Southern Skies

Volume 25, Number 4 Journal of the Southeastern Planetarium Association Fall 2005

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Discovery, Aug. 21, 2005 Credit: Suresh Atapattu

Southern Skies is the quarterly journal of the Southeastern Planetarium Association published for the purpose of communicating association news, reports, reviews, and resources to its members.

President's Message

Patsy Wilson
Margaret C. Woodson Planetarium
Salisbury, NC

Fall is such a great time of year in the south. It seems that the dry weather will affect our display of colors this year, but there's no denying that the days have modulated to a more pleasing temperature and the nights are beginning to feel a bit chilly (unless you live in South Florida, that is!)

There are so many cool things happening in the world of astronomy. We have several weeks to gaze at the beauty of Venus and Jupiter in the evening sky and now Mars is in position to take the stage for a great month of viewing during October. I know many of you have planned special activities around this opportunity to see Mars. I'm encouraged by the number of people in the community who see me out and about and remark about the great planet observing they've done. It just goes to show that there is a lot of interest and curiosity about the heavens.

Many of you have expressed concern for our friends in the field who live and work in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. I do not have a comprehensive list, but from the reports that I've received, it seems that everyone fared pretty well. As they begin the process of cleaning and rebuilding, we, the members of SEPA, should look for any way that we can support them. It might just involve an email or phone call of support or maybe sharing equipment or programming materials, but we need to let our friends know that we care and are there for them. If you know of specific needs, please don't hesitate to contact someone on council.

I'm sure you all join me in saying, "Wow!!" in reference to our summer issue of ***Southern Skies***. James Sullivan has done an excellent job of making this a professional publication. It is obvious that he has great skill in publishing and graphics. His efforts are greatly appreciated and commended. Please let him know how you feel by emailing. Join the other members of our organization who already contribute to the journal on a regular basis and give James something to print.

Many times, we only think of our SEPA Scholarship during conference when the silent auction is held. I want to encourage you to remember this giving opportunity throughout the year. Perhaps you want to honor someone or memorialize a past member, maybe you are one of those people who is hard to buy for at birthdays and holidays, let me suggest a donation to the Scholarship fund. It's a great way to help the organization and you won't have to figure out what to do with that awful tie or those ridiculous socks that you'll never use.

When I wrote my summer column, I was about to embark on a five week westward journey in a motorhome with my family. Obviously, I lived to talk about it, but I'll admit that five weeks camping with five adults can get hairy! It was an amazing time of discovery for me as each day I saw how diverse and beautiful our country is. We spent a great deal of time observing and experiencing the natural beauty of each area, but I did manage to drag them to a few "spacey" things. We visited the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff and were immersed in all the astronomical history that has taken place there. We listened to a very well trained college student do a great sky talk (inside and without a plan-

SEPA President Patsy Wilson with the Apollo Boiler Plate at Meteor Crater

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IPS Report

John Hare
ASH Enterprises
Bradenton, FL

The IPS Council met in Beijing, China on 24 and 25 September. Delegates from 11 of the 22 worldwide regions were in attendance along with IPS officers, committee representatives, and prospective-host representatives. I was in attendance representing SEPA. The host institution was the Beijing Planetarium. Planetarium Director Dr. Jin Ziu welcomed the Council and treated us to several spectacular shows and demonstrations in four different theaters as well as a visit to the ancient Beijing observatory. A post-meeting trip included visits to a solar observatory, the Great Wall, and China's largest optical observatory.

Council business, strategic planning
The controversial Strategic Planning document presented to IPS 2004 Council and attendees, as formulated by consultants Ian McClennan and Robert Balentyne, was discussed and several of its proposals were voted down. The Council members, with a strong mandate from many general members, felt that the governing structure and the present meeting structure needed to be maintained without changes. Major concerns focused on increased costs and dues, and overall member distribution had the changes been implemented. Council did empower the Strategic Planning Committee to conduct a study on the possibility of how some limited paid services may benefit the Society and a report will be presented to Council at the 2006 meeting in Melbourne.

Council business, IPS 2008 Conference
There were three invitations from which to choose the 2008 conference site. Final presentations were shown to Council from bidders that included Morelia, Mexico, Chicago, IL and Oakland, CA. On the second-round of voting Council selected the Adler Planetarium in Chicago as the 2008 site (a winning site must have a majority of the votes cast). Conference dates are 15-20 June.

