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The Royal  
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# BULLETIN

La Société  
Royale d'Astronomie  
du Canada

Supplement to Volume 90/4 of the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

## Reflections: Rovers and Alarm Bells

Andrew I. Oakes  
Unattached Member

Some time ago, an article about remote-controlled rovers and our solar system was published in a large circulation astronomy magazine in the United States. In it, rovers were linked to private-sector activity, which on first glance does not seem as if it would present a problem. Once the full implications of the article became clear, though, an alarm bell rang for me.

Certainly, it is exciting to be living in an era when a new generation of rovers might soon start exploring surfaces of the many planets and moons within our solar system, however, the troubling issue about expanded activity—specifically that of private-enterprise participation in this nascent exploration process—revolves around the question of unnecessary landscape scarring, environmentally damaging exploitation of other worlds, and the leaving behind of space junk.

What definitely set off an alarm for me was the mention of a firm that wanted to sell high-fidelity "Moonwalks" around Apollo 11's Tranquillity Base to entertainment companies and theme parks. The plan is to land a rover on the Moon and to have it driven by paying customers on Earth. This company has a long-term strategy and is trying to commercially fund exploration of the Moon in the same way one might fund a Mount Everest expedition.

Profit-driven enterprises on Earth have not had the best record of being environmentally responsible citizens. Only through tough legislation in the developed countries have many been forced to become cleaner exploiters of our planet's natural resources—restoring surface mine sites after the last commercial ore has been mined; responsibly harvesting trees; or conducting environmental assessment reviews before government-issued project permits are given. Horror stories on Earth are still not unheard of and, in many less developed countries, environmental questions take a distant back seat to economic interests.

**"I believe that it is not too soon to start thinking about such extraterrestrial rules and regulations."**

Before private-enterprise exploration of space actually takes off from the proverbial drawing board—whether it is for strictly entertainment purposes or natural-resource exploitation—it might be a good idea to have international rules and regulations in place that would prevent any commercial rape of distant planetary bodies. The primary objective would be to safeguard our Moon (and by extension other solar system members) from environmental scarring, human-made pollution, and unnecessary destruction.

How can this be achieved? Perhaps international governmental organizations, such as the United Nations or some new institution representing space-faring nations, would need to

develop protocols of behaviour, responsibility and liability. I believe that it is not too soon to start thinking about such extraterrestrial rules and regulations.

Should a national organization like the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada consider voicing an opinion on such matters to governmental bodies, taking up the issue as it has done with the light pollution question facing astronomers? A special committee could look into the issues involved and in a proactive, leadership role could bring the question to the forefront for discussion. ☼

*The child asks,*

*"What is the Moon, and why does it shine?"*

*"What is this water and where does it run?"*

*"What is this wind?"*

*"Where does this animal live, and what is the use of this plant?"*

*And if not snubbed and stunted by being told not to ask foolish questions, there is no limit to the intellectual craving of a young child; nor any bounds to the slow, but solid, accretion of knowledge and development of the thinking faculty in this way. To all such questions, answers which are necessarily incomplete, though true as far as they go, may be given by any teacher whose ideas represent real knowledge and not mere book learning; and a panoramic view of Nature, accompanied by a strong infusion of the scientific habit of mind, may thus be placed within the reach of every child of nine or ten.*

*Thomas Henry Huxley*

*English biologist/evolutionist (1825-1895)*



## BULLETIN

is a publication of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada and is distributed together with the society's Journal. It contains articles on current activities of the R.A.S.C. and its centres across Canada, as well as articles from members and non-members which are of general interest to members of the Society. Inquiries about the Society should be directed to its national office at 136 Dupont Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1V2 (416) 924-7973.

Web site: <http://apwww.stmarys.ca/rasc/nat>

**Cover Picture:** G.A. delegates who took the tour to Elk Island National park were able to spot this bison.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Many Thanks!

Dear members and colleagues:

I thank you all very much for the warmth of your farewell to me at the General Assembly in Edmonton in June.

I was most pleased with the gift that you gave me. As most of you are aware, I love to travel and I am planning an extended visit to Australia in the fall of this year. Your gift of the camcorder will be excellent for me to capture my experiences and retain treasured memories.

Without a doubt I will miss all of you after spending so many happy years as the society's executive secretary.

