

A Short Biography
(with Notes and Remembrances)
of ATS Member, Past-Vice-President,
Past-President, and
Antique Telescope Researcher
Peter Keith Abrahams
(March 19, 1955 - March 4, 2018)



Announcement from ATS President, John Briggs

[ATS_Forum] We have lost a leading member / 3/10/2018 5:45 PM

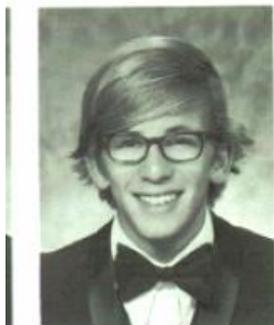
I am very sad to report that Peter Abrahams, a past president, leading member, and dear friend in the Antique Telescope Society, was stricken suddenly with a heart attack earlier this month from which he did not recover. We have just heard the news today. Those of us attending last year's annual meeting at Mount Wilson Observatory saw and heard Peter in particularly happy circumstances. His passing is a shock, and he will be greatly missed. He set a special example of generosity with his knowledge and scholarship. As more information becomes available, it will be posted here.

John W. Briggs,
President, ATS

Peter Abrahams, of Portland, Oregon, died on March 4, 2018 in Los Angeles, CA, of a cardiac arrest.

PETER ABRAHAMS

- Don't criticize what you can't understand, for the times are a changing.



High School Photo

Peter Keith Abrahams was born on March 19, 1955 in Los Angeles County, California. He attended Claremont High School, CA, where he graduated in 1972 as an honor roll student. In 1977, after graduating as an English major from Reed College, Peter made a life in Portland, OR, as an independent scholar. He lectured and published locally, nationally, and internationally on the history of optics, with a particular interest in telescopes, binoculars and astronomy. In 1987 Peter married Elizabeth Jamison, a marriage that would last for about 27 years.

Peter was a past-president of the Antique Telescope Society (2001-2003), vice president (2007-2009), and served on its board (1999-2001, 2007-2011); spent five years as president of the Rose City Astronomers (2000-2005); and was for five years the secretary of the Columbia-Willamette Chapter 112 of Sigma Xi (2000-2005). Additionally, he was an active member of Scientific Instrument Society, the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, and the Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society.

Peter joined the Antique Telescope Society in 1992 and attended the inaugural Convention at the US Naval Observatory in Washington, DC. He was very active in the ATS and during his presidency he helped greatly with the Convention in Dublin, Ireland arranging for the group to dine at Birr Castle with Lord Rosse and his wife. Peter also served as an officer and board member from 1999 to 2001 and from 2007 to 2011.

In 2009, Peter was the recipient of the Sir Isaac Newton Medal presented by the Antique Telescope Society for meritorious service and contributions to the promotion and well being of the Society and its membership. Peter delivered the Keynote Address at the 2014 ATS Convention, entitled: "Telescopes en Route to Automation: History and Prospects". For over the past decade, Peter has served as Papers Chairman for all of the Antique Telescope Society Conventions, and also had an amazing talent for keeping sessions on schedule. He was a mover and shaker in the history of binoculars, and binocular telescopes, and also liked taking stereo pictures of instruments using a stereo camera.

A man of far-ranging curiosities and interests, Peter had a lifelong love for jazz and its history, and was a skilled woodworker. He collected antique telescopes, and other optical devices; practiced calligraphy and origami, gardened, studied ballet and religion, and was an accomplished photographer and amateur astronomer.

Peter was known for wearing socks with sandals whatever the weather, enjoyed a good artisanal beer, and possessed the driest sense of humor imaginable. He is survived by his daughter Katherine (Katie), of Portland, OR; mother and step-father, Rosalie and Stanley Minsk, of Los Angeles, CA; brother Mike, of Tiburon, CA and sister Barbara of Boulder, CO; nieces Rachel, Sarah, and Julia; and nephews Max, Mike, and Sam. His companion since June 2017, where they connected at a Reed College reunion, was Antonette (Toni) DeVito of Los Angeles, CA, who was with him when he died. A family memorial was held March 7 in Los Angeles, with a public memorial planned for Portland.