Interesting facts
IPS, as of about September 15, had 682 members. 395 are US members and the remaining 287 are spread throughout the International community. This represents the greatest proportion of International members.

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Paul Campbell Fellowship Award Nomination Form

Nominees must have been a member of SEPA for at least ten years, and they must display qualities in each of five areas, as represented by the five-pointed star shaped award: integrity, friendship, service, knowledge, and vision. Please submit this form to any SEPA Council member.

Nominee's Name: _____

Qualifications: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Editor's Message

James Sullivan
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

Thanks to all of you who commented that you liked the last journal. I appreciate the encouragement.

I have shared with several of you that I like the journal. It is the one piece of mail I look forward to receiving - I open it, sit down to read it and do not want to be bothered for a while. I look for *News from SEPA States* to see who is running what, who is doing what, and look for ideas to steal/borrow. Then I look at reviews, books, videos, and equipment. Not everyone goes to conferences, so this is how some people get news. I have told vendors that I have to know about a product to want it.

As editor, I want to look for ways to provide more to more people. The journal does not belong to the editors or the council, but to the whole organization. If more people look forward to receiving the journal, than it will be successful.

We can receive electronic files in most any format. Also, graphics can be received electronically or in hardcopy, including slides or photos, and will be converted to digital with sufficient resolution.

Submission deadlines: January 1 (Winter), April 1 (Spring), July 1 (Summer), October 1 (Fall).

Thanks to BCC and its wonderful printing department for assistance.

SEPA Membership Form

Please send your check for $25 (or $15 if outside the SEPA geographical region) to SEPA, c/o Craigmont Planetarium, 3333 Covington Pike, Memphis, TN 38128-3902

Name _____
Organization _____
Planetarium _____
Address _____
City _____
State / Zip Code _____
Voice Phone _____
Fax Phone _____
Email Address _____
Staff Position _____
IPS Member? Yes _____ No _____
Contribution to Scholarship Award Account: $_____

Small Talk

Elizabeth Wasiluk
Hedgesville High School Planetarium
Hedgesville, WV

An Update on items in previous column:
Well, I just wanted to let you know that many of the things I had mentioned in my last column, I have implemented. The laser pointers have been received. One of the ones I had purchased from "Wholesale for Everyone" did not work and I have since exchanged it and it has been replaced with a working model. Therefore, if anyone wishes to use this company to dig up laser pointers to use in the planetarium, I will recommend them. I used a long (about two feet) white dowel and attached the laser pointer with two stainless steel "worm gear clamps". The range of the clamps was 11/16" to 1 ¼". Gold Seal, Murray Corporation, Hunt Valley manufactured the clamps, MD and I bought mine at Lowes. If you missed my last column, the reason I did this was because I set my laser pointer down on the console board last year and someone in Mr. Ferber's 4th period class who was visiting the planetarium that day walked off with it and I never got it back. I hope that this will deter folks from walking off with the laser pointer. Already I found out some unexpected benefits. You can find out who has it, much easier in the dark. You can twirl it around in the dark and play with it, like it is a baton. The dowel steadies it a bit and there is less shaky pointing by the visitors who use it in the planetarium. It helps the planetarium person using it do likewise. In addition, I found that using the clamps would make it easier to change batteries and will help it stay on longer than the duct tape used by the planetarium at Young Harris when we went to go visit it at SEPA and I first got the idea. At $3.00 a pointer, you can have a bunch to use as spares. In addition, the cool heads that project a picture, rather than a point can add some seasonal fun. I am looking forward to using the skeleton head for my Halloween program next month as my intro to astronomy students play my constellation ID game called "Pass Around The Pointer". Finally, if you want a lovely arrow projected on your dome, contact Eric Millenbrink or John Hare at Ash Enterprises and see if they have some left. These were hot sellers at their booth in the vendor's area during the SEPA conference. Dave Manness liked them so much he bought two.

