

# After Dark

Updates from the Great Basin Observatory



## First Light and the NPS Centennial: August 25, 2016

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the “Organic Act” creating the National Park Service. A century later, Great Basin National Park celebrated the anniversary with the “First Light” of the Great Basin Observatory, the first research-grade astronomical observatory located in a national park. The facility was built with funds raised by the Park’s non-profit partner, the Great Basin National Park Foundation.

The ceremony included addresses from several honored guests. Alvin Marques, Chairman of the Ely Shoshone Tribe, recalled his grandmother’s stories of the stars above, while Congressman Hardy and Governor Sandoval expressed their fondness for Great Basin National Park and Nevada’s starry night skies. Foundation representatives Becky Mills and Mike

Niggli shared with the audience how the GBO came to be and the opportunities it creates for students.

A highlight of the ceremony was the honoring of Elinor Tilford Charleston as Great Basin’s Centennial Ranger. Born in Ely, Nevada in 1916, Elinor reached her 100th birthday earlier this year. Elinor was given a ranger badge and flat hat by the Park, while Governor Sandoval took to his knee to present her with a Nevada silver dollar minted in Carson City.

The ceremony closed with the EskDale Girls’ Ensemble singing *Bright Morning Stars* and Park Superintendent Steve Mietz cutting the ribbon. Following the ceremony, guests toured the dome and control room before heading to Baker for birthday cake, solar scopes, and more centennial activities.



The GBO was dedicated with a ribbon cutting ceremony on August 25, 2016, the centennial of the National Park Service.



## What's Next?



With construction completed, the GBO is now in the “shakedown” phase. Project manager Paul Gardner has been remotely operating the GBO every night, running a series of tests. And so far, everything is working just as it should. The GBO even got an unscheduled test in early September due to a power outage: the battery backups performed as programmed, closing the dome until power was restored.

For the first year, Mike Niggli will be the GBO Director, leading the GBO team as it develops operating procedures and begins its initial research projects. Key committees are the Advisory Committee (chaired by Mike Niggli); Operations & Research (chaired by Dr. Tyler Nordgren) and Education & Outreach (chaired by Dr. Briget Eatap). The Foundation will continue fundraising for the GBO.

## First Light Photo



The official “First Light” photo taken by the Planewave CDK700 telescope donated by the Niggli Family was of a star located in the W constellation of Cassiopeia. The star, named *Ruchbah*, holds special significance for the National Park Service and the Great Basin Observatory. Ruchbah sits almost exactly 100 light years away from Earth. Light that left Ruchbah 100 years ago, in 1916—the birth year of the National Park Service—reached us the day we celebrate First Light. Moreover, Ruchbah is close enough to the North Star, Polaris, so that as the Earth turns, Ruchbah circles around Polaris but never sets. It is therefore always visible, all night, every night, all year long. Like the Rangers of the National Park Service, it is always there, always on duty.