Yours truly,  
Rosemary Freeman ☻



Rosemary Freeman accepting one of the many gifts and tokens of affection that she received at the GA banquet. While she plans to do a lot of travelling in her retirement, it was made clear that there would always be a welcome for her to attend future General Assemblies.

Photo by David Lane.

*Behold the mighty dinosaur  
Famous in prehistoric lore,  
Not only for his weight and length  
But for his intellectual strength.  
You will observe by these remains  
The creature had two sets of  
brains—*

*One in his head (the usual place),  
The other at his spinal base.  
Thus he could reason a priori  
As well as a posteriori.*

*No problem bothered him a bit  
He made both head and tail of it.*

*So wise was he, so wise and solemn,  
Each thought filled just a spinal  
column.*

*If one brain found the pressure wrong  
It passed a few ideas along  
If something slipped his forward mind  
Twas rescued by the one behind.*

*And if in error he was caught  
He had a saving afterthought.  
As he thought twice before he spoke  
He had no judgment to revoke.*

*Thus he could think without congestion  
Upon both sides of every question.  
Oh, gaze upon this model beast  
Defunct ten million years at least.*

*Bert Liston Taylor  
American journalist/humorist (1920)*

## Mary Grey 1927-1996

A past president of the RASC died on Thursday, June 27th in Ottawa. Mary Grey served as the society's president from 1986-1988.

She had worked at the Dominion Observatory and, on its closure in 1974, moved to the National Museum of Science and Technology where she was curator of physical sciences and astronomy. If it had not been for Mary, the historic 15" refractor may well have been destroyed rather than being moved to the museum where it is still used regularly for public education programmes.

She was responsible for starting and writing *Sky News* which achieved a mailing list of 30,000 for the three panel version that she produced for over ten years. Mary also wrote the monthly "StarGazing" column that appeared in newspapers across Canada. She retired in 1993.

She was a civil engineer by training (UNB, 1949) and had worked for the Defence Research Board and various branches of Energy, Mines and Resources before going to the Dominion Observatory. Her interest in astronomy was acquired while at the Geodetic Surveys Branch at Energy, Mines and Resources.

Despite fighting off cancer for several years and recovering from a heart attack, she was always optimistic, provided support to, and was a model for many others in the same situation. Mary was active in the Breast Cancer Action group in Ottawa until shortly before her death. Probably only her closest friends are aware of the extent of her great generosity. She was a talented and remarkable woman in many ways.

An obituary appeared in the July 6th national edition of the *Globe & Mail*. A more complete obituary will appear in the *Journal* in the fall.

A memorial service was held on Tuesday, July 16th at the National Museum of Science and Technology. ☻

# National Council Report

Patrick Kelly

There were two meetings of the national council during the General Assembly in Edmonton. While much went on at these meetings, I will report those items that I feel will be of interest to the general membership. Those who wish to get the detailed minutes, can do so once they are available, either by contacting your centre secretary, president or national rep, or by checking the national web page (see masthead).

The first meeting got off to a rather uncertain start as the agenda that had been circulated with the annual meeting mailing, showed that the meeting was not supposed to commence until 12:30. Anyone who has attended a national council meeting should know that you cannot start one early enough! The members of the council gathered at 9:00 but it was the advice of Michael Watson, the society's solicitor, that without sufficient notice, the council did not even have the authority to decide if the meeting could begin early. Doug Hube took responsibility for not noticing the error when the agenda had been made. It was suggested that a suitable punishment would be an additional term in office!

It was finally decided that the executive committee would meet and that any other committees that would like to use the time in a similar fashion were welcome to do so. The rest wandered off, or stayed and chatted about various items of RASC business, as well as their recent observing experiences (or lack thereof).

After lunch, the meeting finally got underway. As part of the president's report, Doug Hube announced that Anne Underhill had delightedly accepted the society's offer of an honorary membership. Doug George, the first vice-president, then explained the main points of the proposed agreement with the University of Toronto Press to handle the society's membership database and renewals. Although there were a few details to work out, it was decided to approve the agreement based on its essential terms. It is hoped that this will be in place to handle the renewals for this fall. (See the article on page 5 for details. The full text of the draft agreement is on the society's web page.)