Another idea we hashed about at last June's SEPA's conference was the problem of kids with those annoying shoes that spark light with active feet in your dome. At one time, it was just a dim red light. It seems now they come in a variety of red, white and blue light, appearing sometimes like a strobe light on the dome. I was telling April Whitt that you should have someone make you a cube shaped box, like a toy chest and have kids remove the offending shoes and place them in the "Magic Box". Before long it will become such a status symbol among your youngest visitors that even those without flashing shoes will want to put their shoes in the "Magic Box". Try it and let me know if this idea works for you. It is so simple; even someone in a portable could use it.

Space and Science Camp
I just finished doing my yearly stint with Eagle Intermediate School at their annual Discovery Camp. This is probably the reason this column came down to the wire with the deadline date.

I am sure many of you have these camp-like events at your facility as well. My experience started out with rain. No problem. I load down the car with dozens of activities to do and just choose one. Since it finally cleared up but left some clouds around, I unfurled the scale model rockets I had gotten from Dave Hostetter and talked about the history of space travel. When I went to hear Andrew Chaiken (author of *A Man on The Moon*, inspiration for the HBO documentary that Tom Hanks did), he kept

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Explore the Moon:
Group Discovery Activities

Patsy Wilson
Margaret C. Woodson Plaetarium
Salisbury, NC

During the SEPA conference in June, I presented a paper on how to use cooperative learning groups with 3rd grade students in the planetarium. This article is a summary of those activities.

Students work in groups to discover 2 Moon concepts: **Size compared to Earth, Distance from Earth.** It is up to the instructor to determine how many groups will be needed and how many students will work in a group. I usually keep group size to six or less.

Size:
I ask students two preliminary questions: 1) What shape is the Moon? and 2) Which is bigger: the Moon or the Earth? Once those facts have been established, I hold up a marble that will be used to represent the Moon. The students are then presented the challenge of deciding what size sphere the Earth should be. In order to facilitate that process, I show them four spheres of varying size. It doesn't matter what sizes are used, as long as at least one is the size of a tennis ball that is the correct model for the Earth. I just made a trip to the local Wal-Mart and found 4 colorful balls sized between ping-pong and softball size.

After viewing the choices, students will huddle and predict which ball would represent the Earth. Once groups have announced their predictions, I demonstrate some additional facts. Use a piece of yarn and wrap it around the marble's circumference. Hold up this length to show students. Explain that the Moon is 4 times smaller than Earth, so the correct ball should be 4 times bigger around than the marble. Count out four lengths and then show that amount of yarn to the students. Once they have seen the measurement, allow them to huddle again and decide whether they need to change their prediction.

Earth Choices

This allows them the freedom to make a guess without fear of failure and also to improve their answer based on new facts that were learned.

Extension:
In order for them to transfer their new-found knowledge, I give each group a golf ball and a balloon. They are challenged to create a balloon Earth that would be the proper size for a golf ball Moon. Once they've made a guess, then I ask if there is any way to check their answer. Most of the time, they will ask for a measuring string. Upon receipt of the string, they can measure the golf ball's circumference, count four times that amount and adjust the balloon size to show the proper Moon/Earth relationship.

Distance:
This activity can be difficult if students have not had experience measuring long distances. It requires a great deal of cooperation as students hold and measure. In addition, the math that needs to be done can be a bit overwhelming for some 3rd graders. This activity works best if there is an adult available for consultation and assistance in each group. Use a golf ball as the Moon and an Earth model that is 4 times bigger. If you can't find a ball the

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Because of several recent, successfully run conferences, as well as contributions from outside agencies, dues, advertising revenues, and other contributions, it is estimated that the cost of member services exceeds dues! That reflects good management by the officers and hard work by the committees!

IPS 2006 Conference <www.ips2006.com>
The next IPS Conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia, July 24-27, 2006. The conference theme is "Under the Southern Skies".

The Keynote speaker is David Malin.

Conference registration costs are expected to be about $430 US, based on a minimum of 250 participants. The conference will include a trip to a "dark-sky" observing site for some spectacular views of the southern skies.

A post-conference trip of approximately 6-days duration will include other planetariums and famous Australian observatories.

Comprehensive conference and registration information will be available soon.

Resource Guide and Directory
An updated version of the IPS Directory and Resource Guide will be distributed to members this fall on CD media. Members wishing a hard copy may purchase copies for about $40.00. Editor Dale Smith is particularly interested to learn of any portable planetariums that may not currently be listed in the Directory. Please contact Dale or myself if you have information to offer on portables or on any other additions and corrections to the publication.

