In the 1950s, Americans worried about satellites even before Russia launched Sputnik on Oct. 4, 1957. Operation Moonwatch was begun in 1956; it was an amateur science program sponsored by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO). Its primary goal: Spot “artificial moons.” This photo shows a band of volunteer trackers in 1965 in South Africa, one of more than 100 such teams worldwide. Each observer stared through a special telescope at a small portion of the nighttime sky, watching for a satellite. The godfather of the program was Fred L. Whipple (right), SAO director. Moonwatch teams backed up an optical network of 12 Baker-Nunn tracking cameras (far right). Moonwatch continued until 1975.