

SOUTHERN SKIES

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Journal of the Southeastern Planetarium Association

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A Message From The President

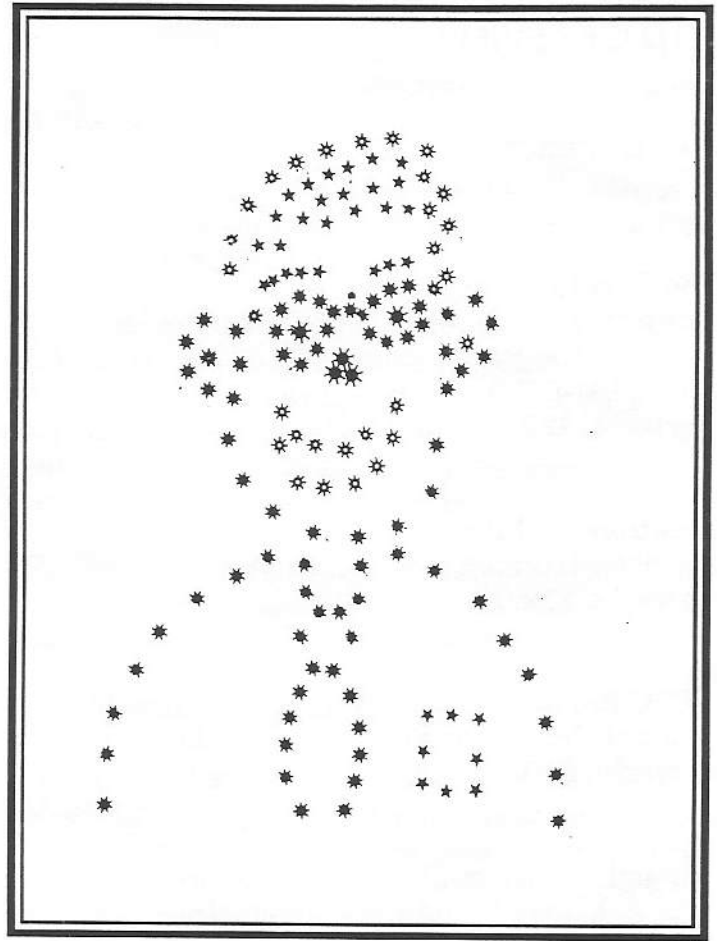
Bob Tate
Harper Planetarium
Atlanta, GA

I have on my desk a new book which I think might be of interest to all planetarians. It is called *Science Matters* by Hazen and Trefil. I just got it yesterday, so I haven't had time to dig into it yet, but I have a good idea what I will find there. The authors worked with Hirsch on his book, *Cultural Literacy* which came out a few years ago.

The idea behind cultural literacy is quite simple: there are some things which all of us must know and understand in order to be educated citizens. Without this base of knowledge, Americans cannot make good decisions on topics of vital importance to our country.

Science Matters discusses what every American should know about science. That's a pretty important idea for us to consider in our positions as educators and popularizers of science. The importance of this is pointed out to me quite often in my planetarium, when, during the question and answer portion of the lesson, a student asks a question like this: "How do the astronauts get out of the earth when they go to the moon?" Further discussion with the student invariably brings to light the student's mistaken concept that we live in, not on, the earth.

In order to find out how pervasive this misconception is, I have been asking around among students and teachers. As many as 40%-60% of fifth and sixth graders either don't know, or are unsure, that we live on the earth's surface, while as many as 30% of elementary teachers hold this misbelief! Where this idea originates is still a mystery, but we have actually found teachers who have instructed their students that we live below the surface of the earth. Naturally students cannot understand more complicated concepts,



such as the appearance of the sky, and the motions of the earth until they understand where we live. We have our work cut out for us!

As president of SEPA, I have appointed an Education Committee to identify those items which every student should learn about astronomy and space during the school curriculum in each SEPA state and make recommendations to the respective Departments of Education as to what changes need to be made to guarantee each student a fundamental education in astronomy.

As experts on astronomy education, this is the least we can do. The committee will be working overtime during the Atlanta SEPA Convention to produce the report. By the way, each state in SEPA is represented on the Education Committee. In the next issue of this journal, I hope you will be presented with the report of this committee.