Website
The IPS website contains a wealth of information on IPS plus there are links to various other websites of interest. One in particular is the Planetarian's Calendar <www.ips-planetarium.org/events/ips-calendar.html>. The site is updated often and has information on planetarium and related conferences worldwide.

Are you an IPS member?
About 50% of SEPA members are IPS members. This is better than many other regional organizations but not as good as some. Your IPS membership is good for 1 year from the quarter you join so why wait? As always, don't hesitate to contact me for membership information or anything else IPS-related.

The IPS Council at the Ancient Beijing Observatory

NASA NEWS

John Hare
ASH Enterprises
Bradenton, FL

Request for Support

Subject Line: URGENT: NASA's Strategic Review of Education Programs

Dear Colleague,

On April 14, 2005, Dr. Michael Griffin became NASA's eleventh Administrator. Under his direction, a comprehensive strategic review of all facets of NASA is underway Agency-wide. It is meant to define how NASA will implement U.S. space exploration policy. The review also includes an assessment of the need for NASA education and public outreach programs, and how such programs should be organized and implemented within NASA.

Elements of the education and public outreach review include examining the proper mix of programs across higher education (undergrad and graduate), grade K-12, and informal education (museum-, science center-, public venue-based); assessing whether there are too many programs; and determining the best way to meet the needs of underserved and under-represented students. One of many possible conclusions could be a new focus on higher education primarily to serve NASA's own workforce needs, and a consequent dramatic decrease in grade K-12 and informal programs.

If you are an educator or a member of the public, and NASA-supported education programs have enhanced the educational experience in your classroom; at a museum, science center, planetarium, or other public venue; through a workshop for teachers; or on the web, now is the time to let the NASA Administrator know of the benefits you have received from such NASA programs. If you feel that NASA education and public outreach programs are important-even vital-to ensure America's ability to maintain leadership in science and technology fields by inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers, then now is the time for your voice to be heard. A decision on education and outreach by the NASA Administrator is imminent. Send a letter to the Administrator at the address below, and copy NASA's Chief of Strategic Communications, and your local congressman.

Dr. Michael Griffin, Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

Joe Davis, Chief of Strategic Communications
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

Please feel free to quickly share this message with other colleagues who also may be concerned about the future of NASA education and public outreach programs.

NASA has long embraced the notion that the agency's efforts in human space flight, the exploration of Earth and space, and aeronautics should be shared with all Americans through NASA-supported education and public outreach programs. It is an approach meant to strategically communicate NASA's efforts on the frontiers of research to the taxpaying public, and in subjects that can captivate young and old alike, foster pride in America's leadership on the frontiers of space exploration, and inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers. It is important to preserve this heritage of inclusion of the public through education and outreach, for NASA's prime function is to serve the public.

Prepared by NASA

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saying that telling this story is important to our children. They don't seem to get this information anywhere else in their school career. This proved true when I asked the students who was the first person in space. I never really expected them to know the name Yuri Gagarin. Nor did I expect them to know that Alan Shepherd was the first American in space. (One student asked me if the local university, Shepherd University, is named after him, which of course isn't the case.) The only two astronauts the fifth graders seemed to be familiar with were Sally Ride and Neil Armstrong, but they didn't seem able to mention what they accomplished.

Astronomy fared no better. On the second day of camp, I was going to show students the sun using a variety of solar telescopes. When I asked them if someone knew what the nearest star was, someone blurted out, Orion.

Finally, what is the camp experience without songs? I can't make up songs like John Bell in Fort Pierce, FL can. A friend gave me this funky little book called *Crazy Campsongs* by George Petersen & JJ Jenkins that tells you how you can come up with a song to teach to the next group of campers who come to visit your dome. If you would like more information about the book, go to the web site www.crazycampsongs.com to learn more.

New Solar System Program
Nothing thrilled me more than finding out that SEPA is planning to have a new solar system program written and sent out to all of us free of charge. I am sure everyone in the association can use this.

