



# RASC Awards Committee Report

2014 January 12

The Awards committee has been busy developing terms of reference for the new Fellow Award, and nominating and having our first three fellows named (Dr. Roy Bishop, Peter Broughton and Randy Attwood). This time of year is the committee's busy season, as the nomination deadline approaches and passes. There have been a good number of excellent nominations received. The chair has been busy communicating with nominators, clarifying a few issues and helping them to strengthen their citations. Below is a list of award candidates which the committee recommends be approved by the Board of Directors.

The awards committee recommends that the Board approve the following awards for presentation in 2014:

## Service Award

1. Jay Anderson, Winnipeg
2. Susan Gagnon, Kingston
3. Dave Gamble, Okanagan
4. Dr. James Hesser, Victoria
5. Greg Lisk, Belleville
6. Chris Stevenson, St. John's
7. Mary Lou Whitehorne, Halifax

## Fellow Award

1. Dr. James Hesser, Victoria

## Chilton Prize

1. Kathryn Gray, Halifax
2. Nathan Gray, Halifax

## Qilak Award

1. Dr. Howard Trottier, Vancouver

## Award Citations

### 1. Service Award – Jay Anderson (Winnipeg Centre)

The Council of the Winnipeg Centre has unanimously voted to nominate Gordon "Jay" Anderson for the 2013 Service Award.

Jay has contributed to all facets of the Winnipeg Centre, and at the National level for a very long time. Originally joining the RASC in the early 1970s, his latest membership term began in 1990. During this period of time, he has served as Winnipeg Centre President, Councillor, Secretary, National Representative and he is currently the club Treasurer. Jay is also serving his second five year term as Editor of the Journal, a monumental task.

Jay's role with the Winnipeg Centre may best be described as a stalwart builder, both physically and mentally. He was a key participant in the initial construction of our observatory at Glenlea, and the subsequent rebuilds which followed the incapacitating floods to the site. Plus he is a key member of the maintenance of, and annual upgrades to, the building. He's often dropping by to cut grass or shovel snow before any of our Centre sponsored events at the site.

Plus, he is constantly trying to improve the Winnipeg Centre. As President, he made wholesale changes to our meeting format; setting stage for a friendlier and more inviting meeting for new members. Jay participates by regular presentations at the meetings, plus monthly updates on the upcoming astronomical events worth enjoying. He is regularly supporting the club's Public Observing sessions; bring out his expertise and his various telescopes. He also encourages others to travel to view events such as occultations, transits and eclipses.

Being one who enjoys bringing people together, he regularly lends out his house to our Centres Council meetings, Annual Winter Potluck dinner and as a backup site in case of rain, for our annual June Barbeque.

Jay enjoys helping others to improve their observing skills. He is generous in lending out equipment, and helping others develop their imaging skills.

Jay's contributions extend well beyond the Winnipeg Centre. He is an expert on Solar Eclipses, participating in the past with the former NASA Eclipse guides. Plus he is still sought out for his opinion on where to go to view them, utilizing his long term experience as a former Meteorologist.

Jay also significantly contributes with his writing and editorial skills. He is the author of many articles seen in our Journal and Sky and Telescope magazine. Jay also achieved a long sought goal, in tailoring the Journal into a more membership friendly publication. He has solicited others to contribute with numerous monthly columns on amateur based interests.

He has been involved as Chairman of the organizing committee for the last three of our Centre General Assembly meetings in Winnipeg.

Jay does all this with a large smile on his face. His presence offers warmth, patience and expertise to help others become the best astronomers they can be. Winnipeg Centre is lucky to have him in our fold, and we are proud of his achievements.

## **2. Service Award – Susan Gagnon (Kingston Centre)**

We, the Board of the RASC- Kingston Centre, nominate Susan Gagnon for the RASC Service Award.

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada presents a Service Award, which is given to members in recognition of outstanding service, rendered over an extended period of time, where such service has had a major impact on the work of the Society and/or of a Centre of the Society.

