out on the deck for the big crowd of visitors we were expecting. It was a beautiful sight - all polished, nice cases of new eyepieces, and lots of coats for the cold weather. Then, at 10 pm, just as the event was starting to wind down, as the computer timers dictated, the sprinklers in the compass circle came on and watered all the telescopes, their eyepieces, the coats, and anyone nearby. Panic and bedlam, with everyone trying to get out of the spray! The contractors decided on the drawings where we had reserved the circle in the deck for the future *fleur de lei*, a floral compass rose pattern, that it had to



The compass rose when it was more a "trap," than a feature.



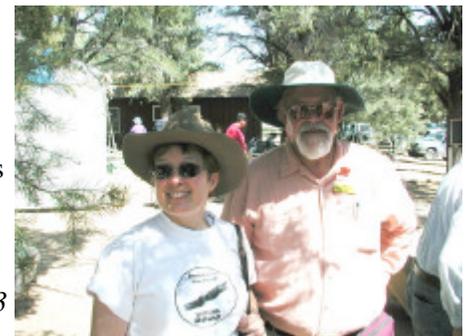
Fred Patton and Terry Galloway installing the brick compass rose design

have plants and an automatic watering system (not specified on the drawings). We thought the plants in the drawings were added just to keep that gravel hole from looking so badly until we could get the compass built. Nope - they decided it was to be a real

flower bed with big sprinklers. Carter found their mistranslation from the French, and how the botch happened. We eventually replaced the plants with gravel so our public wouldn't be constantly stumbling over them in the dark. Fred Patton and I eventually put in the compass rose so *Observatory Lake*, common in the winter, would be no more. So, thank Carter for catching this botch, enjoy the telescopes out on the deck, properly oriented with their equatorial mounts aligned to celestial north, and operating without getting watered down at 10 pm sharp. ★

JANE HOUSTON JONES: We bumped into Carter here and there. My most favorite and lasting memories of Carter is when we would bump into him at meetings. A lot of them, actually. At the bi-monthly meetings from 1998 to 2003, while I was president of AANC, a small group of club representatives met at Lawrence Hall of Science on Sunday mornings. They were your typical board meetings, except only a few clubs actually participated. These few people gave reports and things got approved and done. Carter was at every meeting, representing the Eastbay Astronomical Society. Carter always had his laptop plugged in, with internet access when it was available, and he was always pre-occupied looking at awesome eclipse images or any other astronomical images he could grab, often his own images. We'd be listening to some club report and he'd be sitting there with this boyish grin on his face and a far-away look in his eyes, as he was both listening to the meeting (a little) and internally escaping to some place where the shadow chasers go (a lot). He'd pick up his laptop, and turn it around for all to see, no matter what else was being discussed.

I have pictures of when we bumped into Carter at Barcoft in the White Mountains in 2001, but unfortunately he took the picture and is not in it. I bumped into Carter for the past 10 years at the AGU (American Geophysical Union) meetings in San Francisco every December, and we often did lunch, together. Last December I didn't bump into him. Now we won't get to bump into Carter any more, but I have great personal memories of watching Carter float pumice in a tub of water at USGS Open House in Menlo Park - where I got to see him doing outreach for his profession. I also have many memories of Carter at star parties, both far from the public, and surrounded by them. But I most remember Carter as one of those few and precious club representatives who attend the meetings where astronomy outreach gets organized. Carter got astronomy done. Period. He was an inspiration, both as a leader and as a friend to both of us. This picture is from 2002 RTMC where we bumped into Carter once again - this one where he paused for a picture. ★



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Editor's News 'n Views

Up until the last few days of life, he was still micro-managing a group of us as we attempted to sort out the mountains of books, magazines, photographs, maps, camera equipment, astronomy gear, and memorabilia that filled every nook and

cranny of his fairly large house in the Berkeley hills. We unburied whole tables he'd forgotten were there! We had a good time of it, though, for he would still joke, or talk with or us, or growl at us if it looked like we would mis-file or throw away something valuable. But, we savored our time with him, because we knew he wouldn't be with us for much longer. To be honest, for a little while, I thought he was fooling us, that he was going to come back from the brink again, somehow. When he was at the hospital, he really did seem to be at Death's door. Then, he seemed to make a huge improvement, came back home, and was eating pizza, diet Coke, and Trader Joe's Cat Cookies again, ordering us around like a CEO. It was, however, but a pause to the inevitable end that awaits us all. Now, he's gone, and already, the Universe seems a little less bright. But, as Carter appreciated and approved of wholeheartedly, Life, and NCHLADA, goes on...