Peter's Introduction and Interests in Astronomy

(From the Rose City Astronomers Newsletter – Meet the Members Section, 2002, January)

Peter Abrahams, on the subject of himself: Although my 'telescope time' is very important to me, I don't spend a sizeable number of nights per year under the stars. I am more of an armchair astronomer; reading and writing, in print and on the internet. I find the history of the telescope to be particularly interesting, and when I realized how little was written on the subject; I was motivated to make my own contribution. I have published half a dozen articles in journals, and have a web site with many more texts and some images as well (linked on the RCA web site). I have come to regard this history as the most important activity I am engaged in, but it is a bit peripheral to RCA involvement. I am motivated to help run RCA because I think stargazing and related activities are the most rewarding avocations a person can find. I was not exposed to amateur astronomy until I was in my mid thirties, and one of my few regrets is that I didn't learn about it as a child. Like many other 'gadget nuts', I end up more interested in the telescopes than in the celestial objects; but I don't confuse which is more meaningful; and no telescope compares with a big spiral galaxy, or comet Hyakutake, or many other sights.

I have a 13 year old daughter who especially likes the Swan nebula, and would be more involved if it weren't something her old man was so nuts about. My wife enjoys a view, but not enough to freeze all night or rough it for a long weekend. Astronomy outside the RCA includes travel; I go to Riverside every year and to meetings of a telescope history group, the Antique Telescope Society, which I help to run. I intend to do much more travel in another half decade; I'd like to go to all the major star parties, especially ATM oriented events like Stellafane, and to visit old observatories. All of this travel would be with the goal of writing the history of the people and instruments found at the destinations; though I also want to see the southern sky and a solar eclipse.

I was very involved in meteorites for a number of years, but recently I have not had the time to pursue that very interesting field. Likewise for a variety of early astronomical instruments -- sundials, astrolabes, orreries, celestial maps and globes -- they are fascinating but there are only so many hours in the day.

Some Thoughts by ATS Past-President Bart Fried

Dear ATS and Forum members,

Thank you John for letting us all know this incredible news. As with all organizations, perhaps 98% of the work gets done by a handful of dedicated members and then, typically, there are some of those who stand out further. Peter Abrahams was certainly that member for the ATS. Recognition of Peter's work on our behalf was formalized when he was presented with the 2009 ATS Isaac Newton Medal, awarded to an individual Antique Telescope Society member for meritorious service and contribution to the promotion and well being of the Society and its membership. Peter was also one of the ATS' longest standing members, joining in 1992. Had he learned of the ATS earlier, there can be no doubt that he would have been another charter member. He was also an initial Forum subscriber and was helpful on so many occasions offering behind the scenes advice regarding its management.

Formally, Peter held positions as President and Vice-President of the ATS, and was especially active with planning and running many of our conventions. He was always willing to pitch in and I hear his voice clearly, saying, "Let me know if there is anything I can do to help ..."

Peter found ... no, created for himself an interesting niche as a notable scholar in a field where he had no formal training. But his love for astronomy, optics, history and research drove him endlessly to study, publish, debate and, foremost, share his work. Usually at his own expense, he attended topical symposiums and conferences around the world and in many cases was very happy to present a paper or discuss his latest research. And his enthusiasm was certainly contagious!

It will take some time for me to process that Peter, at such a young age and in seemingly good health, is really gone now, and then I'll gladly share some more personal reflections and anecdotes. But even now, as the shock wears off, I find myself smiling for the privilege of having known him well, for so long.

Bart Fried

Thoughts and Photos by ATS Past-President Ken Launie

Like many of you I've had a rough couple of days coming to grips with the news of Peter Abraham's passing; the worst possible explanation for recent delayed email responses. He was a good friend, much more a scholar than a collector, far more interested in research than acquisition and accumulation. As has been said by many, he would freely share whatever he learned. And he learned a LOT. His web pages are full of content not flash, with compiled and annotated lists of well-known and obscure telescope makers, observatories and other significant information. While the expanding web might seem to make finding such things easier now, remember that he was at it for nearly thirty years, and that many things still remain out of digital reach. He dealt with original sources rather than hearsay, and he spent endless time visiting archives, libraries, observatories and collections with his scanner, and later with digital cameras. I fondly recall the couple days he spent perhaps ten years ago with my papers, books and ephemera. I'd head off to work in the morning, and he'd already be scanning. Only when I returned from work did he pause long enough for conversation and dinner. He also made his hard drive data available to folks who shared information with him, and I found I needed to invest in higher capacity (and faster) external drives to take full advantage. I am confident it will all be preserved as a legacy to his lifetime of work.