Susan is a good example of what flying under the radar can accomplish. What she has done is committed herself over two decades to the RASC- Kingston Centre fulfilling many roles. If we look at the last 20 years without her service, it is an eye opening view. Below is the historical aspect of what Susan has done to enhance the RASC-Kingston Centre.

Susan joined the RASC-Kingston Centre on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993. Since that time, she slowly eased her way into learning astronomy and introducing herself to helping the Centre grow.

1995-1997 RASC Kingston Centre GA Committee  
1998-2000 National Council Rep  
2000-2002 RASC Kingston-Secretary  
2008-2009 RASC Kingston -Vice President  
2010-2013 RASC Kingston- President

Though stepping down as President after two consecutive terms, she is still carrying on with Coordinating the Kingston Astronomical Outreach Network (KAON). This is a monthly open house and public observing sessions in conjunction with the Queen's University Observatory. She has been dependable regular volunteer at least as far back as 2003 bring "Baby" and binoculars and a Coordinator since 2007.

In Public Outreach over the years along with other volunteers, she has always been present. Sky is the Limit Festivals, Astronomy Day's in the parks, libraries and various shopping malls.

She has also helped out at the Charleston Lake Observing Sessions helping Terrance Dickinson on his August Astronomy Nights. Susan has also made presentations at the Cataraqui Conservation Area (2011 Feb) (<http://crca.ca/>), Kingston Field Naturalists Bio Blitz (2012 June) (<http://kingstonfieldnaturalists.org/>)

She has presented countless sessions to schools, Girl Guide's and Girl, Boy scouts as well. She has also presented Astronomy to the elderly who in retirement homes. She also arranged a couple of overnight observing sessions at Elbow Lake Environmental Education Centre (<http://elbowlakecentre.ca/>) Susan is also a regular member on the Fall'N'Stars (<http://rascbelleville.ca/fallnstars/>) Star party Organizing committee for the last 12 years.

She helps out where ever she can, when we are short volunteers, and has an infectious smile and laugh that welcomes all who come into her presence. To us she is Super Woman, but she is terribly modest and self-effacing. Best of all she is our friend and well deserving of this award.

December 18, 2013  
Kim Hay – President  
RoseMarie Burke- Secretary  
Kevin Kell- Treasurer  
Walter MacDonald- Newsletter Editor/Webmaster  
David Maguire- Librarian

### **3. Service Award – Dave Gamble (Okanagan Centre)**

From: chohare@shaw.ca  
Subject: [Awards] Nomination for National Service Award  
Date: December 10, 2013 at 4:00:15 PM AST  
To: mlwhitehorne@hfx.eastlink.ca

The Okanagan Centre nominates Dave Gamble for a national RASC Service Award. Mr. Gamble has contributed in a great many ways, but his most noteworthy accomplishments were in the design and building of the Okanagan Observatory's primary telescope, a 25-inch tracking Newtonian.

Mr. Gamble has served on the Okanagan Centre executive, including a recent term as centre president. He updated and maintains the centre's website, and added image galleries to showcase member's work. Dave is one of the centre's leading astrophotographers and observers, and has encouraged and coached those activities. He has provided observing sessions for Summerland schools for many years.

Dave designed a 25-inch folded Dobsonian telescope with a three-mirror system that does not require most viewers to climb a ladder. He built much of the telescope himself and donated some components. He regularly makes the long trek from Summerland to Okanagan Observatory to maintain the instrument. The Gamble 25-inch is used for very popular public observing sessions every clear Friday evening between early May and late October. Observations made with this telescope have been published in Sky&Telescope magazine.

Additional info provided Dec. 17, 2013:

- Chair of the Okanagan Observatory telescope committee since August 2006
  - this includes the design and most of the building of the 25" telescope, driving to Edmonton to retrieve the 24" Zerodur mirror, obtaining the 25" replacement mirror, equatorial platform and push-to system, laying the Okanagan Shortline (the shortest railroad in BC, all 8 m of it!).
- President Nov 2010 - Nov 2011
- Past President Nov 2011 – present
- Centre webmaster
- Director (Kelowna section) - 2008

### **4. Service Award – Dr. James Hesser (Victoria Centre) (see also Fellow below)**

We of RASC Victoria Centre nominate Dr. James Hesser for the RASC Service Award, to be given at GA 2014 in Victoria. The nominators are Bill Almond and Chris Gainor, Past Presidents, and Nelson Walker, current President.

