The ALPO's Legacy...

Preserving Our Astronomical Heritage

- The Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO) is an astronomical organization dedicated to the scientific study of Solar System.
- Scientific study includes the collection of observational data from astronomical instrumentation maintained by amateur astronomers.

- Amateur observations have regularly recorded transient phenomena such as:
 - the changing
 meteorology of
 the planets such
 as Venus, Mars,
 Jupiter, Saturn
 and the remote
 planets

Images of Mars by ALPO members Jim Melka, Marc Delcroix, Gary Walker, and Don Parker



- the changing physical definition of comets and meteoroid clouds
- impacts of Solar System debris on the Moon and Jupiter
- and other phenomena elsewhere in the Solar System too numerous to mention in this presentation.

- This data is submitted for analysis, performed by ALPO coordinating personnel.
- Our coordinators in turn produce reports concerning this observational data, in our Journal, the Journal ALPO, otherwise known as The Strolling Astronomer.

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The Strolling Astronomer

Volume 49, Number 2, Spring 2007 Now in Portable Document Format (PDF) for Macintosh and PC-Compatible Computers

- · A home brewed collimation tool for Schmidt-Cassegrain scopes
- · A status report on the current Mars apparition
- · A report on the 2003-2004 Saturn apparition
- · Sunspot observations during Carrington solar rotation 2031-2036
- · Book Review: The Planets

. . . plus reports about your ALPO section activities and much, much



Comet McNaught (C/2006 P1) as imaged by its dis-coverer Robert H. McNaught on January 24, 2007, 10:39 UT, at Dubbo, New South Wales, Australia. Equipment: Canon 5D SLR using a 50mm, f/2.8, lens; 360-sec.total exp., ISO 400. Medium co of three 120-sec. exposures.



DATE: JUNE 19, 1948

TIME: 10:50 PDST

SEEING: 3

TRANSPARENCY: 3

POWER: 160

INSTRUMENT: 8" REFL

C. M. (1):

C.M. (2): 210°

- Although the collection and reporting of the data is performed by amateur astronomers, professional astronomers have utilized our observational databases for their own analyses going back decades.
- Some of these databases have observational data extending back over 60 years.

Jupiter observed in 1948 by the late Thomas Cragg

 The ALPO provides training and other support to its observers, most of whom are dues paying members in our organization. The Strolling Astronomer

Inside the ALPO Member, section and activity news (continued)

Interest Section Reports

Computing Section By Kim Hay, coordinator

June 1 – Earlier in 2004, the Computing Section took a bit of a hiatus with the leaving of Mike McClure. In the interim, Lenny Abbey had kindly looked after the ALPOCS listsery to keep things going until a new coordinator was found.

This position was posted and inquiring minds wanted to know. The next moment, Richard Schmude, ALPO executive director appointed me as ALPO Computing Section Coordinator.

I will not go into to much detail of what I do, but I am currently Acting Asts. Coordinator: Rototics & General Correspondence for the AIPO Solar Section, and belong to several other Astronomy groups, such as the American Assn. of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO), the Royal Astronomical Society of Candaia (RASC), the International Meteor Organization (IMO), NAMN, the American Meteor Society (AMS), and the Society of Radio Astronomes (SARA).

Each section is not run by one person, but is put together by a term — a team of volunteers who believe in what they are doing and want to share its nowledge with others. We need to rebuild the ALPO Computing Section, and I ask you, our members, that if you are interested in writing programs, databases or anything "computing", to please come and join our section.

If you have ideas on what you would like to see this section do or have included, please let us know. You can contact me at kimhay@kingston.net privately, or post to the ALPOCS list.

Our Yahoo Groups listserv discussion group (ALPOCS) was established in 1999 and now has 146 members. If you wish to subscribe, please send a message to alpocs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Though traffic on the listserv is down right now, I am sure everyone will get re-acquainted and that over the next few months, it will become active again. With all the astronomical wonders that are happening now, we can produce some programs to enrich our observing techniques and help bring astronomy to Visit the ALPO Computing Section on the World Wide Web at http://www.lpl.arizona.edu/~rhill/alpo/computer.html

ALPO Lunar & Planetary Training Program

By Tim Robertson, coordinator

June 9 – The ALPO Training Program would like to congratulate Carl Roussell for his successful comple-



ing Program in only eight months the is now perfecting his observing skills as he advances through the Novice Level to finally obtain Observer Status. Great job Carl!

The ALPO Training Program currently has 8 active students at various stages of training. And in the past 12 months, we have had orders for

over 120 copies of the Novice Observers Handbook

The ALPO Training Program is a two-step program, and there is no time requirement for completing the steps. But I have seen that those students that are motivated usually complete the steps in a short amount of time. The motivation comes from the desire to improve their observing skills and contribute to the pages of The Strolling Astronomer, the Journal of the ALPO.

