

# Through My Eyepiece

## Raising Arizona



by Geoff Gaherty, Toronto Centre  
(geoff@foxmead.ca)

As some of you may know, I had to go on kidney dialysis a few years ago. This requires that I spend quite a bit of my time hooked up to a machine that does the work my kidneys are capable of no longer. It also prevents me from travelling far from my dialysis centre at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. Recently I rebelled against cabin fever and escaped from the cold of Coldwater for a couple of weeks as a "transient" at DaVita Dialysis, West Tucson. I received much the same treatment as at home, and the rest of the time Louise and I enjoyed 20 °C weather and sunshine almost every day.

Arizona is, of course, a Mecca for astronomers, and I took advantage of my time there to renew my acquaintance with two of my oldest and best friends, David Levy and Klaus Brasch.

David is, of course, well known to many of you. When I first met him, he was a tall string-bean of a kid, keenly interested in astronomy. We reconnected at the Toronto GA in 1999 and have kept in contact ever since. Last time Louise and I were in Arizona, we visited David and Wendee at their home/office/observatory in Vail, just southeast of Tucson. This time, we met for dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Tucson owned by another amateur astronomer.

Klaus Brasch and I have been best friends for over 50 years. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, we spent many hours observing central-meridian transits on Jupiter, comparing notes by phone the next morning. Klaus was always a better sketch artist and astrophotographer than I was. I wrote a bit about Klaus in my column in the April 2010 *JRASC*. Originally Louise and I planned to drive up to Flagstaff, where Klaus and Maggie have retired, but the weather there resembled that in Coldwater too closely, so Klaus instead came down to Phoenix to have lunch with us on our way back to Canada.

Klaus and I were part of an active group of "young Turks" in the Montréal Centre back in those days. When I got back from Arizona, Klaus emailed me asking whether I had ever reconnected with another of our group, Ken Chalk. I did a bit of Internet research and discovered to my dismay that Ken had died from cancer in 2005.



Ken Chalk

Ken, pictured here at the 1963 solar eclipse near Plessisville, Québec, was the youngest of our group. For a number of years, he was Lunar Meteor Recorder for the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers. He later lectured

at the Montréal Planetarium and Concordia University. He was always fascinated by things mechanical, and eventually went into the business of repairing and restoring old clocks, phonographs, and other instruments.

The fourth member of our little group was George Wedge, pictured here on a sunny day in July 1960 using a Herschel Wedge (no relation) to observe the Sun with the Montréal Centre's magnificent 110-mm Zeiss achromatic refractor.



George Wedge

George had emigrated from the U.K. shortly before joining the Montréal Centre. He was particularly interested in the Moon, and was instrumental with Isabel Williamson in establishing the Montréal Centre's lunar-training program. George and I would meet at the observatory every Saturday morning to observe the Sun and listen to *Jazz at its Best* on CBC Radio. He eventually returned to England, became engaged, and seemed to be settling in to a good life. Then, in the spring of 1967, he went on a holiday in Spain, and his plane crashed with no survivors.

Aside from our mutual love of astronomy, George, Ken, Klaus, and I shared a love of classical music and British humour, notably the *Goon Show*. Klaus and I both celebrated our 70th birthdays recently, but it's sad to realize that only half of our "gang of four" survives today. ★

*Geoff Gaherty received the Toronto Centre's Ostrander-Ramsay Award for excellence in writing, specifically for his JRASC column, "Through My Eyepiece." Despite cold in the winter and mosquitoes in the summer, he still manages to pursue a variety of observations, particularly of Jupiter and variable stars. Besides this column, he contributes regularly to the Starry Night Times and writes a weekly article on the Space.com Web site.*