As part of the secretary's report, Randall Brooks announced that several society members had completed the requirements for the Messier and NGC Certificates. Messier Certificates were awarded to Ray Berg of Kingston, Peter Dawes of London and Brian Cheaney of Toronto. An NGC Certificate was awarded to David Lane of Halifax, which prompted the suggestion that a motion should be made that the



*One of the national council meetings that were held during the General Assembly, or possibly the morning session that was not held! Photo by David Lane.*

society ban him from receiving any further society awards!

Rajiv Gupta, the society's treasurer, presented the report from the financial committee. Due to several large items which were approved after the original 1996 budget was prepared, he was predicting a deficit for this year of around \$5,000. He noted that the society had predicted deficits for the last several years, all of which ended up as surpluses. With many changes next year, including the cost of the trial bundling of *SkyNews*, he felt that a similar deficit would also be incurred in the 1997 fiscal year, but that an increase in membership might negate it. The society currently has cash reserves of about \$100,000, excluding the special purpose funds.

The library committee reported that a listing of the holdings of the society's national library will soon be made available at our web site.

The single retail price for the 1998 *Observer's Handbook* was set at \$18.95, on the recommendation of Roy Bishop, the editor. The 1997 price had previously been approved at \$17.95.

Leo Enright reported that a third edition of the *Beginner's Observing Guide* was issued in April and that centres could order copies of the new edition once their accounts had been settled on the previous edition. Major changes include a new cover, ten additional pages and five year coverage for such items as phases of the Moon, eclipses, planet positions, etc.

The awards committee decided not to confer the Simon Newcomb Award this year.

Don Hladiuk of the Calgary Centre, one of the members of the membership and promotion committee, produced a resource book of educational and promotional ideas related to Comet Hale-Bopp. Each centre was given a copy to take back with them. Centres that were not

represented at the G.A. should have received theirs in the mail by now. The booklet was produced as a result of the increase in membership that all centres experienced as a result of Comet Halley. It is not known if Comet Hyakutake will have a similar effect this fall.

## **The RASC Manual. What is it?**

For members unfamiliar with the *RASC Manual*, it contains a lot of information covering everything from lists of recent past presidents, to policies on the Hogg and Northcott Lectures. The appendices include all of the forms used at the national level, travel policies, etc. This documentation was first put together by David Tindall when he was national secretary, and has been updated by Randall Brooks, who currently holds that position. Any member that wishes to see a complete copy, should check with their centre secretary, as they should have one.

The nominating committee nominated Scott Young of Winnipeg as the new Astronomy Day coordinator. He succeeds Sandy Ferguson of Saskatoon who has done a good job over the past few years.

The computer use committee announced that By-Law #1 and the *RASC Manual* (see sidebar), with the exception of the appendices, were now on the society's web page.

The national light pollution committee announced that it would be presenting this year's National Award for Responsible Lighting jointly to Alberta Transportation and Utilities and TransAlta Utilities Corporation for using and promoting efficient lighting practices to illuminate Alberta's highways.

Several issues came up as a result of the report of the publications revitalization committee. The first came out of the previous council meeting where *Astronomy Canada*, which had been proposed as the name of the new society publication, was felt by many to sound too much like a government department. As a result, the committee had been asked to propose a name that was "more poetic" and "less institutional". There was a lot of discussion about this on the RASC list server (see sidebar). A vote held by members of that group, showed *Polaris: The Journal of the RASC* to have been the most popular, with a significant number wishing to retain the existing name, *The Journal of the RASC*. In fact, due to the on-going and emotional debate over the name, the committee had begun to simply refer to the new publication as Fred. Dave Lane could be seen, camera in hand, at various G.A. activities wearing a badge that read: *Official Photographer of Fred*. The committee put forward a motion to adopt this name and then requested that it be tabled until the second meeting to allow for discussion. This was done but the issue would reappear with a vengeance at the next meeting.

The next item was the proposal to create an editorial board to oversee the new publication and act as a "home" for the various editors. There was a fair bit of discussion on this point, but the board structure was approved. It initially consists of an editor, (Dr. David Turner, the current *Journal* editor), and an associate editor (Patrick Kelly, the current *Bulletin* editor). The board will also consist of assistant editors, who will be responsible for editing regular features, and contributing editors, who will be regular columnists. Other members of the board would be appointed by the national president, on the recommendation of the publications committee.

