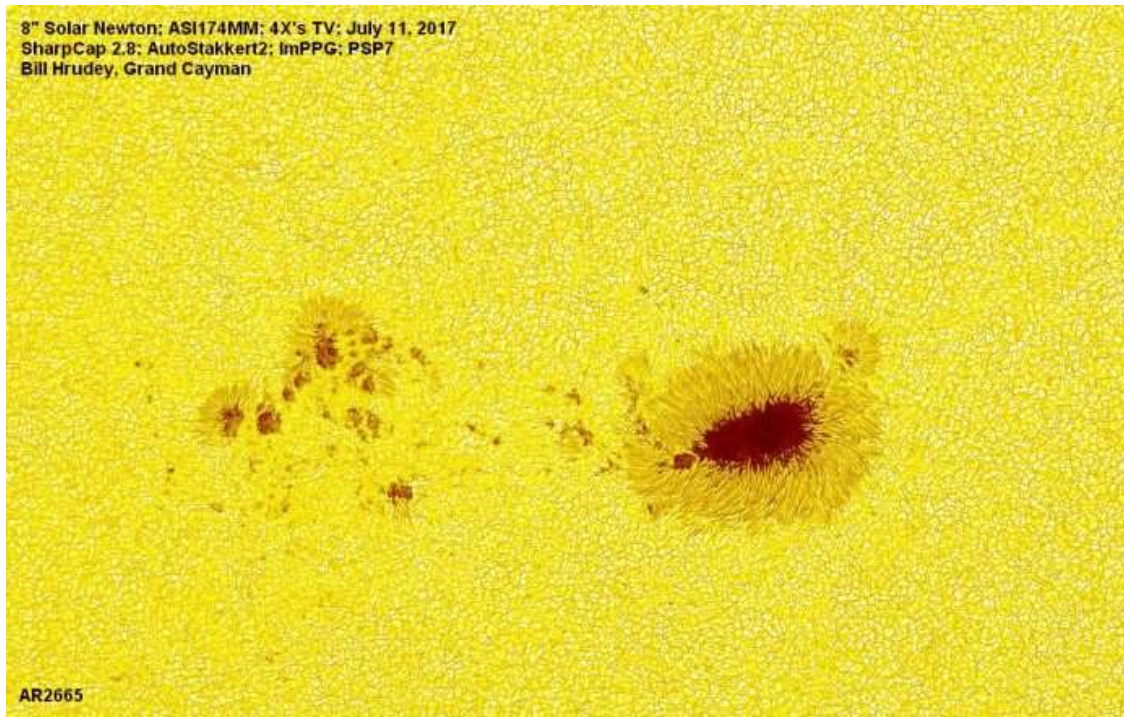


Telescopes focus on Cayman for astronomy conference

By Brent Fuller - May 17, 2018



A sunspot photographed by Dr. Bill Hrudehy using one of his solar telescopes at the UCCI Observatory. Among the topics under discussion at next week's conference will be a presentation by Trinidadian astronomer Brandon Rajkumar on 'A Fractal Analysis of Sunspots.'

The late Dr. Bill Hrudehy would have been proud to see Cayman's first astronomy conference being held in his name next week.

"This is the first time and it was organized by [Dr.] Hrudehy, so we're just continuing what he started," said Richard McLeod, president of the Cayman Islands Astronomical Society.