I have trouble trying to figure out what to use in my solar system program and what to take out. I like using the flyovers of different solar system objects and 3D Mars images and the Maas animation of how the rovers on Mars got there and what a typical Martian day is like. I like showing asteroid pictures and the new six-minute view of Cassini's Saturn that we got from the International Planetarium Society. All in all, the whole program seems too long and I am ready for a fresh update. I only hope that we get it out after planet number ten is named. I am sick of calling it 2003UB313. What's that? You don't know about planet number 10 being discovered? Go to <http://www.gps.caltech.edu/~mbrown/planetlila/index.html> for all the info.

Thoughts and Prayers Go Out To The Louisiana and Mississippi Members
After SEPA's visit to the Louisiana region in 2004, who could not have them in our thoughts and prayers as we heard about the devastation of Katrina and Rita? We hope that any damage to their facilities and homes were minimal and repairable.

Betty Wasiluk tries to line up a shot of one of the telescopes this summer while at McDonald Observatory, Ft. Davis, TX.
Credit: Mary Kay Hemmingway, University of Texas at Austin

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etarium) and the skies cleared just enough to use the historic telescope. Flagstaff is also recognized by the IDA as a city that has worked to reduce light pollution. On one of the hottest days of the trip, we visited Meteor Crater which is amazing by itself, but is equally interesting because of the Apollo training that took place there. Unfortunately, there was not time to visit all the planetariums along the way---but there is always another trip on the horizon!

I hope your fall is productive and that you are geared up for the return of our school children. I'm often called the "star lady" by those who excitedly return for another session in the planetarium. It seems, when you get right down to it, that we have one of the greatest jobs in the world. Enjoy!!

Featured Vendor

Susan Barnett
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

Carl Zeiss, Inc. Innovation Days

The Carl Zeiss Company's Planetarium business unit invited customers and interested parties from all over the world to Jena, Germany, for Innovation Days. During this two-day meeting (in English) over 90 planetarians from Europe, North and South America, Asia, Australia and Arabic countries were introduced to six different systems. Introduced were the Skymaster ZKP 4 star projector, three different full dome projection systems, a digital planetarium system, and a full dome image control system. There was ample opportunity for comparisons.

The Skymaster ZKP 4 is an optical-mechanical projection planetarium. This is designed for domes between 6 and 14 meters. It uses Zeiss glass fiber projection. Demonstrated in a 14 meter dome, the stars were quite bright and very small, resulting in a rich starfield of approximately 7,000 stars down to 6.3 magnitude with 18 colored stars. The computer-control system works well with the fiber optic projection, and all motions looked extremely smooth. The benefits to this machine include a common bulb (105 watt) for illumination, a built-in lift with azimuth control, and that it is fully operational in its lowered position. This makes it easily usable with all-dome video projection, with which it can be integrated. It also has interfaces for external control systems. This machine takes features from Zeiss's larger machines and brings them to small and medium domes. The price is also very competitive.

ADLIP HD is the newest version of Zeiss's laser all-dome projection, useful for medium and large domes. It had the brightest image of all systems demonstrated, with very rich color saturation and great resolution. It also has an enormous price tag. The 120 systems in use are mostly in simulation venues, not planetaria.

SPACEGATE is a set of DLP projectors for all-dome projection. It comes in QUINTO (5 projectors) for domes up to 14 meters or DUO (2 projectors) for domes under 8 meters. It had excellent contrast and a very low background brightness. It was shown with synchronous control with the Skymaster ZKP 4, with constellation figures and star markers moving together with the stars.

Skymaster ZKP 4 with SPACEGATE projectors.

4DOME was the most well-received projection system. The Sony SXRD 8-megapixel projectors can cover the dome with two projectors and new lenses from ZEISS. It showed high brightness and color saturation that compared favorably with the ADLIP. Its high resolution was remarkable. When a projector was rolled into the dome, the presentation stopped because of all the picture taking.

PowerDome is a new image generator system by Zeiss. This system acted as a controller for all the digital projections systems. It switched between different projector configurations. It can accept

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standard image, video and sound formats and it computes all necessary distortion corrections, channel divisions and edge bending in real time. Few facilities would utilize so many different configurations with the need to switch between them as did these presentations. While PowerDome easily utilized all the systems, breaks had been scheduled while the system changed configurations.

DigitalSky 2 is a real-time virtual planetarium from Sky-Skan. It has extensive databases built into it. This was demonstrated by a tour through the 3D Universe. Its functions aid in showing advanced astronomy concepts, with the ability to show trails, adjust rotation speeds, increase relative sizes, etc. Its interface is not much more complex than a standard manual panel of a classical planetarium projector. It can also receive and place stills or video.

