



North American AstroPhysical Observatory (NAAPO)



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People

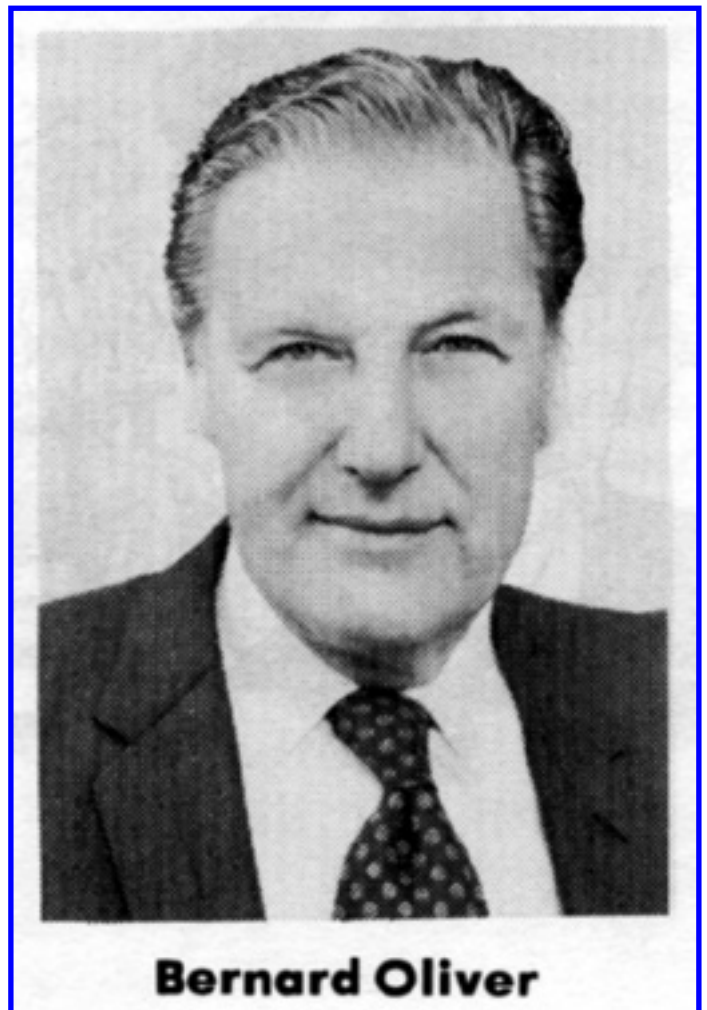
By: John Kraus

Bernard Oliver Grants \$200,000 to Monterey Institute

In 1973, six students at Case-Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio) took a unique tack. Realizing that the job outlook in astronomy was dismal, they formed their own astronomical research institute and, on receiving their doctoral degrees from Case-Western, they moved to Monterey, California, where they found full-time employment in the area doing teaching and computer programming. But they devoted their combined spare-time efforts to their first love, astronomy, and to the implementation of their desire to actively participate in the exploration of the universe. Their organization, the Monterey Institute for Research in Astronomy (MIRA), acquired an observatory site, gifts of equipment and a group of several hundred "Friends of the Institute."

Recently, Bernard Oliver, Vice President for Research and Development of Hewlett-Packard of Palo Alto, California, made a \$200,000 grant to assist MIRA to build an observatory. The grant is contingent on MIRA raising another \$200,000 to match Oliver's gift. However, Dr. Oliver is making an advance of \$44,000 regardless of the outcome of the matching.

The telescope for MIRA's new observatory is equipped with a 91 centimeter mirror made originally for Princeton University's Project Stratoscope and being loaned by Princeton to the observatory. The telescope was designed by Dr. Frank Melsheimer and is unique in having a



friction instead of gear drive. Research planned for the new observatory includes a search for supernovas in other galaxies, improved spectrophotometry of the brighter stars, a search for more sun-like stars and a study of whether the sun has unique characteristics. Sun-like stars are considered good candidates for planets and life (see **COSMIC SEARCH** Winter 1981, Serial No. 9, page 2).