NCHALADA, the Northern California History of Astronomy, Luncheon, And Discussion Association will meet on Saturday, 17 May, from 9:30 AM through 5 PM (with a lunch break at noon) in the Soda Board Room. The morning session, More Fun with Next to Nothing, about recent developments in infinitesimal calculus, will be chaired by Alan Fisher. The afternoon session, Predicted but Disproved, about astronomical predictions that have since been found not true, including the "element" Nebulium and the *other* planet Vulcan (not to be confused the planet of Spock's birth), will be chaired by Nancy Cox.

Sorry for the short issue, this month - I'm busier than a one-toothed man in a corn-on-the-cob eating contest. That's it for now. Dark skies...★

Favorites, continued from Page 2

DON SAITO: It was the late spring of November 2001 (heh, heh - think about it). There we were, having travelled thousands of miles to the Land Downunder, to get our last chance to see something neither of us had ever seen, or would be able to see, again. The Leonid Meteor Storm, from the "Armpit of Australia," aka, Mount Isa. This armpit wasn't so bad, really - it had some very nice things to see and do for tourists, which we did and saw, but we weren't there to sight-see the town; we were there for the meteors! We napped for several hours before heading out to the view site, Lake Moondara. There was a pleasant lodge facility near the lake, with its own rolling roof observatory, next to a medium-sized

patch of lawn. We set up our camera gear in the dark, along with several dozen others doing the same thing. Right around 02:30, Nov 17, Carter announced to the crowd, "The radiant has just risen," when *woosh!* a bright meteor streaked overhead,



View site, Lake Moondara, Mt. Isa, Australia, November 2001

with two smaller meteors on either side and slightly behind it, like twin escorts! I could swear it was on cue; you couldn't have timed it better. The rest of the night was filled with many, many more meteors, but that first volley will forever be in my memory as one of the most amazing things I've ever experienced, thanks to Carter's practically psychic abilities. ★

FUTURE CONJUNCTIONS—2008

- May 7 MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*, 7:30pm - 10pm
- 10 Astronomy Day, Jack London Sq, Oak. Zoo 10am-5pm
- 15 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- 17 NCHALADA mtg, Chabot Soda Bd Rm, 9:30am-5pm
- 19 Carter Roberts Memorial, Chabot, Planetarium, 7:30pm
- Jun 5 MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza* 7:30pm - 10pm
- 12 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- 14 General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab, 7:30pm
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*
- Jul 10 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- 14 General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab, 7:30pm
- 15 Girl Scouts of Treasure Island, 9-10:30pm
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*
- Aug 6 MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza* 7:30pm - 10pm
- 14 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*
- 16 General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab, 7:30pm
- Sep 11 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- 20 General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab, 7:30pm
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*
- Oct 5 MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza* 7:30pm - 10pm
- 9 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*
- 18 General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab, 7:30pm
- Nov 13 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- 15 General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab, 7:30pm
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*
- Dec 11 Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- (tba) Holiday Potluck Party (new and improved!)
- (tba) MOVN @ Chabot, Wightman Plaza*

*Members Only View Night: *Always* call 510 482-2913 after 5pm to confirm, as we may be pre-empted by weather or a Chabot event.

NOTE: Dates and times may change. We will provide as much advance warning as possible.



Eastbay Astronomical Society

At Chabot Space & Science Center
10000 Skyline Boulevard ● Oakland, CA 94619

May 2008
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

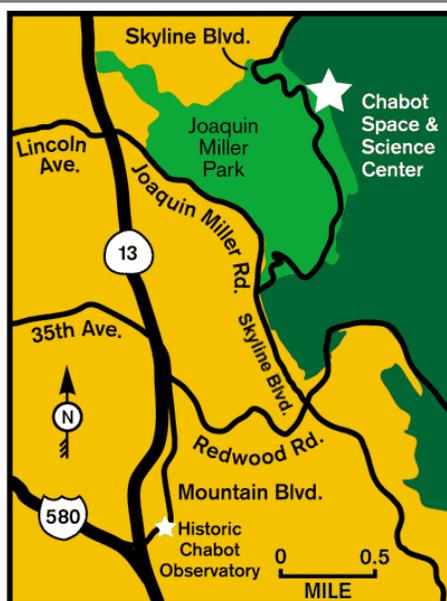
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Articles and photos for *The Refractor* are encouraged. Deadline for the June 2008 issue is May 31, 2008. Items may be submitted by mail to:
Editor - 3514 Randolph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602-1228. Internet email address: donsaito@comcast.net Hm: (510) 482-2913 (leave a message)



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*Always call 510 482-2913 after 5pm to confirm

Join the Eastbay Astronomical Society

- Regular, \$24/year Family, \$36/year
 Contributing, \$40/year Student, \$15/year (digital news-
 Sustaining, \$60/year or more letter, only)

Contact: Gerald McKeegan, EAS Treasurer
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Sign up online at <http://www.eastbayastro.org/>