I learned a great deal from him about how to retain and organize information, how to be a better researcher. I'd take lots of photos, but he'd always have a small notepad with him to help him identify his photos later, essential when we'd spend long days seeing dozens of interesting things in European or American collections. He'd rename the photos in the evening in a way that he'd be able to file them and readily find them later. Despite 75 gigabytes or more of data he would quickly be able to respond to inquiries on obscure subjects. Having less patience I haven't been able to be as diligent in my labeling, so it took me much longer than he would have needed to caption the photos I gathered below.

He had wide-ranging interests beyond just telescopes and observatories. He was a central organizer and resource for the history of the binocular, and over the past 20 years or so he edited and distributed more than 620 "Binocular Lists", essentially newsletters that had many contributors discussing binocular science, history, and use that went out to a worldwide distribution list. I've preserved most of them as they're full of information. My wife Sara knew him long before she met me, as both were early members of the North American Sundial Society, a continuing interest. He was interested in stereo photography, and made a number of spectacular color stereo views of telescopes we'd have visited. He made those available too, and his high craftsmanship was apparent in how well they were mounted. Less known but not less interesting are his stereo views of sea shells, and his X-Ray stereo images of them.

He was active with the Scientific Instrument Society and the SIC, the Scientific Instrument Commission, both of which deal more broadly with the history of scientific instruments, and we'd often see him giving talks at SIC meetings overseas. Likewise with HAD, the Historical Astronomy Division of the AAS, where he gave the first talk I'd seen about the coming 400th anniversary of the invention of the telescope, several years in advance. His active presence at the RTMC has been mentioned.

If you click on the link below you'll find a number of digital images that include Peter doing the sort of things that he especially enjoyed. I put together a selection that covers a few of many events over the past 16 years or so. I have many earlier images on slides, but only the 2002 photos, when I was reluctantly crossing the digital divide, include a few slides poorly converted. Going through the many pictures has been a bit cathartic for me, I think.



2002 – Presenting Lipperhey Medal to Lord and Lady Rosse



2002 – Peter on the Observing Platform



2002 – Presentation to Armagh Mayor

In 2002, Peter was the ATS President, presiding over our memorable meeting in Ireland and Northern Ireland. You'll see him greeting the mayors at receptions in Dublin and Armagh City Halls, and presenting Lord Rosse with the ATS Lipperhey Medal for his role in the restoration of the giant Leviathan of Parsonstown. He also talks with Michael Tubridy, who did the research and engineering and led the construction work on the telescope and both can be seen atop the observing platform.



2008 – George Adams Telescope



2008 – Examining Audio Teaching Instrument



2014 – Estonian Transportation Museum

In 2008 Peter is seen at the SIC meeting in Portugal, visiting museums and observatories in Lisbon and Coimbra, and you can see an example of how he gathered information about a George Adams telescope we encountered. From there we all went to the Netherlands for a series of meetings commemorating the 400th

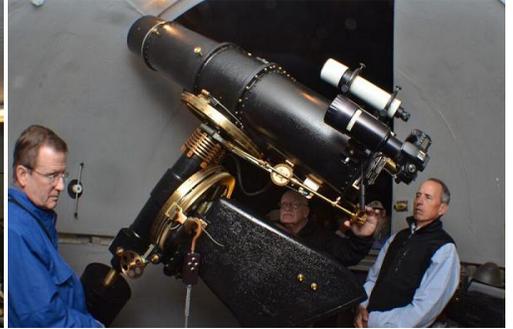
anniversary of the telescope, including the ATS meeting. Sara and I only had time for two, but Peter managed to stay for all three.



2014 – Peter and Daughter Katie on Estonia Boat Cruise



2016 – Peter perusing Ralph Nye's workshop



2016 – Peter with Nye's Brashear Astrograph

In 2014 the SIC met in Tartu, Estonia, home of the recently restored Dorpat refractor. Peter had his daughter Katie along and there was much more than the observatories to visit, including a couple of unusual museums. There are also a few pictures taken at the ATS Lowell Observatory meeting in 2016.

Peter will be missed by so many of us...