Dr. Hesser is well known to the RASC, as a nearly thirty-year member, and as its Honorary President (2009-2013). He is Director of the NRC Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO), where he has been for more than thirty years.

Dr. Hesser is past-president of the Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA) and of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. He is past vice-president of the American Astronomical Society. He is recipient of numerous awards, including, most recently, the Qilak Award for his “outstanding contribution to public appreciation and understanding of Astronomy.” He was one of the first to receive the prestigious Michael Smith award, given by NSERC Canada to recognize those who inspire through the promotion of science to the general public. The list goes on and on.

Dr. Hesser, as Director of the DAO, brought to it the Centre of the Universe, an important and popular site of science outreach in this community. Dr. Hesser was the first recipient of the Newton-Ball Award, Victoria Centre’s own service award (2001). In 2008, due in large part to Dr. Hesser’s wise counsel, Victoria Centre was able to build an observatory on the grounds of the DAO. He has made easy our Centre’s continued participation in public outreach on the hill (coming up on 100 years).

Dr. Hesser worked tirelessly to lead International Year of Astronomy (IYA) efforts within Canada (2005-2009). He guided this highly visible, and highly successful international project by serving as the country’s “single point of contact” and as Chair of the Executive Committee and Advisory Board for IYA within Canada. Under his direction, the IYA provided “Galileo moments” to more than two million Canadians through more than 3600 separate events. Jim was often found at events dressed as Galileo himself, antique telescope in hand.

Dr. Hesser has long served on Victoria Centre Council as liaison with the NRC/DAO. His energy seems endless. Upon recently announcing his upcoming partial-retirement from his post at the DAO, Jim showed up at a meeting of several of the organizational committees working on GA 2014 with a “well, finally I have some time to help with this!”

Your nominators cannot imagine a more worthy recipient of this award. Jim is a true gentleman, and for some thirty years, has proudly and energetically promoted science in general, astronomy in particular, and the RASC and its Victoria Centre, across Canada, and in his community. His contribution to the efforts of the RASC has been profound.

## **5. Service Award Nomination – Greg Lisk (Belleville Centre)**

It is my pleasure and honour to nominate Greg Lisk, Belleville Centre, for the RASC Service Award.

The Service Award recognizes the contributions of members who, at either the National or Centre levels, have made a significant contribution to the life and vitality of the Society. It is given in recognition of outstanding service, rendered over an extended period of time, where such service has had a major impact on the work of the Society and/or of a Centre of the Society.

Greg’s nomination is based on his sustained contribution to the Belleville Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. In 1994, Greg joined the Belleville

Astronomy Club, which was founded in 1990. The club transitioned into the Belleville Centre of the RASC on June 27, 2003.

Greg has served the last 8 consecutive terms as the President for Belleville Centre. As Centre President and key contributor, Greg leads the local Centre meetings and personally delivers segments reviewing current astronomical news, a highlighted observing object, and a featured topic for the evening. Also serving as the Centre's Observing Chair, he organizes the monthly observing sessions and advertises them on the Centre's website.

Greg organizes the Astronomy Day booth at the local mall, setting up and manning the public information exhibit and displaying his own meteorite collection and telescopes. In addition to staffing the daylong event, he also coordinates the Public Observing Session that follows in the evening.

Greg receives requests for speaking engagements and viewing sessions from local schools and groups and personally fulfills these Public Outreach commitments. Acting on a recent request from the Air Force Museum in Trenton, Greg prepared a space related indoor static display, created a permanent outdoor scale model of our solar system, and coordinated public observing sessions.

