

## Presidential Report

For logistical reasons I have this year merged my Report on Council with my Presidential Address

The ASSA Council's prime objective is to make sure that the ASSA functions as laid out by its Constitution. Over the years this has been up-dated to keep in step with the maturation of the ASSA as its scope of activities has broadened. But what hasn't changed is the fact that the President has to report to ASSA members at the AGM, the Council's activities for the year.

Council meetings were held on a regular basis and usually held a week after a Financial sub-Committee, FSC, meeting, both via Skype; efficiently handled by Chris Stewart and Lerika Cross. As was mentioned last year these FSC meetings added greatly to the efficient running of Council meetings; since the Council consists of 15 members or more – as occasionally a few invited section Directors attend as well.

It is almost natural that the FSC has evolved into a sort Executive, consisting as it does, of the President, two VPs, the Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. They are able to prepare ground for the Council meetings; much work is discussed and covered beforehand by phone and e-mail, an Agenda drawn up, so that when the FSC meets issues raised have had time to be rationalized, these are then discussed and decisions taken, that can then be taken forward to Council for further discussion and final ratification. This system has enhanced the Council's performance, and I look back on the year with great satisfaction in this regard.

Needless to say, one must never overlook the tremendous input Council gets from its Secretary, Lerika Cross. Hers is the most demanding portfolio, and the smooth running of Council is due in large part to her superb project management skills and experience. The FSC and Council Agendas and Minutes were clear, detailed and reflected accurately the issues discussed; and to be discussed. Added to this was the support I received from my VPs, Chris Stewart and Pierre de Villiers, aided by the financial wisdom of AJ Nel, certainly made my task a lot easier.

A financial issue that is still outstanding is that of the ASSET Trust. I would like to thank Peter Cramb, Tim Cooper and Ian Glass, the trustees, for doing their best to resolve this, and feel confident this will be resolved, probably this year.

A word of thanks must also go to Auke Slotegraaf for producing the SGAS which, besides being an excellent publication, it is also becoming a good source of income for the ASSA, enabling members to apply for funding for special projects.

The ASSA now produces three publications, MNASSA, SGAS and Nightfall, all being efficiently managed by the Editorial Board.

ASSA finances are in good shape and AJ will present his report later. The regular FSC meetings have certainly contributed to the smooth and efficient running of our financial affairs which are being well managed.

Claire Flanagan is looking after two Scholarships; the ASSA and the Cooke Scholarship. Thank you, Claire, for your invaluable work.

Membership Secretary, Wilmi Nel has managed this important portfolio very well. She has sustained a well-structured membership list that makes keeping track of the Country Members easier, many thanks for all your efforts. A problem that has been resolved is that MNASSA will no longer be printed and mailed to country members; it is available in printable A4 PDF and booklet format from the Website for free.

The ASSA Website is functioning very well and constantly updated by John Gill. Many people don't realize how important this is; an outdated site will inevitably contain errors that could be embarrassing

There were three highlights for me this year. The first was to see the spin-off from ASSA Symposium 2018 becoming reality, with several new projects by ASSA members; especially Percy Jacobs and his spectroscopy, and Dave Blane for his double star observations, both contributing to the AAVSO.

This reminds me, that the next ASSA Symposium, the 12<sup>th</sup>, is due in 2020. This coincides with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the SAAO, and the Royal Astronomical Society, and a theme relating to this could well generate some funding for the Symposium and for getting both local and overseas speakers to attend.

The second was the fact that some of our members were becoming actively involved in international collaborations, for example; Tim Cooper's participation in the Cameras for All-sky Meteor Surveillance (CAMS) network in conjunction with the SETI Institute, and Clyde Foster with the NASA Juno project. Thirdly,

many thanks to Chris Stewart, for his efforts in completing the Proxima Stellar highway at the Johannesburg Observatory.

On the downside, there is one problem that will need to be addressed by Council. Each Centre chair is a member of Council and these are expected to attend Council meetings, and if the chair is not available, a nominated representative is expected to attend. One or two centres have not done this for several meetings and I encourage them to do so, and that proper communication with ASSA Council is maintained; essential for the future of the ASSA, and its Centres, as I will discuss later. However I feel confident that this matter will improve this coming year.

Finally I can say that the ASSA is in a healthy state and can look forward to the future with confidence.

Case Rijdsijk  
ASSA President