The definiti TWIN is a digital projection system designed for mobile domes, but would work as well in small domes. Demonstrated in a 6 meter inflated dome, it showed good clarity and contrast. While the resolution was less than that of larger systems, the image quality was very good. This is distributed by Sky-Skan and includes their DigitalSky.

There was ample opportunity to compare and discuss the relative merits and drawbacks of the various systems and their competition. Zeiss demonstrated an awareness that they are not the only game in town, and that they had to provide appropriately sized systems at suitable prices in order to continue to be competitive in the planetarium field.

Sony SXRD projector for use with 4DOME.

Photos by author

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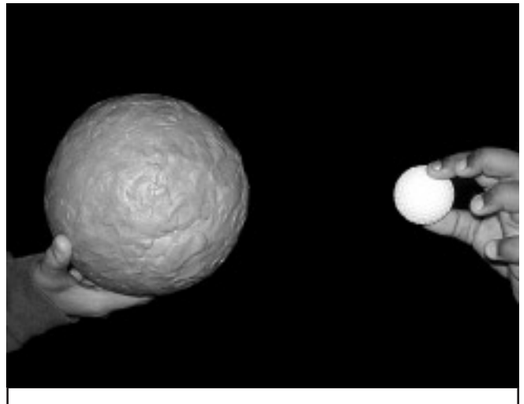
right size, change your moon model. Make sure the two objects have a 4 to 1 ratio. In this activity, students will predict how far apart the 2 models should be placed to show the distance between Moon and Earth. Each group is given a roll of masking tape and a place on the wall to mark their prediction. They place one piece of tape that represents Earth at the starting point and another piece of tape at the place they believe represents the distance of the Moon. Remind them of the size of the models in this exercise. Next each group will measure their predicted distance with a measuring tape. Measurements are recorded. After students have guessed, wrap yarn around the Earth's circumference. Instruct students that this amount of yarn is about 24,000 miles and that the Moon is about 240,000 miles from Earth. That is 10 lengths of yarn! Groups are then given time to go to the wall and adjust the position of the Moon tape. Most groups place it very close together the first time and easily recognize that they need to move them farther apart. I have a string of the correct length ready to show the distance. This is used to compare to their final guess.



Earth models

These are just two of the activities I use to develop student understanding of the Earth-Moon system. We also do a Earth Weight/Moon Weight comparison, a phase activity and a demonstration of how high someone could jump in the Moon's light gravity.

Photos by author

News From SEPA States

FLORIDA

contact: George Fleenor
GeoGraphics Imaging and
Consulting, Bradenton, FL
Jetson1959@aol.com

Florida Planetarium Association
(FLORPLAN)

The Fall meeting has been cancelled. It is expected that there will be a Spring meeting. Contact George Fleenor for details.

Buehler Planetarium
Broward Community College
Davie, FL

Susan J. Barnett reports: The Buehler Planetarium & Observatory is running public shows four days a week. The weekend shows and monthly specials include *Our Place In Space*, *In Search of New Worlds*, *MoonWitch*, *Springtime of the Universe* and *Clouds of Fire: The Origin of Stars.*

We continue to rotate shows on Wednesdays, and these shows include *The People*, *The Mars Show*, *The Voyager Encounters*, *Egyptian Skylore*, *Endless Horizon* and *The Secret of the Cardboard Rocket.*

The Buehler Observatory has viewing four times a week. It has free public observing Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. In addition, we observe the Sun on Wednesday afternoons. We ususally have one telescope set up to view sunspots, and watch flares through a Hydrogen-Alpha filter on another.

Astronaut Memorial Planetarium
and Observatory
Brevard Community College
Cocoa, FL

Mark Howard reports: The Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory in Cocoa, FL is currently running its full complement of school shows and weekend public shows including star shows, Iwerks 8-70 large format movies, and laser shows.

A new staff member joined us recently. Bernie Badger is our new show presenter/educator. Bernie's background is in math but he has a keen interest in astronomy offering his fresh perspective to our presentations.

We are pleased to announce that our facility will be hosting the 2006 SEPA conference June 20-24. The conference hotel is the Raddison Resort at the Port, a full featured conference center and resort in Cape Canaveral, FL.