The proposed scheduling of the new publication was next. Due to the current lateness of the existing publications and the need to make the joint mailing with *SkyNews* timely, it is expected that the October and December issues of both the *Journal* and *Bulletin* will be combined into single, thicker issues and mailed in late December with the Jan-Feb. issue of *SkyNews*. The first issue of the new publication (the February issue) would be mailed in late February with the March-April issue of *SkyNews*. The committee is trying to meet a set of "fast-track" deadlines, which would allow for the combined issues to be mailed in early November and a January issue of the new publication to be mailed in late December with the Jan-Feb. issue of *SkyNews*. This will require a lot of effort, but at the time of writing, the fast-track is still on-track!

The last item was the fate of the annual report.

It was felt by the committee that a lot of the material that was in the report, such as centre reports, could be better used in the new publication by spreading it over the entire year. The committee also felt that a lot of the material that was presented was of little interest to the general membership and that it should not occupy one entire issue of the new publication. Additionally, it represented a substantial printing cost. A smaller insert, with a minimum amount of information was proposed to replace it. The other information, such as lists of centre executives, would be included in the *RASC Manual*. Contrary arguments were made that the annual report was the only way to get a real snapshot of the society, and that a lot of the members of the council used the material in it. Several motions were made, including one to cease publication of the report (which was defeated) and a motion to make the April issue of the "new" publication the annual report, which was also defeated. An old motion directing that the April issue of the *Bulletin* be the annual report is still in effect, but as the *Bulletin* will cease publication at the end of the year, this topic will, no doubt, come up again at the fall meeting.

Future hosts for General Assemblies was the next topic. Peggy Torney, the president of the Kingston Centre gave an excellent presentation on what we can expect there for the 1997 G.A. It was noted that the Victoria Centre had withdrawn its offer to host the 1998 G.A. and it appeared that Toronto would be putting in a bid to host the event in 1999.

The last main item was the approval of a policy on the recruitment of unattached members. This policy will be sent to all centre councils in the near future.

Well, if you have read this far, you probably are wondering how much time this meeting took. Would you believe that the meeting was adjourned at 4:15? When people realized the time, Doug Hube announced to all that, in fact, he had deliberately set the starting time at 12:30 as a test to see if the council could use its time wisely! Those of you who have met Doug know that he has an excellent sense of humor but I am actually tempted to believe him!

The annual meeting was held on Sunday afternoon. This meeting was a rather quiet affair compared to some of the recent ones as there was no proposed fee increase and no proposed constitutional changes. The main item was the election of Randy Attwood as the society's new first vice-president.

At the second council meeting, the main order of business was the reconstitution of the society's standing and special committees. The committees and their current composition is

listed below. The first name in each list is the committee chair, the remaining members are listed in alphabetical order.

**Awards:** Doug Hube, Raymond Auclair, Peter Broughton, Jack Newton, David Turner.

**Constitution:** Michael Watson, Randy Attwood, Don Hladiuk. (Advisor: Raymond Auclair)

**Executive:** Doug George, Randy Attwood, Randall Brooks, Robert Garrison, Rajiv Gupta.

(Continued on page 8)

### List Servers: What are they?

A list server is an E-mail system that allows subscribers to receive news items or have an on-going dialog. People subscribe to the list by sending a coded E-mail message to the server. Regular E-mail messages sent to the server are forwarded to all subscribers on the list.

People with a "permanent" Internet connection, such as an office computer, and who have it set to check their E-mail very frequently, can receive messages and reply, almost in real time. These servers can be quite busy; it is common to get a dozen messages (or more) a day. Some servers provide the option of receiving a digest version. This is a single message containing a chronological index of all messages handled by the server during the previous day, followed by the text of the individual messages.

Some list servers support more than one "discussion group". This is often needed when a single server gets flooded with messages that not all members want to receive. Separate lists are set up to handle subtopics from the larger group and subscribers can choose which ones they wish to subscribe to.

The RASC list server is maintained by David Lane. To join it, send e-mail to [listserv@astrotech.stmarys.ca](mailto:listserv@astrotech.stmarys.ca) with the words "subscribe raslist YourName (Your Centre)" as the first line of the message, e.g. subscribe raslist Patrick Kelly (Halifax). You will receive an E-mail message from the listserver explaining its use.

Another astronomy related list server is Astromart, a free classified ad server for astronomical items. Subscribers can expect forty to sixty messages a week!

