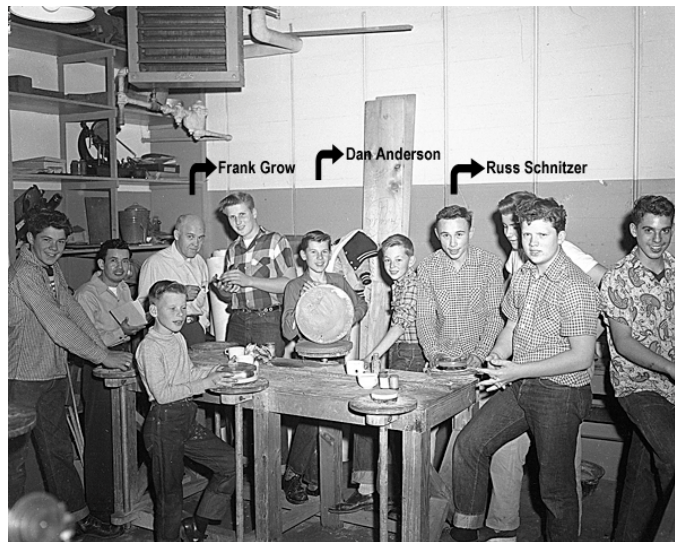


# The LAAS History Detective



by Lewis Chilton

In my first installment of the LAAS History Detective, I used a photo of the club's telescope-making class from 1954. Shortly after the article went online, I received an email from Russ Schnitzer, one of the young men in the photo below. Russ and his wife Cynthia are retired and living in in Arizona.



Here's what Russ said:

...I have kept up my membership mostly because I want to support the LAAS. The LAAS has had a major positive impact on my and Cynthia's life, and paying my annual dues is just a small way of saying thanks.

I joined the LAAS when I was in high school, probably 1953 or 1954. I let my membership lapse when I served on active duty in the Navy, 1957-1960. I believe I rejoined shortly after leaving the Navy, but I don't remember the date. Cynthia doesn't remember when she joined (1963?) or when she stopped being a member. BTW, Cynthia and I first met at an LAAS meeting in 1964 or 1965. Just another reason I'm glad to have been a member of the LAAS.

I assume you know that I'm the fourth person from the right in the picture. I can tell you the name of the person, sixth from the right. That is my friend Dan Anderson. Dan and I go way back, as you can tell from the picture. He and I were college students together at CSULA. He majored in physics and I in math with a minor in physics. We both ended up working as aerospace engineers for different companies. Dan lives in Wrightwood, Ca. He is still making telescopes and has maintained his interest in astronomy, although no longer a member of the LAAS. Dan was friends with Joe Meyers and Jack Eastman, if my memory serves. He ground and polished a 12" telescope mirror in the LAAS shops under the guidance of Clarke Harris, who was the shop instructor at the time. Time has dimmed my recollection of the names of the others in the picture, but their faces are so familiar.

## 1926

Have you noticed the '1926' in the LAAS logo? That's right, that's the year our club came into existence.



If any one person can be given credit for its founding, then perhaps the honor should go to a Long Beach Polytechnic High School student named Charlton F. Chute whose school activities included membership in the scientific and electric research societies and the chess club.



For some time, a number of local amateur telescope makers and readers of the *Scientific American* had wanted to organize a club in Los Angeles. Chute was among them. During his 1925 senior year, he wrote to Albert G. Ingalls at the *Scientific American* requesting that he announce in a forthcoming issue that an organizational meeting was going to be held in the Study Room above the Science Room of the new downtown Los Angeles Public Library. Meetings were to be held on the first Thursday of each month at 8 p.m. beginning November 4, 1926. The appeal was to those interested in building telescopes, and after their completion, the promotion of their useful work in astronomy.

At that first meeting, it was suggested and approved that the club be called the Telescope Makers and Amateur Astronomers Society, but during the next meeting in December it was changed to the Amateur Telescope Makers Society of Los Angeles. During the first year, Chute held the titles of Librarian and Corresponding Secretary.

After Chute's matriculation from Long Beach Poly High in 1925, he attended UCLA (then known as the University of California, Southern Branch), graduating in 1929 with a degree in political science. During his college years in Los Angeles, Chute was a popular entertainer of prestidigitation (magic). He earned a Ph.D. in public administration from the University of Chicago in 1935, then began his career with the federal government in Washington, D.C. He later taught at the University of North Carolina and NYU. Following his retirement in 1973, he was named Professor Emeritus of the NYU Graduate School of Public Administration. Chute was born in Peru, Indiana in 1906 and died in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1985.

**Next time: charter members and early activities**