Considering the planetarium profession's common mission of teaching basic astronomical concepts together with the advent of high-tech full dome video systems, we have chosen "Back to the Future" for next year's conference theme.

Now more than ever it is becoming clear that it doesn't have to be only one or the other - basic traditional vs. modern high tech. The tools of our trade are just means to an end - teaching astronomy and our mission is being accomplished in domes of all sizes and resources. Start thinking now about how you can contribute to SEPA 2006. Whether you are a vendor or an educator (or both). Whether yours is a full-featured modern space theater or if all you have is a starball and a flashlight. We want to hear your stories about how you communicate the wonder of the cosmos to your students and public visitors.

More information will be coming soon so stay tuned. We hope to see you in Cocoa, FL next summer!

Hallstrom Planetarium
Indian River Community College
Fort Pierce, FL

The IRCC Hallstrom Planetarium weathered last year's hurricanes Frances and Jeanne fairly well, with only minor damage to the aluminum flashing along the roof line adjacent to the concrete dome. And after a dozen or so years of operation, some renovation work was successfully done inside the theater.

The 40 foot interior Spitz dome screen, which had a reflectivity of 38%, was repainted by Astro Tec and is now just under 50%, so all the stars, etc. shine much more brightly.

The Spitz incandescent light bulb cove lighting was removed and replaced with an East Coast Control Systems LED system (and we went from 5,000 watts to 800 watts too.)

The Spitz control console with its ATM-3 automation system, which had done a great job until it decided to retire about a year or so ago, has been replaced with an East Coast Controls console and Hercules automation system. At the same time the new horseshoe-shaped console has been installed in the front (south) part of the unidirectional theater to improve live presentations and provide better crowd control, as well as showcase the console's "bells and whistles." Also frees up a lot of good seating space in the rear of the theater.

A stage platform has been constructed around the new console; carpeting it is next.

We're looking forward to more public and school shows this year; public shows include a show about Mars (gotta milk that opposition this fall!); *Star of Wonder* in December; *The Stars of the Pharaohs*, which IRCC Hallstrom Planetarium Director Jon Bell is writing to complement the King Tut exhibition in Fort Lauderdale this winter); and in the springtime we'll be bringing back the ever-popular, *Bear Tales and Other Grizzly Stories*, which strangely enough, Jon is still not tired of even after all these years of singing, "Waltzing With Bears."

On the collegiate side, Jon has written the textbook for his introductory astronomy class. It's a chronological approach to the subject, and avoids the usual compartmentalizing of most texts. The historical treatment has garnered some interesting conversations such as, "How come Socrates had to drink Hemlock and Plato didn't?", "What was so dark about the Dark Ages?" and other big philosophical questions. "It's keeping me on my toes, but luckily I have a high instep and the legs for it!" Jon says.

Alexander Brest Planetarium
Jacksonville Museum of Science and History
Jacksonville, Fl

The Editor reports: Patrick McQuillan has left the Alexander Brest Planetarium and Brett Jacobs has been named the new Planetarium Manager. Congratulations, Brett! Brett has been a producer at the Brest since 2001 after a fire destroyed the Bishop Planetarium in 2001 where he was also a producer.

Planetarium
Science Center of Pinellas County
St. Petersburg, FL

Marie Stempinski reports: Our Oceans and Marine Life-Super Saturday, October 1 at the Science Center includes the following activities:

Learn why our oceans are important and explore the mysteries of under water marine life during Super Saturday, October 1 at the Science Center. Associate Dean/Professor Kent Fanning and Senior PhD. Graduate Student Noland Alsaesser, of USF's College of Marine Science, take us on a fun voyage as we visit the tides, the currents and the creatures that live underwater.

The Center will be open from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. and the fee is $5 per person. At 11:00 kids get a hands-on experience feeding marine animals. Planetarium shows will be held at 11:30 and 2:30. "The Importance of Oceans" and "Scallops and other Marine Life" will be presented in the Laser Theatre from 12 until 1, and there will be a Gator Feeding at 2:00. Visitors can also enjoy a self guided tour of the Center featuring our 600 gallon marine touch tank, live animals, two alligators, a wetlands area, an African American Scientists and Inventors Exhibit and a replica of a 16th Century Indian Village.