FIELD OF REVIEW

Dave Hostetter
Lafayette Planetarium

"The Skeptical Inquirer"
Committee for the Scientific Investigation of
Claims of the Paranormal
ISSN 0194-6730
quarterly, \$25.00/year

"Creation/Evolution"
American Humanist Association
quarterly, \$12.00

"NCSC Reports"
National Center for Science Education
quarterly, \$10/year

Although I normally review books for this column, I have found these magazines to be so helpful that I thought it would be appropriate to mention them in this issue.

In my opinion, every planetarian ought to have a subscription to "The Skeptical Inquirer." Each issue brings an update on the latest in the pseudosciences that seem to pop up during so many of the question-and-answer sessions that follow programs. I believe we look a lot smarter to the general public if such questions generate an intelligent and specific answer than if we simply shrug the question off.

"Skeptical Inquirer" covers a wide variety of pseudosciences (and not a little general goofiness) with a sense of humor, a sense of

rationality, and a well sharpened (Occam's) razor. The articles don't simply claim that ideas such as astrology are off the wall, they help the reader understand exactly why the ideas do not meet scientific standards. Many of the topics (psi, fire walking, biorhythms, crystal power, etc.) are far off the subjects with which we generally deal in the planetarium, but others (astrology, the face on Mars, UFOs, etc.) are right on the nose. The current issue

(Spring, 1991), for instance, has articles about the Kecksburg UFO incident (featured recently on the TV show "Unsolved Mysteries," but likely related to a daylight bolide), the Browning earthquake prediction, dealing with UFOs as the reports come in, a fictional UFO reported as the real thing in Whitley Strieber's *Majestic*, newspaper astrology, and general techniques for rebutting the claims common to many pseudosciences. There were also special reports on CD folklore (involving products alleged to improve the quality of audion reproduction) and the psi-busting magic act of Penn and Teller, a pair of articles cogently arguing opposite viewpoints about SETI, and a new department concerning science education in general.

Granted, this was a better than average issue, but not by much. I find very few issues in which there is nothing I can use. In fact, I have back issues for about a decade, and have found many of them useful when dealing with public questions.

"Creation/Evolution" and "NCSE Reports" go together, but are slightly farther off the subject for planetarians. The main thrust of both is to rebut the arguments of creationists, help the reader understand the weaknesses of creation "theory" itself, and to apprise the reader of creationist activities and debates nationwide. Although most of the articles (written by both critics and sometimes proponents of creationism) deal with biological evolution and creationism, a number of them get into geology and astronomy also. Some of the articles are quite technical and require a strong background in biology, but a surprising number of complex creationist challenges have recently developed that need. Still, many articles deal with the more common arguments that planetarians are likely to encounter in their programming.

These two magazines--both relatively small--make a good pair to have on your side if you have ever found yourself stumped by a creationist; but if you can afford only one, I would recommend selecting "Creation/Evolution"; that magazine and "NCSE Reports" can be ordered separately or as a pair from the National Center for Science Education in Berkeley, California.

Incidentally, a number of good books on the subject of evolution and creationism are available through "NCSE Reports."

I recommend all three magazines highly.

A PLANETARIUM RESCUED

by Jayne Ray
Muscle Shoals Planetarium
Muscle Shoals, Alabama

Muscle Shoals High School, constructed in 1969, included an observatory/planetarium facility. Upon completion with the aid of a Title IV-C grant, a Nova III planetarium was installed containing a twenty foot dome and circular seating for thirty-two. Planetarium experiences for Muscle Shoals students were the goal of a forward-thinking board of education and local superintendent.

Science teachers had worked to provide planetarium experiences for students on a make-shift basis during the early seventies. Realistically, however, a program could not continue to be implemented for monetary reasons as well as a lack of technical expertise.

Therefore, the planetarium was temporarily cast aside and became a place where maintenance people cooled off while mowing the lawn.

In 1989, the Muscle Shoals School System found itself in a better financial position and the decision was made by the board of education to make the planetarium operational. When I first viewed the planetarium, it was used as a storage room with Coke cans and lawn mowers everywhere

The building itself underwent substantial renovation and the search for equipment began. With a great deal of assistance from Bob Tate of Domes and Spaces, Inc., and consultation with Joe Hopkins of Joe Hopkins Engineering, as well as several other SEPA members, the facility was updated considerably. A Nova 373 with an arc lamp was located and acquired to replace the damaged Nova III. A Brevard Community College computer system, eight carousel projectors and a Tascam 246 PortaStudio were also purchased.

A proposal for the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Award was submitted and I was selected as Alabama's recipient. With this additional money, many special effects projectors, constellation outlines, and some canned programs were purchased.