The Lunar & Planetary Training Program is open to all members of the ALPO. Despiner as well as the expert observer. The goal is to help make members proficient observers. The ALPO revolves around the submission of astronomical observations of members for the purposes of scientific research. Therefore, it is the responsibility of our organization to guide prospective contributors toward a productive and meaningful scientific observation.

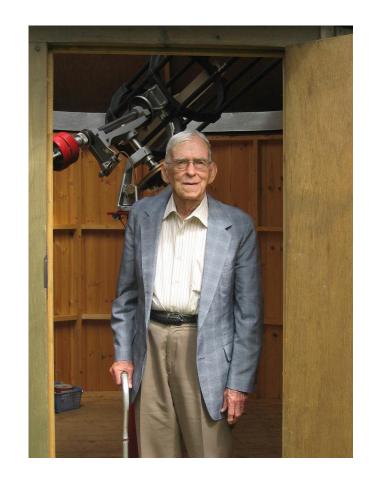
The course of instruction for the Training Program is two-tiered. The first tier is known as the "Basic Level"

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o The ALPO was founded in 1947 by Walter H. Haas. While Mr. Haas has been a professional mathematician and a computer programmer for much of his working life, amateur astronomy, particularly lunar and planetary astronomy, has been a lifelong pursuit.

Walter H. Haas, courtesy of Richard McKim, B.A.A.



A Ten-Year Study of Mercury and its Atmosphere

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A Ten-Year Study of Mercury and its Atmosphere

By WALTER H. HAAS

Introduction

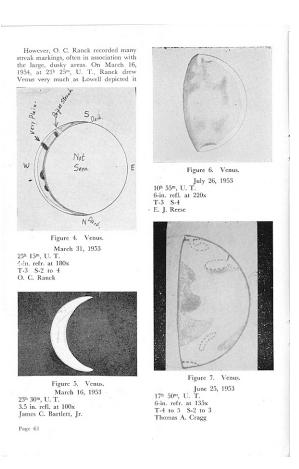
This paper is a discussion of observations of the innermost planet by a small group of largely American amateur astronomers between the years 1936 and 1945, inclusive. The group made about 230 drawings of the planet and observed it on a few dozen additional dates on which no drawings were made. The observers and their principal instruments are listed below. I made the majority of the observations, and Johnson was the most active of the others.

Observer	Station	Telescope	Remarks
C. F. Gramm	Rochester, N. Y.	4-in, refr.	
W. H. Haas	Alliance, Ohio	10-in, refr.	Mount Union Col lege Observator
W. H. Haas	New Waterford, Ohio	two 6-in. refls,	
W. H. Haas	East Cleveland, Ohio	9-in. refr.	Case School Observatory
W. H. Haas	Des Moines, Iowa	5-in, refl.	A. E. Chennell's telescope

Prior to 1947, Mr.
 Haas wrote many papers regarding amateur observations of the moon and planets appearing in the leading publications of that day such as Popular Astronomy.

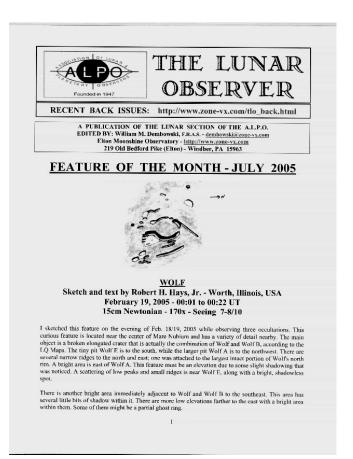
 The purpose of the formation of the ALPO was to consolidate efforts by other amateur investigators, while invigorating amateur interest in lunar and planetary astronomy and channeling it toward these observational studies.

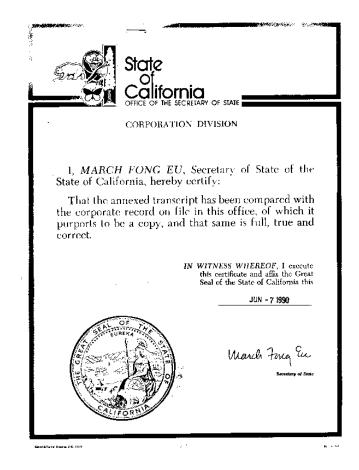
Drawings of Venus, from the Journal ALPO



- The ALPO has some 28 observing programs and activities spread over 18 different topical sections, dedicated to some aspect of Solar System study.
- All observers, staff, officers, and board members contribute their services strictly on a voluntary basis and receive no monetary compensation.

 These sections also produce literature and web blogs to assist observers in understanding and enjoying what they observe.





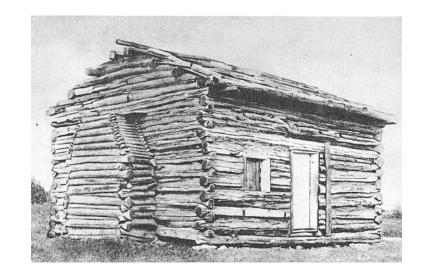
 Since 1990, the ALPO has been a State of California nonprofit corporation and is recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c)(3) organization.