Ken Launie, West Newton, MA

Note: Len Launie submitted 40 images of Peter from 2002 through 2016 of which only nine are included here. The complete set will be included on the ATS website in the near future. - BDM

Emails of Condolence and Remembrance from ATS members and Friends

WOW!!! I am in total shock. I was not aware he had a heart attack. The last time I saw him he looked his normal healthy self. Peter was a gentle soul. He always made me feel welcome after I joined the ATS in 2006. He was a giant among those who loved telescopes, binoculars and history of those instruments. I can close my eyes and picture him at all the ATS meetings and events I have attended. Peter will be dearly missed by us all.

RIP Peter,

Dan Schechter, Long Beach, CA

Wow. I'm at a loss for words...

Matt Considine, Randolph, VT

John and List - That is absolutely dreadful – and scary. He could not have been more than 62, and he was an avid hiker, fitter than most of us. He was a stalwart at every convention as papers chair (and uniquely talented at keeping proceedings on schedule.) He also liked taking stereo pictures of instruments with a stereo camera - I remember his doing so of the instruments at the Hudson Obs (now called the Loomis Obs) during the 2001 ATS field trip - first time I'd seen such a camera. His europa website was/is a treasure trove of priceless information for leads and research. I hope it will/can be maintained as a Peter Abrahams memorial of some kind, as his optical interests ranged widely over type of instrumentation, era, and geography... he also was just so genuinely nice... it's beyond belief... reeling

Trudy E. Bell, Lakewood, OH



Peter Lecturing at the 2008 ATS Meeting



Checking the Burrell Memorial Telescope



Peter with ATS Members Perusing Scope 2007
(Above Images submitted by Trudy Bell)



Brashear Mount in Stereo – by Peter



Mogey Telescopes in Stereo – by Peter

Very sorry to hear the sad news. He contributed much during his life. May he rest in peace.

Julio Bird, Washington

I am also in shock. This is extremely sad and unfortunate news.

Alan Agrawal, Lafayette, CA

Hi,

I am also saddened by the news. I first met Peter when we had the first regional meeting on the ATS at the then-brand new Chabot Space and Science Center in Oakland. I have a special place in my history, because I gave the first talk that day about the 18-inch Dearborn lens and its polishing at the Clark's factory.

Peter was a valuable resource to me as I did research for Luna Cognita. The lunar observer's handbook is in the final stages of proofing before it is placed in the hands of Springer for publication.

Take care.

Bob Garfinkle, FRAS, Union City, CA

My goodness. Completely unexpected. Totally irreplaceable. Has the family mentioned anything about the disposition of his astronomy-related estate? His collections should find good and useful homes where possible. Not sure if the ATS can be of use here.

Ken Lum, San Carlos, CA

Dear John and the entire ATS,

This is a tremendous loss. I first met Peter at an American Astronomical Society (AAS) meeting, and later at ATS meetings, and Historical Astronomy Division (HAD) sessions. His generosity in sharing information was a model to follow.

Regards,

Patrick Seitzer, Michigan
Chair, HAD

This is truly a major loss to ATS, historical astronomy research, and all who knew him. Sincere condolences to his family and friends. He will be greatly missed.

Barry Malpas, Williams, AZ

Oh Gosh! We have lost one of our most informed members. I will miss his valuable posts and personal comments. Life just isn't fair.

Paul Valleli, Burlington, MA

Peter Abrahams, a good man.

Peter was speaker at every Telescope/Optics workshop in Bellingham, Washington both before and after the year 2000. They were always interesting subjects with thorough research and a professional presentation. Thank you Peter for all you have provided our community both in friendship and in our quest for knowledge.

Kreig McBride, Washington

Peter Abrahams tirelessly gathered scraps and fragments of telescope history from dusty corners and distant shores. These he assembled into a tiny library full of important records, writings, and remarkable insights, made available to all. His quest for knowledge in a small field, and eagerness to share, has broadened and enriched our world.

<http://www.europa.com/~telscope/binotele.htm>

Sam Houston, Wichita, KS

Dear John, dear colleagues,

These are indeed very, very sad news. I never met Peter, but we corresponded and I enjoyed reading his publications and online texts at <http://www.europa.com/~telscope/binotele.htm>, full of data which are hard to find elsewhere.