The Fall of 1989-90 found the planetarium operational on a full-time basis. During the school year 1990-91, with the assistance of Mike Ryan and Jon Frantz, the star machine was adapted so that the heading could be changed to different positions in the theater. The seating was realigned to become unidirectional which more effectively utilized the available seating.

This school year, four thousand people visited the planetarium. In addition to Muscle Shoals and local school children grades K-12, students from Mississippi and Tennessee have visited the planetarium. The local Astronomical Society meets here monthly and we welcome the opportunity to share our planetarium with others. Groups visiting the planetarium can select from twelve different programs in a wide variety of disciplines which include: English, social studies, science, literature, as well as astronomy.

Enough cannot be said about the wonderful way in which the SEPA group helped in this project. Although each one cannot be named, many people had a hand in the renovation. We are deeply appreciative of all the assistance that was given.

Code of Ethics

Adopted: June 19, 1981

Commitment to Patrons

The professional planetarian knows that his position exists because people have a need to be served. In serving the needs of people to understand our universe, the planetarian understands that he is seen as an expert and responds by maintaining the highest standards of integrity.

In fulfillment of the commitment to patrons, the planetarian:

promotes and extends public knowledge of, and appreciation for astronomy, science, the scientific process, and the planetarium profession;

shall not on the ground of race, color, creed, sex or national origin exclude any patron from participation in or deny him benefits under any program, nor grant him any discriminatory consideration or advantage;

shall not promote subjects and opinions not grounded upon scientific principles;

shall make every reasonable effort to protect patrons from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety;

shall respect the rights, beliefs, and sensitivities of the patrons;

shall not misrepresent an institution or organization with which he is affiliated, and shall take adequate precautions to distinguish between his personal and institutional or organizational views;

shall seek opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and work for the advancement of the safety, health, and well-being of the community.

Commitment to the Profession

No planetarian can perform his duties in a professional way without interacting with others in the profession. This interaction with other planetarians nurtures both the professional and the profession, providing new developments and techniques. The professional planetarian recognizes the value of working with the professional organizations and deals equitably with others in the profession.

In fulfillment of the commitment to the profession, the planetarian:

continues professional development throughout his career;

should strive to increase knowledge within the profession and share developments with colleagues;

shall accord just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession;

shall admit and accept his own errors when proven wrong and refrain from distorting or altering the facts in an attempt to justify his position;

avoids any act tending to promote his own interest at the expense of the dignity and integrity of the profession;

shall not misrepresent his personal qualifications;

shall not knowingly distort evaluations of colleagues;

shall withhold and safeguard information acquired about colleagues in the course of employment, unless disclosure serves professional purposes;

shall not refuse to participate in a professional inquiry when requested by an appropriate professional association;

shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment in order to influence professional decisions of colleagues;

shall give credit due to others for work, contributions, discoveries, or creations;

respects the rights of other artisans and professionals to collect just compensation for the fruits of their labors;

should actively support and participate in activities and programs of professional organizations;

should establish harmonious relations with other colleagues and members of other professions, and endeavor to inform members of related professions of services provided by the planetarium profession.

Employer-Employee Relations

While maintaining his position in order to serve patrons, the planetarian is rewarded with working conditions and compensation which allow him to devote his energies to his job. The ethics of dealing with one's employer is a two-way street and corporation and institutional members of the society as well as individual members are enjoined to abide by the Code of Ethics.

In fulfillment of the employer-employee agreement, the planetarian:

shall adhere to the terms of a contract or appointment, unless these terms have been legally terminated, falsely represented, or substantially altered by unilateral action of the employing agency;

shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position of responsibility on the basis of professional preparation and legal qualifications without discrimination on the ground of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin;

shall not delegate assigned tasks to unqualified personnel;

shall not knowingly withhold information regarding a position from an applicant or misrepresent an assignment or conditions of employment;

shall apply for a specific position only when it is known to be vacant and shall refrain from underbidding or commenting adversely about other candidates;

shall uphold the principle of appropriate and adequate compensation for those engaged in the profession;

shall use time granted for the purpose for which it is intended;

shall not accept outside employment to the detriment of his job;

shall not use equipment, supplies, laboratory, or office facilities of his employer to carry on outside private business activities without consent.