Greg arranges the Centre's late summer picnic and southern sky public observing session – Star-B-Q - at Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Greg participates in and helps coordinate in the autumn weekend dark sky observing session – Fall'n'Stars – held jointly with the Kingston RASC Center. He has organized numerous centre field trips, such as visits to the Hayden Planetarium, NEAF, AstroCATS, etc., for the benefit of the Belleville Centre members.

Greg designed a series of accomplishment pins and forwarded the idea to RASC National that became the wearable awards for the RASC Observing Certificate programs (e.g. Finest NGC, Messier).

Greg also promotes Astronomy in our local schools by supporting the local Science Fair. Greg judges the astronomy related entries at the regional Science Fair and awards a series of prizes to students, including the Arlyne Gillespie Memorial Prize. Greg will either donate a commercial telescope or one that he personally refurbishes as the first prize in the local competition. He also donates meteorites from his own collection for some of the lesser prize winners.

Greg Lisk is the driving force for the Belleville Centre and truly deserves recognition for his significant, long lasting and tireless contributions to not only The Belleville Centre, but also to the local community.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Don Town, Belleville Centre NAC Representative.

## **6. Service Award, Chris Stevenson (St. John's Centre)**

Chris Stevenson has been a member of the RASC for more than 30 years and has been an Executive Committee member of the St. John's Centre for more than 11 years, including six years as President.

In a small centre and especially a remote centre such as St. John's, recruiting and keeping Executive members is perhaps more difficult than for most centres. In an era of volunteer burnout, recognition for long term dedication is sometimes lacking but sorely needed.

Our Executive is challenged by limited access to speakers and other resources that larger centres have ready access to. The President's position in our centre is especially challenged by our remoteness. The constant efforts to attract and retain members has always been important to Chris and his dedication to the Centre is noteworthy.

As an employee of Memorial University, Chris is an enthusiastic liaison for the St. John's Centre allowing us to keep University-supplied benefits such as parking, meeting space, speakers, and equipment storage space at no cost. These benefits help to allow our small Centre to continue to exist and serve its members and the general public. Given the infamous St. John's weather, our public monthly meetings serve a role that our sky-challenged activities fall short of.

Chris is a frequent expert speaker, writer, media contact and liaison with other groups. With a young family, job responsibilities, choir and orchestra interests, Chris has been very generous to our Centre with his limited free time and leadership.

He is a valued member of the St. John's Centre Executive and frequently called upon to perform a variety of tasks. Our Centre's efforts to establish an observatory is being helped tremendously by Chris's expertise and experience. This observatory will be a major part of our public outreach activities, essential to our Centre's future.

Chris has given freely of his time and energy for the advancement of astronomy at the local and provincial level. He is a deserving candidate for the RASC Service Award.

## **7. Service Award – Mary Lou Whitehorne (Halifax Centre)**

Mary Lou Whitehorne has had, for more than 25 years, a major positive impact on The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, both at the Halifax Centre level and at the National level.

As a Medical Laboratory Technologist and mother of two young girls, Mary Lou once read in an astronomy column by Terence Dickinson that one could see the Galilean moons of Jupiter with a pair of binoculars. She looked, and became hooked on astronomy!

She joined the Halifax Centre in 1985 and has since become a Life Member. Her sparkling personality and growing interest in the heavens inevitably led her into

many executive positions within the Centre over a 14-year period, including as Councillor, Secretary, Observing Chair, and three years as Centre President (1990, 1991 and 2002), plus chair of the committee that hosted the 1993 RASC General Assembly in Halifax. Over the years, she has also given numerous presentations to the Centre on a wide variety of astronomical topics.

Mary Lou advanced her knowledge of astronomy with courses at Saint Mary's University. Her observations of B-e stars with the telescope at the Burke-Gaffney Observatory resulted in two papers in the RASC Journal, and the Chant Medal.