There is a very short biography of him in German in the section "About the authors" in the book "Der Meister und die Fernrohre" of 2007, a festschrift to Rolf Riekher on his 85th birthday (= Acta Historica Astronomiae Vol. 33). It mainly describes his areas of research, but there is also one biographical fact, namely that he got his Bachelor of Arts in literature from Reed College in 1977. Peter contributed the paper "When an Eye is armed

with a Telescope: The Dioptrics of William and Samuel Molyneux" to this book. It is not available online, but I may send a preprint version without the figures to everyone interested - please contact me off list.

I would be very pleased to read an obituary to learn more about this kind and erudite man.

Best regards,

Wolfgang Dick, Germany

I was saddened to learn of Peter Abraham's passing. Having worked all of the recent Conventions with Peter as Paper Chair, I have fond memories of his dedication to the ATS and the history of astronomy. One memory that stands out was Peter's almost single handed rescue of our meeting in Ireland in 2002. The banquet at Birr Castle is still in my mind. Peter you will be missed.

Walt Breyer, Dahlenega, GA

Sad news indeed! I used his website regularly to find out information. I never met him but I had a few emails with him. He was always prompt and informative with is replies. Condolences to his family.

Denis Buczynski

British Astronomical Association

It is sad news indeed, and it is clear that his work is much appreciated. Given the worries about his digital legacy and the fact that his website will be defunct by Nov. 2018, I have taken the liberty to place a full digital copy of his material on my own web site: <http://www.dehilster.info/docs/PeterAbrahams/>

Nicolàs de Hilster, Netherlands

John,

I too am saddened to hear your news. About 12 years ago, Peter and I spent nearly an entire day together in town and later at my home in Virginia during his visit to the Washington, DC area for a conference. He had a contagious passion for uncovering accurate historical data on various aspects on the history of telescope and was able to summon from memory minute details on many makers that he had researched or telescopes that he had studied.

I second another list member's observation that Peter was a gentle soul. Please keep me in the loop if the ATS chooses to move forward w/ a permanent tribute to his memory.

Randy Liebermann , Virginia

Hello everyone,

Peter was a very interesting man. RIP, Peter.

I met Peter for the first time at the 2010 Alt-Az Telescope Initiative Workshop in Portland Oregon. Peter gave a talk on the "Brief History of the Alt-Az Telescope". Below you will see him on the right in a purple short sleeved shirt as we set up for a group photo in front of David Davis's 1.5m tessellated prototype mirror (David is wearing the suspenders). The workshop was organized by Howard Banich and Russ Genet (center with baseball hat, Howard is to his right). David Rowe, CTO of Plane Wave Instruments is on the left in a black shirt. Dan Gray (standing to the immediate right of Howard), the creator of the SciTech controller, offered up his offices for the workshop. (I am standing behind Peter with the pen in my pocket).

http://www.altazinitiative.org/AA%20Past%20Meetings.htm#Alt-Az_

Kind regards,

Bruce Holenstein, Malvern, PA



Photo submitted by Bruce Holenstein

^ Peter ^ Bruce

Hello all,

This is indeed sad News - an unexpected great loss. I first met Peter on the 2004 Binocular History Society Meeting in Koblenz Germany and stayed in email contact since then or met him again on other BHS Meetings and on a private occasion in Washington State.

He was always willing to share Information, pictures or whatever needed and among his files.

He did a great Job in Setting up his Website at a time when there was only little info on the Internet and almost no books on binoculars. His email Newsletter about binoculars or for the collectors also was a good source of mutual Information and getting to know other optic enthusiasts.

In agreement with Peter, the Binocular History Society set up a forum - www.binopedia.info - which was meant as a follow-up of his binoculars Newsletter. It is a good idea to save his website information on other Domains.

The binocular collectors like me and the BHS will miss him for sure.

Uli Zeun
Dortmund, Germany

We have indeed will miss him. He was a great historian. 10 years ago Peter decided to scan all of his hard copies in binders on the 400 years of history. He was looking for a museum or someone who wanted to take

all the hard copies off his hands. I worked it out with Peter and now have 116 - 3" binders in my office. They have proved to be a great resource. Thanks Peter. RIP

Gerry Kocken, Amberg, WI

He came to visit my observatory, together with Jim Hysom about 20 years ago. Now they're both gone, and within a few months of each other. His website is an invaluable resource. It needs maintaining, and not just in memorium.