Dr. Oliver, who is a member of the Editorial Board of **COSMIC SEARCH**, told us that he made the grant because he was impressed with the MIRA group and the progress they had made on their telescope and the automation they had provided, making it very well suited for their proposed plan to study stars in the solar neighborhood and acquire better statistics on those that may be good SETI candidates.

The MIRA core group consists of 10 persons, six of whom came from Case-Western. These six, who obtained Ph.D. degrees in astronomy from Case-Western (between 1973 and 1975) are Craig Chester, Cynthia and Nelson Irvine, Albert Merville, Hazel Ross and Bruce Weaver. Their philosophy that, if federal support for astronomy is peaking out, at least for the present, it is reasonable to think of doing astronomy as it was done prior to World War II. After all, the Yerkes, the Mt. Wilson and Mt. Palomar Observatories were built by private gifts. Since World War II, with increased costs, particularly for large facilities, federal support has become important but private support is still vital.

John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States, remarked that the culture of a nation can be judged by the condition of its astronomical observatories. Although other U.S. presidents have not shown similar devotion to culture, former President Avila Comacho of Mexico established the great Tonanzintla Observatory with his own personal funds.

The MIRA project is a refreshing, exciting example of the great public interest in astronomy, the queen of the sciences, which makes us one with the cosmos.

Persons interested in more information, or in becoming Friends of MIRA, should write to MIRA, Bin 568, Carmel Valley, California 93924 or telephone 408-375-3220.



Margaret Burbidge is the new President-Elect of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Dr. Burbidge, Professor of Astronomy at the University of California, San Diego, is a pioneer in astronomical research involving the evolution of stars, the dynamics of galaxies, the nature of quasars and other topics. In 1973, with a team of Lick Observatory astronomers, she established the redshift of the quasar OQ172 making it the most distant known object in the universe at 91 percent of the distance to the "edge" or observational limit of the universe.



The Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, President of the University of Notre Dame has been honored by the naming of an asteroid orbiting between Mars and Jupiter as "Asteroid Hesburgh-1952". The naming was suggested by Professor Frank Edmundson of Indiana University to thank Dr. Hesburgh for his valuable services to astronomy during his membership of the National Science Board from 1954 to 1966. Dr. Hesburgh is a member of the Editorial Board of **COSMIC SEARCH**.



Johns Hopkins University has been selected as the site for the new Space Telescope Science Institute. Plans call for the new Space Telescope with 2.4 meter mirror to be put into low orbit by the Space Shuttle in 1985. Above the earth's atmosphere, the new telescope will afford astronomers a much clearer view of the cosmos than possible from even the best mountain sites. The observational data acquired by the telescope will be transmitted from orbit to a NASA station in New Mexico, then relayed by the high-orbit Comsat to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center at Greenbelt, Maryland, and finally relayed by land line to the Telescope Institute at John Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland, where the data will be displayed, recorded and analyzed.

The new institute will be operated by the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) under contract with NASA. The institute is to have a staff of about 40 astronomers with a support group of one hundred persons. It is anticipated that several hundred astronomers from many different institutions will visit the institute each year in order to observe with the new telescope.



A **Master List of Nonstellar Optical Astronomical Objects** compiled by **Robert S. Dixon** and **George Sonneborn** of the Ohio State University Radio Observatory

has been selected by Choice magazine as one of the Outstanding Academic Books of the year. This list makes available pertinent information in easy-to-read format on 185,000 nebulas, galaxies, clusters and other non-stellar objects which was formerly scattered throughout the astronomical literature in nearly 300 catalogs published in many different countries. Dr. Dixon is Co-Editor of **COSMIC SEARCH**.



The **National Aviation/Space Education Convention** will be held during National Space Week '81, July 13 to 20, in Seattle, Washington. For further information contact the American Society for Aerospace Education, 1750 Pennsylvania Ave., N. W., Suite 1303, Washington, DC, 20006. (Tel. 202-347-5187).

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Designed by Jerry Ehman.

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