Constitution and By-Laws of the Southeastern Planetarium Association, Inc.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. To promote the spread of knowledge of astronomy and related disciplines in the school curriculum and among the general public at all levels of age and interest.
2. To encourage planetarium and educational institutions in planning the development of the planetarium as an effective educational and cultural medium.
3. To seek to improve professional standards among our members, and to provide assistance to those wishing to improve their knowledge and skills in this field.

STATEMENT OF METHODS

1. To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas at an annual meeting to be held at a convenient location.
2. To issue periodic newsletters dealing with current ideas and issues within our profession.
3. To provide information and encouragement to those interested in establishing new planetariums.

RATIFICATION

This document was ratified by a majority of members of the Southeastern Planetarium Association on the 9th day of June 1977 in Atlanta, Georgia.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE ONE

Name of Association, Situation of Offices, and Seal

Section 1. Name - Southeastern Planetarium Association Inc. (SEPA). Our name shall hereafter be called the "Association."

Section 2. The Association shall be a non-profit organization.

Section 3. Situation of Offices - The head office of the Association shall be the Gibbes Planetarium, 1519 Senate Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201 and any other Offices designated by the President.

Section 4. Seal or Insignia - The President, Vice-president, Secretary-Treasurer, or other such officer of the Association as the Council may appoint, shall have the authority to affix the Seal of the Association to any document requiring the same.

ARTICLE TWO

Members and Dues

Section 1. Conditions of Membership - The members of the Association shall consist of:

A. Full membership is extended to persons engaged in the administration, professional, educational or technical activities at a planetarium in Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and all U.S. Territories off the southeastern coast of the U.S.

B. Associate status can be granted to those persons or institutions interested in the aims of the Association but who do not fulfill the above requirements.

C. Patrons - Individuals not necessarily in the planetarium field whose interest and support is beneficial to the Association.

Section 2. Election of Members - Applications for all classes of membership shall be subject to approval by the Council. The Council shall review the membership roll annually and shall exclude institutions or individuals which no longer meet the requirements of membership.

Section 3. Dues - Annual dues shall be an amount determined by a majority vote of the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

Section 4. Privileges of Membership - All members shall be entitled to all benefits of the Association, but only those individuals described in paragraph A of Section 1 shall be entitled to vote and to hold office.

Section 5. Use of Funds - All dues and monies received by the Association shall be used to accomplish the statement of purpose and methods as set forth herein.

Section 6. Dissolution - In the event of dissolution, the residual assets of the Association shall be turned over to an organization which is exempt from federal income tax under Section 501 of the Federal Internal Revenue Code as amended from time to time, which organization appears most likely to carry out the purposes of this Association.

ARTICLE THREE

The Executive Council of the Association

Section 1.

A. Councillors - The Council shall consist of three or more persons. The President, the Vice-president, the Secretary-Treasurer, the Past President, (hereinafter referred to as the "Officers") and any other members designated by the President.

B. All members of the Council shall be elected for a two-year term ending on the 31st of December of even numbered years. The Vice-president, however, shall serve as President for the following two years. No member, except the Secretary-Treasurer, is eligible for reelection to the same position for a consecutive term.

C. The affairs of the Association shall be managed by the Council, who shall exercise all such powers of the Association not delegated to the general meeting.

D. The Council shall have power to authorize expenditures on behalf of the Association from time to time.

E. Transfer of a member of the Council out of the geographical areas designated in Article Two, Section 1, paragraph A of Section 1 shall terminate that member's Council position. Vacancies on the Council may be appointed on the Council for the remainder

F. In preparing a slate of officers, the Nominating Committee shall insure that at least two planetariums are represented.

G. Meetings and Notices

(1) Immediately after the Annual General Meeting of Members in each year there shall be held a meeting of the Executive Council provided they shall constitute a quorum, without further notice, for the purpose of transacting such business as may come before the Council.

(2) Meetings of the Council shall be called by the President at his discretion, or by written request of two Council members. Meetings may be held by telephone or through the mail, if all Council Members are polled on each issue.

(3) A quorum of Council shall be three members, one of whom must be the President or Vice-president.

(4) Questions arising at any meeting of the Council shall be decided by a majority vote of those present.

H. Remuneration of Council Members - Members of the Council as such, shall not receive salary for their services.

Section 2. President - The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association and of the Council and shall have the second or casting vote in the event of a tie vote upon any resolution. The President shall represent SEPA on the Council of the International

Planetarium Society (IPS), if possible. The President will appoint a representative to the IPS Council if the President is not able to serve. He shall, jointly with the Secretary-Treasurer, sign all written contracts made in the name of the Association.