Chris Lord, Lancashire, England

Like everyone else, I was stunned and greatly saddened at the news of Peter's passing. It is a heavy blow to us all, and to the history of telescopes/binoculars. As others have said, he was a very generous man, smiling even when it was painful to do so. He offered me to stay with him in Portland on several occasions during the Alt-Az gatherings that Bruce Hohlenstein gave us a picture of. And we did stay together at his house twice -- both times very pleasant occasions. We took some hikes together, ate out, and he showed me some of his antique telescopes. Peter was a cat lover, and I believe that professionally he was a fine cabinetry/furniture maker. At any rate he worked in wood and knew a lot about wood, as well as telescopes/binoculars.

Peter also had a vast collection of scanned documents relating to the history of telescopes/binoculars, which he shared with interested parties. Like so many others, I will greatly miss him.

Ecce vir bonus, cuius recordatio nobis omnibus in aeternum benedictioni sit. Amen.

["Behold a good man. May the remembrance of him be a blessing to us all forever. Amen."]

Sincerely,

Roger Ceragioli, Tucson, AZ

What a terrible loss!

I agree with Trudy's assessment here, that permission to use his website as a font of knowledge as well as a memorial to Peter should be solicited from his family. His invaluable legacy of technical and historical information should be preserved. In my view, the most fitting place for that memorial to be archived permanently would be on the ATS website.

Peter was an active member of the AAS- Historical Astronomy Division. I hope someone from the ATS will volunteer to craft an appropriate obituary for the AAS-HAD archive.

Tom Williams, Houston, TX

Thanks Bart, and all, for these recollections of Peter. At the risk of being repetitive, I'd like to underline the following aspect of his sustained commitment to study of the history of binoculars and telescopes: It was prosecuted at significant personal cost in money, and 'immense' personal effort--yet he generously made its fruits freely available to all.

Since most of his years of work, in this field, was done before the advent of inexpensive digital imaging, Peter endured a staggering amount of physical drudgery, standing for hours at photocopiers while meticulously copying valuable old texts. During one of his visits here I vividly recall him carefully Xeroxing a fragile copy of Smith's Opticks, making certain that all the plates were fully reproduced yet scrupulously protecting the aged binding. It's likely an understatement to say he spent hundreds and hundreds of hours in this manner. Later, Peter was able to use a digital camera for this purpose, which proved less tedious but still required the attention to detail that was his hallmark.

I agree also that Peter gave invaluable, and sustained, support to the ATS and other organizations he led/participated in.

The suddenness with which this sad news has come upon us calls to mind an offhand remark Peter made to me about 10 years ago. I can't say for sure that it applies in this specific instance, and hope that it won't be considered inappropriate to mention it since it wasn't told me in confidence. But in reply to a question I asked about the obvious care Peter devoted to his dietary choices, he said that many of his older male relatives died in their 50s due to heart/circulatory disease. 63 years was all too short for all his contributions.....but may have beaten the odds.

Regards to all,

Jack Koester, Charlottesville, VA

I met Peter a number of years ago, and I recall a very nice visit he made to Ann Arbor so that he could examine our file of English Mechanic. When the ATS met here at the old Detroit Observatory a few years ago, Peter gave a talk just after I did, and in the talk he slyly demonstrated how often I plagiarized my own work. He was always pleasant and concerned: I had a sense that he wanted, at the moment, nothing more than to talk with me. He was a wonderful man and an extraordinary researcher, and we shall miss him terribly.

Rudi Lindner, Ann Arbor, MI

I was just in the process of visiting Peter at the end of this month. I was going to e-mail him tonight when this news came to me. Peter and I had many long talks when I visited Rose City Telescope Makers, he always wanted me to make sure we had time together. I was bringing some of my optics books for him to review and see which ones he wanted.

We lost another star in our now smaller group. He will be very much missed.

Bob Schalck, California

I was saddened to hear from John Briggs of Peter's unexpected death. He was the speaker at the February meeting of the Rose City Astronomers (Portland, OR) that unfortunately I was unable to attend because of stormy weather. I have attached three photos of Peter from the 2016 "PDX X" meeting on alt-azimuth telescopes, and took two of these snaps during Peter's presentation, with the third while Peter was examining Dan's alt-alt telescope mount. I stayed with Peter several times over the years at his house in Portland during the PDX meetings, met his cats, handled the beautiful wood pieces that he sculpted, and looked over his magnificent collection of telescopes. I have contacted the president and member secretary of the Rose City Astronomers, who had not heard this news, to learn more.