ALPO gathering, courtesy of Phil Plante

 While the ALPO is an astronomical organization with real people that manage observational databases and the studies that result from it, the preservation and permanence of the ALPO and its observational databases rest upon the shoulders of these very same people.

- Most observational data, particularly hard copy observations are housed by our coordinators in their private dwellings.
- But not in something like this!



Courtesy or National Park Service, US Department of the Interior

- Historic hard copy depictions of lunar and planetary observations spanning decades along with newer electronically archived digital imagery are now maintained by our volunteer staff.
- However, circumstances and limitations that our staff are under pose some potential risk to these collections.

 Such databases of the ALPO are vulnerable to lost from natural and manmade disasters or even neglect if these records become the custody of indifferent third parties.



 One-of-a-kind scientific observations can be at risk to such perils.



- Professional astronomers have put a high value on this data for research proposes.
- Since no professional monitoring of the Solar System is done in the complete manner that amateur astronomers have done over the years, these observational databases that the ALPO maintains have become invaluable.

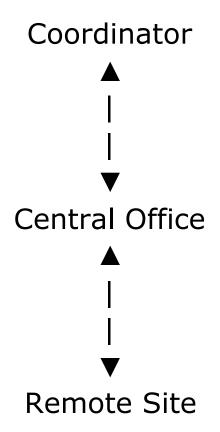


- A centralized headquarters or office would help to protect and preserve such historical data.
- Preservation of amateur observations of Solar System bodies would be the finest tribute we could pay these men and women that have taken the time, energy, and talent to record the ever changing Solar System through the last 7 decades.

- Other organizations such as the American Association of Variable Star Observers have successfully achieved this goal of maintaining a centralized headquarters to coordinate data preservation.
- The ALPO must do the same to guarantee its future.

- The purpose of a central office would actually be multi-fold.
- First and foremost, to preserve and duplicate observational databases so that they could not be lost as one-of-a-kind records maintained at one location.

 Minimally, observational databases could be maintained at three locations: the central office, with the observing section coordinator, and possibly at a remote location separate from either two.



 The usefulness of the central office would be that it could facilitate preservation through use of archiving techniques and equipment utilized and maintained on site, in addition to storing such data.



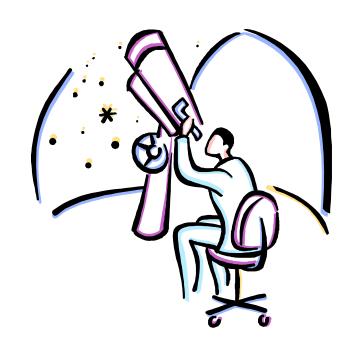




The Purpose

- A recent survey of ALPO Sections indicated that collectively, the amount of ALPO observational data is considerable.
- Observational data in electronic format may total more than 1 terabyte.
- Hard copy observational data going back to the 1940's could occupy 1000 or more sq. ft. of space.

 Additionally, a central office could provide other support for maintaining and storing scientific equipment such as optical and electronic instrumentation for loan and distribution to ALPO coordinators and its membership.





 A permanent home for the ALPO would be indispensable in maintaining a reference library of astronomy books and periodicals for staff and the public.

- The ALPO maintains collections at a public storage facility that is currently not easily accessible.
- A central headquarters would not only promote the active use of such collections, it would encourage the growth of these collections through literature contributions by the ALPO members and the public at large.

- Having a home base could also help as a staging or marshaling area for educational and public outreach.
- It could be a distribution and contact point for these efforts with the astronomical community and the public.



 Having a physical business location with a telephone contact point would give the ALPO accessibility and definition as a real educational and research institution.



The Funding...

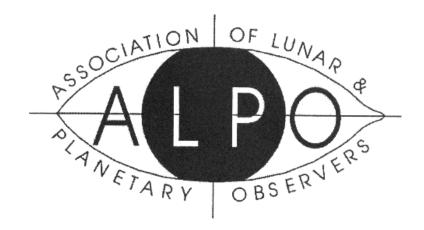
- The ALPO maintains and continues to seek out donations not only for organizational day-to-day operations, but for its future goal of housing its operations.
- In the past, the ALPO has been blessed with generous contributors that have kept the publication of our Journal at reduced cost to the general membership.

The Funding...

- Continued funding will be needed to help the vision of a central office become a reality.
- The ALPO Endowment has been set up specifically to receive funds for the specific propose of one day, meeting this goal of having a central office.

The ALPO Endowment

 Your giving through higher levels of memberships or your direct contributions to the ALPO Endowment are most appreciated and will bring the ALPO closer to its goal of preserving its legacy.



Thank you!