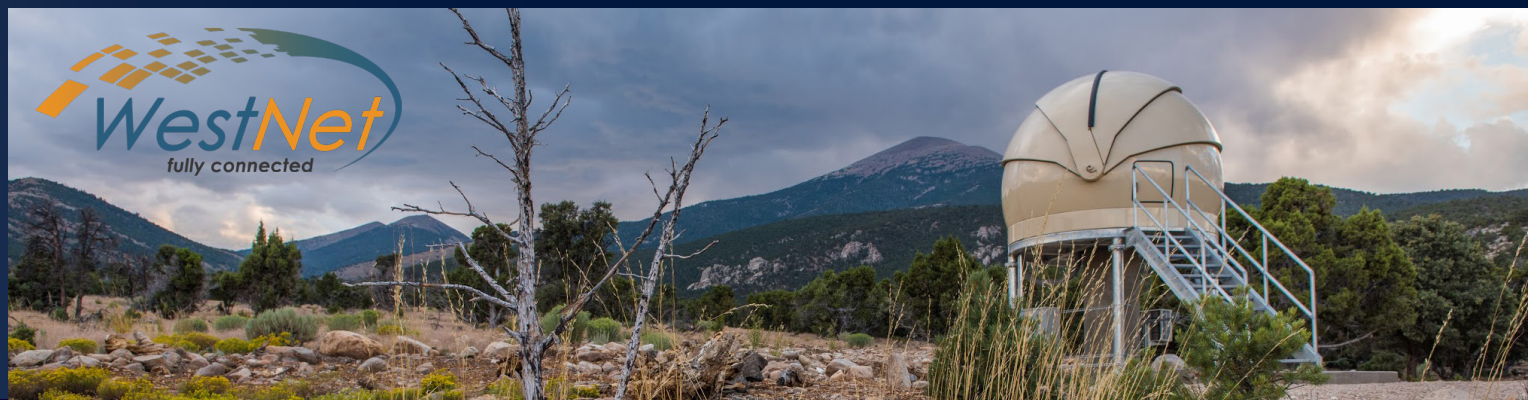
## Who We Are

The Great Basin Observatory is a collaborative effort of Great Basin National Park; the Great Basin National Park Foundation; and four partner universities: University of Nevada, Reno; Western Nevada College in Carson City; Southern Utah University in Cedar City; and Concordia University in Irvine, CA. These partners have joined together in order to build and operate the first research-grade telescope in a National Park for the benefit of students, scholars, and Park visitors. The GBO will enable researchers

to explore fundamental questions about our universe, and its location in Great Basin National Park underscores the need to preserve night skies as a park resource.

Learn more at [www.greatbasinobservatory.org](http://www.greatbasinobservatory.org).  
Send us a note at [greatbasinobservatory@gmail.com](mailto:greatbasinobservatory@gmail.com)  
Follow us at [www.facebook.com/GBObservatory](https://www.facebook.com/GBObservatory).

Great Basin Observatory  
P.O. Box 181; Baker, NV 89311



## GBO Donors

The Great Basin Observatory is now a reality because over 100 individuals, families, and foundations made generous donations. All told, over \$800,000 has been raised: enough to build the GBO, purchase the essential equipment, and fund the first three years of operations. We are also grateful for the donation of broadband internet service by WestNet.

### Sagan Society - \$100,000+

Michael and Linda Niggli and Family  
David Nathan Meyerson Foundation  
Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership  
Mt. Cuba Astronomical Foundation

### Galaxy - \$20,000

Cashman Family Foundation  
Willard L. Eccles Foundation  
Roxie and Azad Joseph Foundation  
Jack Van Sickle Foundation

### Supernova - \$5,000+

Bretzlaff Foundation	Nature Conservancy, Utah
Elinor Tilford Charleston	San Diego Gas & Electric
CoBank — John Donner	Sempre Energy Foundation
Flora Mason and Family	Bill & Holly Wilson
Mt. Wheeler Power	

### Constellation - \$1,000+

Margaret Bath	Rebecca Mills
Steve Brown	Mia and Robert Morrill
Briget Eastep	Margaret Rees
Garth and Jerri Frehner	Mary and Reed Simmons
John and Julie Gianoli	Carolyn North Strauss in honor of Michael Strauss

### Superstar - \$500+

Gary Donaldson	Marge Sill
Carol Ferguson	William C. Thornton
David Hubbel & Janet Keyes	Dave & Edith Tilford
Marc Johnson & Karen Penner	Peggy Weeden
Denys Koyle	

Please note, recent donations may not be reflected above.

Moving forward, we will continue to raise funds for additional equipment and to create the *Reach for the Stars* Education Outreach program to connect K-12 students to the GBO and the educational opportunities it makes possible. Visit [www.greatbasinobservatory.org](http://www.greatbasinobservatory.org) and help us to raise the next generation of scientists and stargazers!

### Galileo Group - \$50,000+

E.L. Cord Foundation  
NV Energy Foundation  
George S. & Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation  
Robert S. & Dorothy J. Keyser Foundation

### Quazar - \$10,000+

Community Foundation of Western Nevada  
Carmela Perkins Linsmeier in memory of Fred Perkins

### Star - \$100+

David Albrecht	Ely Shoshone Tribe
Donna Andress	Michael & Jan Gilbert
in memory of Bonnie Bryan	Bud & Lois Gilbert
Paul Bath	JoAnn Kelly
Richard & Bonnie Bryan	Patricia Ferraro Klos
Michael Bush	Tom Lent
Katharine Butler	Susan Lynn
Galeta Carleton	Donna Mickleson
& Joe Schubeck	Steve Moore
Dana Carroll	Mike Newton
Randy and Lori Drew	Tyler Nordgren
Duane Dudley	Kenneth Roberts
	Lawrence Rouse

### Stardust - \$25+

Reita Berger	David Moss
Heather Booth	Lois Sagel
Harry & Carol Brill	Susan Seymour
Linda Buhlig	Harvey Smith
Jonathan Burke	Terrance Steadman
Darl & Lorraine Clark	Mimi Sternberg
Ted & Patricia Dienstfrey	Susan D. Tenforde
Wilda Garber	Howard Watts III
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