(Photo above submitted by Richard Berry)

Richard Berry, Oregon

The unexpected departure of Peter made me very sad. I remember many interesting conversations we had together. Rest in peace.

Paolo Brenni, Italy

The news of Peter's untimely death makes me very sad. I met Peter on the occasion of the ATS meeting in Hamburg, after he had already helped me a lot in several matters before. In Hamburg and later on our tour we also talked about baroque music and organ building. He knew a lot about both of them. Peter was a gentleman.

Take care, Peter, wherever you are now.

Walter Stephani, Germany

This is a tremendous loss to our community. I will remember Peter for his hospitality, help and encouragement of my own research pursuits as a formative member. I remember a brief talk at the 2008 Convention in Leiden when he mentioned a quote from Hugo Grotius as being self-descriptive, "By understanding many things, I have accomplished nothing..." I think we can all agree that wasn't descriptive of Peter -- he accomplished much in his all-too-short lifetime, and both his companionship and his contributions will be greatly missed by all of us.

-Walter Yund, New York



(Photos above submitted by Richard Berry)

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-Walter Yund IV, Ballston Spa, NY

Thanks Ken [Launie], for these wonderful memories of Peter Abrahams. Like all of you, I grieve very much about Peter's death. I still cannot believe he will not be at meetings anymore, asking questions, questions, questions, and also providing answers, answers, answers. He is really irreplaceable.

Huib Zuidervaart, Netherlands

From the Rose City Astronomers Website

<http://www.rosecityastronomers.net/newsletter-content/2018/3/13/beloved-rca-president-peter-abrahams-has-died>

Beloved Former RCA President Peter Abrahams Has Died

RCA has learned of the sudden passing of our friend and colleague, Peter Abrahams, on March 4. He was in Los Angeles visiting family and had a heart attack from which he did not recover. We are shocked and greatly saddened at this news. Peter has been a dedicated member of RCA for more than thirty years, making him one of the founding members of the club. He served as president of RCA for five years, and he was a popular

president. He began the tradition of the monthly Night Sky Report at each meeting, giving a short review of the latest in astronomical news. Peter's passing is all the more shocking because he was our speaker at last month's RCA meeting, where once again we were treated to his wit, intelligence, depth of understanding, his research and knowledge. He died just two weeks after giving that speech.

Peter's scholarship was deep, his knowledge was wide-ranging, and his dry wit made his talks fun and funny. Peter's passion was the history of scientific instruments. He was a collector and sometimes dealer in historical books, telescopes, microscopes and binoculars. He published for and spoke to a variety of global scientific organizations regarding historical scientific instruments: the Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society, Amateur Telescope Making Journal, the Antique Telescope Society, and several others. He spoke at conferences in Europe as well as in the U.S.

When I first joined the club, Peter announced on our old Listserve that he was the go-between agent for the sale of one of the world's very first lunar atlases, a lovely hand-drawn series of portraits of the moon's surface. He offered to let members of the club see it if we made a personal appointment. I signed up. He was set up in OMSI's Classroom One, we came in one at a time and we couldn't touch it. Peter wore white cotton gloves as he handled the atlas. It was such an impressive item that we "spoke in hushed tones."

And he was a friend. When I became president, he offered to advise me or assist me in any way he could, and he meant it. When I needed wise counsel, I asked Peter. I knew I could count on him to have a different way of seeing things and to bring soothing oil to sticky issues. I am personally at a loss with his passing. We were lucky to have him as a member and as a friend.

The family will inform us of a memorial service in the coming months. We will announce it to our members when we know the details. In the meantime, if you have any Peter stories, please add them to the comments section below.

Margaret McCrea
RCA President

This small tribute to Peter Abrahams was compiled by Barry D. Malpas, ATS Web Guy, by accessing Ancestry.com, scouring newspapers and other resources on the Internet, and with the help of submissions by Katie Abrahams, John Briggs, Walter Breyer, Ken Launie, Bart Fried, Trudy Bell and the many ATS members and friends of Peter who knew him and submitted condolences and remembrances of him on the ATS Forum. – Rest in Peace Peter. You are truly missed – BDM

Further information about Peter, along with additional images of him by ATS members and friends, will be found on the ATS website (<http://oldscope.org>) in the near future.