To subscribe, send an E-mail message to: [astromart-request@lists.best.com](mailto:astromart-request@lists.best.com). In the message body, type: subscribe; for the digest version, type: subscribe. To place an ad, send it to: [ads@astromart.com](mailto:ads@astromart.com) 📧

## New Membership Management Proposal

The agreement with University of Toronto Press (UTP) will cover several areas of responsibility. Listed below are the main points from the draft copy of the agreement

### Membership Renewals

1. UTP will plan and implement annual renewal campaigns. This includes the renewal form, envelope, labor and postage. At least three renewal efforts are mailed for each renewal year. After one year, a follow-up renewal is mailed to those whose membership expired.

2. Centres may decide to manage renewals in their own office. These centres must inform the national office of their intention to opt out and will collect their own funds, forward the national office portion to the national office and forward their list of members to UTP for processing.

3. Each centre is able to set their own membership fee. The member sees only the fee appropriate to their centre. Centres will forward any membership fee changes to the national office by June 30th of each year. These will be implemented on the July renewal mailing dates.

4. Each centre will receive a complete list of their members quarterly. Monthly reports will detail changes from the previous quarterly list. Electronic transmission is preferable but a paper list will also be available.

5. Members and subscribers can reach UTP through the mail, by telephone, by regular fax, by 1-800 fax and by e-mail.

### Publications

1. UTP will feature the society's publications in its catalogues.

2. UTP will include on its world wide web home page a link to the RASC's home page.

3. UTP will mail free sample issues of the society's publications to libraries and potential subscribers. The RASC pays for the samples, which will be part of the normal print run.

4. UTP will produce address sheets or labels for mailing the RASC's publications, distribute them in the US and Canadian postal systems, and guarantee the return postage on undeliverable mail.

5. If a member or subscriber does not receive an issue, it is replaced promptly, at no extra cost.

6. UTP will keep an inventory of back issues of the society's publications.

### Financial Services

1. UTP will deposit and process subscription and membership payments on behalf of the

RASC. Cheques, money orders, Visa and Mastercard are accepted. A commission of 1.8% is deducted from the gross amount of credit card payments. All payments are credited to the RASC general ledger account. All revenue is recorded by source: subscriptions, back issues, single issues, advertising, foreign exchange or page charges.

2. UTP will prepare revenue statements detailing membership, subscription, advertising, single issue income and GST received on a monthly basis. Each centre will receive a monthly activity report, payment for membership funds collected and a list of members paid during the period. Cheques, along with the report of paid members and subscribers, are delivered by the third week of the month following the activity.

3. UTP will supply the society with audited financial statements each year.

### Observer's Handbook

1. Production costs of *The Observers Handbook* will be the responsibility of the RASC.

2. UTP will prepare invoices and process payments for retail clients for \$1.50 per invoice.

3. Current mailing practices will continue, with the exception that all members will now receive their handbooks by mail. This will allow for a much lower mailing rate than centres, which must pay first class rates.

4. Members may join at any time of the year. Members applying before July will receive the current year's *Observer's Handbook* immediately after joining, while those applying afterwards will receive the new edition when it becomes available in November.

The annual cost to the society will be \$4.00 for each member/subscriber annually, with a minimum charge of \$8,000. With the exception of increases in postage and changes in service levels, this rate will not increase above the level of inflation over the life of the contract.

### Some Questions and Answers

**Q:** How will centres keep track of who their members are?

**A:** UTP will distribute, either by e-mail or on paper (centre's choice), a complete membership list every quarter. Each month, centres will receive a list of changes to the previous quarterly membership list.

**Q:** Will there be a delay in membership fees arriving at the centre?

**A:** This should not be a problem. UTP will start mailing out membership renewals earlier than most centres would, and follow-up reminder notices will be sent as required which should improve member response. Cheques will be mailed out to each centre on the third

week following each month end.

**Q:** How will this affect the workload at the centre level?

**A:** The treasurer will have to deal with far fewer transactions since only one membership fee cheque will arrive each month. The centre will no longer have to deal with keeping the membership lists up to date, handle address changes, etc. nor will the centre have to deal with handbook distribution and the associated costs.

**Q:** Can members sign up at a meeting?

**A:** Yes, there is no reason why centre representatives cannot collect memberships at a meeting and forward them in a package to UTP for normal processing.