As a mother and amateur astronomer, Mary Lou became keenly interested in science education. Among her many endeavours in that regard, including being chair of the national Education Committee from 2004-2006, she, with other Centre members, established the Nova Scotia Planetarium Advisory Committee (which later became the Atlantic Space Sciences Foundation). She led this organization for several years, while it developed and ran a successful Starlab mobile planetarium program in Nova Scotia. The planetarium was later donated to Halifax's Discovery Centre, resulting in a legacy of astronomy being added to their continuing programs.

She has been continuously active in public outreach activities in the name of the RASC, with many other organizations. These include the Girl Guides of Canada, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Halifax's Discovery Centre, the Halifax Planetarium, and the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

A highlight of her work in promoting formal astronomy education is her book *Skyways, Astronomy Handbook for Teachers*. First published in 2003 by the RASC, the book is now in its second edition, with both English and French versions. She also authored the new *Moon Gazers' Guide* and edited the sixth edition of *The Beginner's Observing Guide* after the death of its author Leo Enright. Over many years, she was also a contributor to the *Observer's Handbook* and the *Observer's Calendar*.

Mary Lou's major national service began in 2006, when she offered to run as a candidate for the position of RASC 2nd Vice-President. Upon her election, she began an 8-year sequence of service to the national Society as 2nd Vice-President, 1st Vice-President, President (2010-2012), and most recently Past President and Chair of the Awards Committee.

A rare moment in Mary Lou's life occurred during those years. At the 2007 General Assembly in Calgary, she was rendered speechless by the announcement that asteroid 144907 had been named "Whitehorne" in her honour.

Mary Lou was our 1st Vice-President during 2009, the International Year of Astronomy, when the RASC partnered with CASCA and the FAAQ to coordinate activities and produce several bilingual outreach publications. In addition to being the inspiration for the *Mary Lou's New Telescope* children's book, Mary Lou continued the legacy of IYA by joining the Beyond IYA Committee, which continued the outreach partnership between the three organizations.

The years Mary Lou has spent in the presidential and vice-presidential positions



were unusually busy ones for the Society, and at times turbulent. She took the executive lead to respond quickly to the Canada Revenue Agency crisis in 2008, when the Society had to seek the guidance and advice of corporate counsel. Mary Lou acted as the Society's liaison and spearheaded meetings between the Executive, National Council, and the lawyer.

Among other issues facing the Society during those years were government-legislated changes in the governance structure of the Society; changes in staffing at the Society Office; and the transition of the national office from its own building (with landlord responsibilities) into rental accommodations. These issues and others demanded much of Mary Lou's time and talents. The successful outcomes were in no small way the result of her initiative, good judgment, and tenacity.

One of Mary Lou's lasting legacies is the creation of the professional Executive Director position. Mary Lou had a vision that the Society needed such a person to move the Society forward. Working in concert with the Executive Director and others, Mary Lou was also instrumental in creating the first Strategic Plan the Society has seen in many years.

Over the years, the RASC has been fortunate to have several distinguished ladies as presidents, including Allie Vibert Douglas, Ruth Northcott, Helen Hogg, and Mary Grey. In the early years of the 21st century, our Society has again benefited from a lady's perspective, determination, and grace. It is with deep thanks and appreciation that we recommend Mary Lou Whitehorne for the RASC Service Award.

Roy Bishop  
David Chapman  
James Edgar  
Paul Heath (President of the Halifax Centre)  
Pat Kelly  
David Lane

#### **Fellow Award – Dr. James Hesser (Victoria Centre)**

*In recognition of Dr. Hesser's decades-long-term contributions to the RASC, his leadership in building partnerships, bringing amateurs and professionals together and leading joint initiatives, the depth and scope of his contributions, and their broad national and international impact regarding the Society's objectives, mission, and vision, the Awards Committee recommends that Dr. Hesser also be named a Fellow of the RASC.*

#### **Ken Chilton Prize – Kathryn & Nathan Gray (Halifax Centre)**

It is with great pleasure and pride that, on behalf of the Halifax Centre Council, we submit the following nomination to the RASC National Awards Committee.

The Chilton Prize is awarded to an amateur astronomer, resident in Canada, in recognition of a significant piece of astronomical work carried out or published