Section 3. Vice-president - The Vice-president shall in the absence or demise of the President, perform the duties of the President, and when so acting he shall have all the powers and be subject to all responsibility hereby given to or imposed upon the President.

Section 4. Secretary-Treasurer

A. The Secretary-Treasurer shall attend to and record the minutes of all proceedings of the Association, shall give and service all notices of the Association and Council and shall be the custodian of all records.

B. The Secretary-Treasurer shall be responsible for the proper keeping of the books of account and such other records as may be prescribed by law and as may be required by Council; shall deposit any funds of the Association in a bank or banks approved by the Council, and shall not invest them without due authorization by the Council. The Secretary-Treasurer shall, in advance of the General Meeting, provide an audited statement of accounts for the perusal and approval of the Members of the Association.

C. The Secretary-Treasurer shall be the Custodian of the Seal of the Association.

ARTICLE FOUR

Annual Meeting

Section 1. The Annual Meeting of the Members of the Association shall be held at such place and at such time as may be fixed from time to time by resolution of the Council; to receive the Annual report of the Council and report of the Secretary-Treasurer; to sanction, if approved, decisions and actions of the Council since the preceding Annual General Meeting; to elect members of the Council; to consider, and, if deemed fit, to sanction and confirm the repeal, amendment or re-enactment of any By-Laws; and to transact such other business as

may properly come before the Meeting.

Section 2. Notice of Meeting - At least thirty days notice in writing of any General Meeting, specifying the place, the date and hour of meeting, and, in case of special business, the general nature of such business, shall be given to the Members, but the non-receipt of such notice by any Member shall not invalidate the proceedings at any General Meeting.

Section 3. Quorum and Voting

A. Quorum - The presence in person of one-fourth of the voting Members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum at General Meetings.

B. Voting

(1) Each Member is entitled to one vote, subject to Section 4 of Article Two, to be cast either in person or by written proxy.

(2) The election of Members of the Council may be by acclamation unless there is more than one candidate for a particular office. In that event, a secret ballot shall be used for each such office.

(3) A simple majority of the votes cast by Members on good standing at a General Meeting shall constitute a decision of the membership of the Association except where the vote or consent of a greater proportion of the members is required by the By-Laws.

ARTICLE FIVE

Fiscal Year, Accounts and Audit

Section 1. Fiscal Year - The Fiscal Year of the Association shall end at the close of the annual conference.

Section 2. Accounts - The Council shall cause to be kept proper books of account with respect to:

A. All sums of money received, donated, or expended by the Association and the particulars in respect of which the receipts and expenditures take place.

B. All sales and purchases by the Association.

C. The assets and liabilities of the Association.

D. All other transactions affecting the financial position of the Association.

Section 3. Audit - At the end of each fiscal year the accounts of the Association shall be examined. If deemed necessary by the Council, the correctness of such accounts and of the balance sheet shall be certified by an auditor approved by the Council. Such accounts shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Association for scrutiny and approval.

Section 4. All the necessary tax returns; corporate forms and any other necessary returns or information shall be filed in their proper and respective places.

ARTICLE SIX

Contracts, Checks, Drafts and Bank Accounts

Section 1. Contracts - Any and all deeds, documents, investments and writings signed for and on behalf of and in the name of the Association by the President or Vice-president and Secretary-Treasurer with the authorization of the Council, shall be binding upon the Association. Save as aforesaid or as otherwise stipulated in the By-Laws, no Officer, agent, or Member shall have any power or authority to bind the Association by any contract or engagement or to pledge its credit.

Section 2. Checks and Drafts - All checks, bills of exchange or other orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidences of indebtedness issued, accepted or endorsed in the name of the Association shall be signed by the Treasurer. Only the Treasurer or Council Member approved by the President may arrange, settle, and balance all books and accounts between the Association and its bankers and may receive all paid checks and vouchers and sign all the bank's forms of settlement of balances and release or verification slips.

Section 3. Deposits - All funds of the Association shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the Association in such banks or trust companies as the Council may approve.

ARTICLE SEVEN

Section 1. Authority - The Council may appoint by resolution such committees as may be required from time to time.

Section 2. Terms - All Committee memberships shall terminate at the Annual Meeting. It shall be the duty of Council to reconstitute such committees as required.

ARTICLE EIGHT

Amendment. These By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any regular meeting, if the proposed amendment has been sent to every member at least thirty days prior to the meeting at which it is to be voted upon.