**Q:** We like to give our members an *Observer's Handbook* immediately when they sign up. Is this still possible?

**A:** Unfortunately, no. There is no way to coordinate with UTP whether a new member has already received a handbook or not. This disadvantage should be weighed against the reduced handbook mailing costs to the centre (now handled at the national level at bulk rates) and the fact that members can now join at any time of the year. Hence, as life members have enjoyed for years, all members will have a copy by about mid-November—an incentive to renew by October!

**Q:** What about extra fees such as centre surcharges, *Sky & Telescope* or *Astronomy* subscriptions, observatory fees, etc.?

**A:** No problem. When setting fees, the centre has the option of adding extra-cost optional items to the application form. UTP will collect the appropriate fees and forward them to the centre as part of the monthly cheque.

If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact:

Doug George  
RASC President  
E-Mail: george@sce.carleton.ca  
Telephone (613) 225-7182  
Fax (613) 225-9688 ☎

*Artistotle's opinion... that comets were nothing else than sublunary vapors or airy meteors... prevailed so far amongst the Greeks, that this sublimest part of astronomy lay altogether neglected; since none could think it worthwhile to observe, and to give account of the wandering and uncertain paths of vapours floating in the Ether.*

*Edmond Halley  
English astronomer (1656-1742)*

# The 1996 Edmonton General Assembly

Ken Noesgaard  
Winnipeg Centre

This year's G.A. was held in Edmonton, Alberta. Delegates began arriving on Thursday and were welcomed by Edmonton Centre volunteers. As we were driving from Winnipeg we did not leave until 9:00 that evening. Friday morning at 9:00 we arrived at the University of Alberta campus. We got our keys to the dorms and then checked in at the registration room. We were made to feel quite welcome by the volunteers who were on hand. We were invited to sign up for the Challenger Centre space mission simulator (no, it is not a 72 second simulation that ends in a bright flash!) which was being held that afternoon at the Edmonton Space Science Centre. They needed two teams, one for ground crew and the other for flight crew. I wanted to go, but I had already decided to go to the national council session that afternoon.

The council met at 1:00 PM in the university board room—a very cool place for a meeting. They had microphones and switches for electronic voting at each seat! I had to leave at 3:00,



*The display area featured many exhibits, the most prominent being the beautifully crafted telescopes that dominated the room.*

since driving all night had made me kind of tired. By the time I left, the new journal still did not have a name. The council members took to calling it "Fred" and tabled the discussion until Sunday. The council meeting went on until about 4:00, and I understand that most of the people there stayed awake until the end!

After my nap (the one at the dorm, not the board room) we headed over to the Edmonton Space and Sciences Centre (ESSC) for the wine and cheese welcome. We had wine, we had cheese, we felt welcome. After about an hour of meeting the other delegates ("Oh, you're from Winnipeg? You must know Stan!"), the annual song contest began. All the entries were terrific, then it was our turn. The Halipeg Winfaxes



*At the ESSC observing deck, RASC members with a nose for quality, line up to wait for their turn at the Tasco refractor.*

(with apologies to a popular software package), in a collaborative effort performed a variation on the Bare Naked Ladies' song "If I Had a Million Dollars". I, personally, was drafted into the group—the real talent was in the group's founders—Dave Lane and Scott Young. The applause meter swung our way and the trophy will be coming back to Winnipeg—or Halifax.