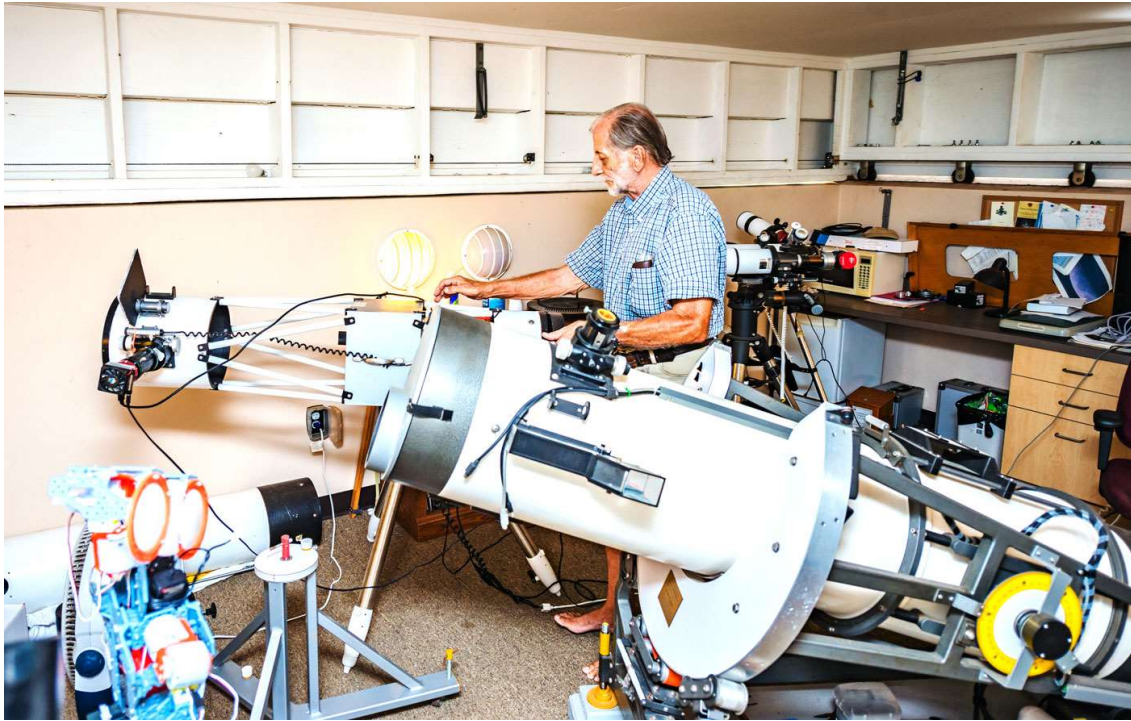
The three-day event set for Wednesday, May 23, to Friday, May 25 – dubbed the William Hrudehy Caribbean Astronomy Conference – will be held at the Chamber of Commerce meeting room in Governors Square and is expected to bring scientists from around the region to discuss topics such as the largest telescopes in the world, microbial life in space, and preparing for colonies on Mars.

"The idea is to bring Caribbean astronomers together and get everyone on the same page as to where we're going in astronomy," Mr. McLeod said. "Bill himself was a former astronomer ... and this conference will make people aware of what is going on in the Caribbean."

There will be a total of 17 speakers over the three days, including Villanova University astrophysics professor Edward Guinan, and Caribbean-based astronomers Nathan Henderson and David Morris, among others.

Mr. McLeod said astronomy is a great subject for small, less populated Caribbean islands like Cayman and that he hopes other jurisdictions around the region will pick up the conference in future years.

"The Caribbean is a pretty good spot for astronomy. Small islands get less cloud cover and we've got a bit more viewing hours than large, land-based spaces," he said. "We're closer to the equator as well, so we can see the south, as well as the north."



Dr. Bill Hrudehy, pictured here in August 2017, with two of his telescopes in the University College of the Cayman Islands observatory. Next week's Caribbean astronomy conference has been named after him. - Photo: Taneos Ramsay

Mr. McLeod acknowledges that a conference in Cayman each year might be difficult to pull off without Dr. Hrudehy, who passed away earlier this year at age 76. Dr. Hrudehy was well-known in the international astronomy community and had a wide network of contacts.

Mr. McLeod said the local astronomy group was trying to assist in setting up a foundation to keep running the Grand Cayman observatory. So far, no one has been found to take over the job. "Certainly, no one of Bill's stature," he said.

Although the Astronomical Society wants as many people as possible to attend the three-day conference, space is somewhat limited. The Chamber conference room fits a maximum of about 65 people.

All registrations for the conference have to be in by close of business on Monday. Those wishing to attend should email Mr. McLeod at vmcleod@candw.ky and they will be put on a list. Entry costs \$25 per day. Email to register and pay at desk by cash or check at desk.

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