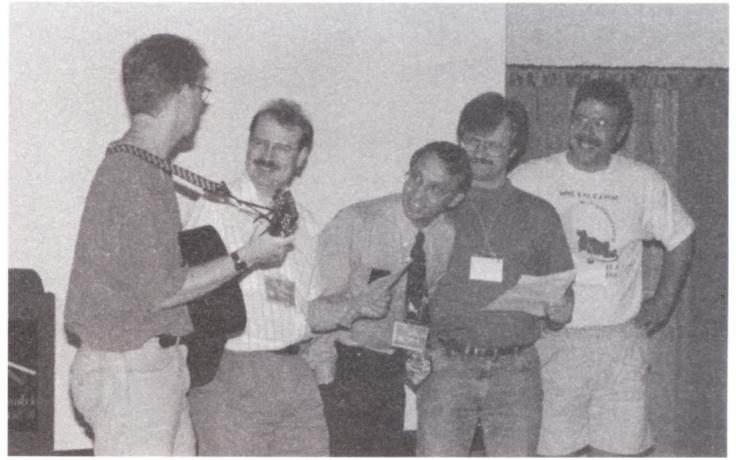
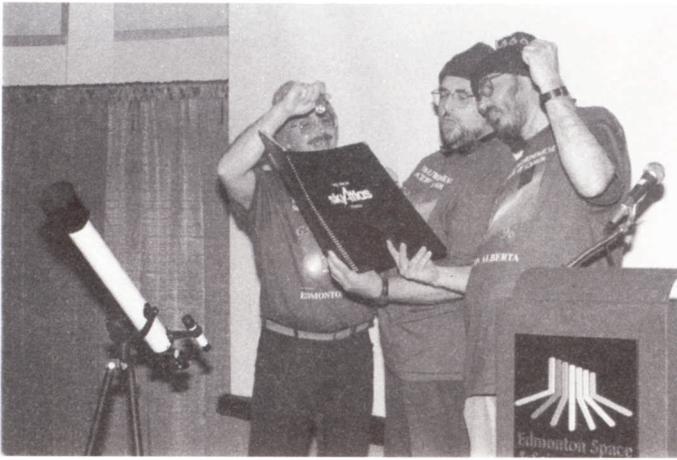
*The chicken barbeque proved to be a great hit with everyone.*

The next event on the agenda was the slide show/Murphy's slide show. Lots of wonderful shots of Comet Hyakutake were displayed, as well as a few of those great mistakes. Stan Runge showed shots of Winnipeg Centre's flood—dubbed the "sub-servatory" by some of the other delegates. Plans were unveiled for a trip to Curaçao in February 1998 for the total eclipse. I think this is one astronomical event my wife will be interested in! We spent the rest of the evening touring the exhibits and, once the sky had gotten dark (or at least what Edmontonians call dark for that time of the year), we visited the Edmonton Centre's on-site observatory.

The ESSC site is a V-shaped building with roll-off roofs. It houses an impressive collection of telescopes including two C8's, a C14, a four-



*A G.A. would not be the same without a pyramid. With a bit more speed this year a fifth layer would have been possible. Five layers will be the goal in Kingston. All photos accompanying this article were taken by David Lane, or at least taken using his camera!*



Two of the groups from the song contest. On the left, (and from the left) Edmonton Centre members Robert Martin, Harris Christian and Bruce McCurdy doing their rendition of the Christmas classic, "We Three Astronomers". On the right, (but also from the left), the members of the winning Halipeg Centre: Scott Young, David Lane, Stan Runge, Ken Noesgaard and Patrick Kelly.

inch Zeiss refractor, and a seven-inch Starfire! There seemed to be a lot of green tinted astronomers around there! We looked at Jupiter and Albeiro, but it was getting cloudy, so we headed back to the university.

Back at the dorm, we discovered the next event on the schedule—party! The common room on the fourth floor was designated the social room for the weekend, and much socializing went on each night. Strangely enough, I found as much discussion relevant to the GA going on at the social session as during the day. In addition, we got to hear Peter Jedicke give his rendition of the RASC GA hit parade—winning songs from past contests. Peter Ceravolo found new uses for popcorn, and we got to watch Dave disassemble the telephone!

Saturday morning, the paper sessions began at 9 o'clock. All of the presentations were excellent and interesting, but I am sure all would agree the highlight of the day was the amazing display put on by Peter Ceravolo, Paul Boltwood



A large crowd was on hand for all of the paper sessions. The topics were all interesting and well-presented. Some of the papers will be appearing in upcoming issues of the society's publications.

and Doug George entitled "Comet Hyakutake—The Movie". Peter took over 850 pictures in Arizona and the group combined them into a movie, showing beautifully the movement of the coma and tail out from the comet. I think we all want a copy of that tape!

The final presentation of the day was by the Kingston Centre's president who was promoting their city as host for the '97 G.A. The turnout should be good for that one.

Immediately following the paper sessions was the barbeque outside the dorm. The chicken



Several members were present to receive society awards. From the left, Robert Venor (Montreal) received the Service Award, Raymond Thompson (Toronto) was awarded the Ken Chilton Prize, and David Lane (Halifax) received the Chant Medal.



Representatives from both the Alberta Transportation and Utilities Department and TransAlta Utilities Corporation were on hand to receive the 1996 National Award for Responsible Lighting. Let us hope that more utility companies follow their lead.

was delicious. We all then walked over to the Timms Centre for the Arts to attend the Helen S. Hogg Memorial Lecture. The guest speaker was Dr. Werner Isreal, Canada's leading relativist and gravitational theorist, who lectured on current black hole theory. Dr. Isreal was insightful and interesting.

Once again, the evening wound up with informal discussion and beverages (party!). This one went on until 5:00 AM, and believe it or not, the very last discussion that was held before we turned in, was on the topic of programs for beginners and youth groups.

Some people went on a tour of Fort Edmonton Sunday morning at 7:15, I tip my hat to them, they are better men than I. The rest of us rose at the crack of noon and had breakfast before attending the General Assembly at 1:00. There the real business of the GA was conducted until about 3:30, at which point the national council met again to hash out the name of the new journal, and others went to the display area to see the judging of the displays. I was asked to judge telescopes and "open" classes. The displays were all nice, and it took some deep discussion between judges to resolve the winners in each category. The national council adjourned at about 4:30 with a new name for the publication! It is now to be called "The Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada". My, that somehow sounds familiar.

The final event was the semi-formal banquet. There we had cocktails together, dined on bison and presented the awards and honors to our



*At the ESSC, Peter Jedicke (seated) "persuaded" the staff to allow him to use their computer lab to hack into, that is, to access E-mail and transfer files from his laptop. Bulletin editor, Pat Kelly looks on to ensure that Peter does not start another flame war on the RASC list server!*

accomplished members. Rosemary Freeman was honored for her years of valuable work as executive secretary (the real boss) as she stepped down from her position. She was presented with a camcorder (Dave Lane and I later tried our best to confuse her about how to run it), a big hug from Doug George and applause from the rest of us.

Then it fell to us to figure out who would get first ownership of the song contest trophy. Dave Lane, in a demonstration of irreverent brilliance, let the decision ride on a flip of the Chant Medal he had just won. Halifax gets to have it until

December. I think that medal is heavier on one side than on the other...

No party that night—everyone needed an early start going home in the morning. We said farewell to all our new friends with promises to meet the same time next year in Kingston, and turned in. Monday morning—Canada Day—we started on the road back to Winnipeg. We were tired, but satisfied, having learned new things and met new people. The conversation all the way back surrounded the events of the weekend, and we all vowed to make it to another G.A. Maybe next year we will meet some of the rest of you in Kingston! ☺

## National Council Report

(continued from page 4)

**Finance:** Rajiv Gupta, Randy Attwood, Robert Garrison, David Lane.

**Historical:** Fred Smith, Roy Bishop, Réal Manseau.

**Library:** Walter MacDonald, Kevin Kell, Ian McGregor. (Advisor: M. Cummings)

**Membership & Promotion:** Don Hladiuk, Randy Attwood, Kim Hay, Peter Jedicke.

**Nominating:** Doug Hube, Peter Broughton, Damien Lemay.

**Property:** Bob May, Randy Attwood, Rajiv Gupta.

**Publications:** Randy Attwood (chair), Roy Bishop, Peter Ceravolo, Patrick Kelly, David Lane, David Turner. (Advisors: Leo Enright, Andrew Oakes)

**Computer Use:** David Lane, two others who will be appointed by the chair.

**Election Procedures:** DISBANDED

**G.A. Guidelines:** DISBANDED

**Light Pollution:** Bill Broderick, Tom Bolton, Bob King, Don Hladiuk.

**Long Range Planning:** Randy Attwood, Ralph Chou, Andrew Oakes, Michael Watson.

**Publications Revitalization:** DISBANDED

The issue of the name of the new publication was revisited and a sizable amount of time was spent on the topic. A full discussion of what happened would take too much space, but in the end, it was decided that the name would remain *The Journal of the RASC*. It seems likely that the issue may not be settled. Only time will tell.

Life memberships were granted to Dr. Amelia Wehlau of London (wife of the late Dr. William Wehlau) and Mr. Clinton Constant of the Edmonton. These were both granted in recognition of a lifetime of meritorious service to their respective centres.

The Montreal Centre offered to host the fall meeting of the national council, which is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 19th. ☺



*The area around the university provided a number of suitable places to have lunch!*