GEORGIA

contact: David Dundee
Fernbank Science Center
Atlanta, GA
david.dundee@fernbank.edu

Fernback Science Center Planetarium
Atlanta, GA

David Dundee reports: Fernbank is currently running *Einstein's Universe* through November we produced this show in honor of the 100 anniversary of Einstein's first publications. "Coyote The Trickster" is running for children, a show with Native American stories of the sky. We also are doing a special evening event in the planetarium for families for Halloween, everyone in costume and everyone gets a spooky night walk in the forest looking for owls.

This past summer was very busy but September hurricanes and gas prices really hurt our attendance, so far October has been good.

We really enjoyed having everyone come visit this past June, even though it was a lot of work we had fun.

LOUISIANA

contact: Jon Elvert
Pennington Planetarium
Baton Rouge, LA
jelvert@lasm.org

Irene W. Pennington Planetarium
La. Art & Science Museum
Baton Rouge, LA

Jon Elvert reports: As of this writing, I haven't heard from our planetarian colleagues in Kenner, Luling, New Orleans, or St. Martinville on when they would resume their programming following the hurricane devastation. Apparently, the facilities in Kenner and Luling did escape damage. Here in Baton Rouge hurricane destruction was minimal in comparison following both Katrina and Rita, but in the four weeks following Katrina, the city's population has increased by 225,000 resulting in traffic gridlock 24/7. This, of course, has made it very difficult in getting anywhere, including a trip to the planetarium. Unlike the planetarium at the Lafayette Natural History Museum, our school and public attendance for September and October decreased significantly; schools cancelled their scheduled fieldtrips and the total lack of parking made it impossible to get near the planetarium. We even cancelled our weekend evening programming for September, primarily due to the 5,000 evacuees staying at the convention center located across the street from the planetarium! We did offer free admissions to hundreds of evacuees, mostly children. These evacuees should be transferred to more stable housing soon and we're hopeful that while our attendance has plummeted due to the massive influx of displaced people, our attendance will eventually rebound with all these new citizens attending our shows.

For those patient and determined planetarium goers willing to find a parking space, we are running the fulldome version of *The Secret of the Cardboard Rocket* and the large format film *Journey Into Amazing Caves*. *Fright Light* ran through October on weekends and the fulldome *Dark Side Of The Moon* resumed on weekends in November. We are currently working with the Burke Baker Planetarium in Houston on an original *Star of Bethlehem* program, which will be a digital production, set to premier Thanksgiving weekend.

Mike Smail and I attended the South Louisiana Association of Planetariums (SLAP) at the Lafayette Natural History Museum & Planetarium in August.

Lafayette Planetarium
Lafayette Natural History Museum
Lafayette, LA

Dave Hostetter reports: The Lafayette Natural History Museum hosted the second SLAP (South Louisiana Association of Planetariums) meeting on Saturday, August 27. Unfortunately, that was the weekend hurricane Katrina arrived, and the New Orleans area planetarians couldn't make the meeting because they were packing up for evacuation. It almost seems like planning the meeting happened in another lifetime.

Our facility was far enough from the storm to be unharmed after a day of nothing more than blustery weather. Since almost 40,000 evacuees found shelter in this city of 120,000, our attendance has gone up as the displaced families have gotten over the initial shock and have begun looking for things to do. Hundreds of evacuee children will be in our school system this year, and probably visiting on field trips.

We had a successful summer with our public program, *Fingerprinting the Stars* (a "hands-on" program about spectra and the analysis of starlight), the children's program, *Bear Tales*, and the exhibit "Dragon Skies," about Chinese imperial astronomy. During the fall, the museum will feature a cosmology exhibit called "Cosmic Questions" while the planetarium features *Hubble Vision 2*. A mini-exhibit about Mars and the upcoming opposition is also being developed.

Because of extreme budget pressures, we could neither open *Larry Cat in Space* as we had expected in the fall, nor purchase any programs for use in 2006. We plan to rerun *Rusty Rocket* during the fall, quickly purchase new programs when our new fiscal year starts in November, and then work quickly to get the first one running by February. Considering the problems other facilities in our state are having, we feel very fortunate to be dealing only with budget problems!

MISSISSIPPI

Russell C. Davis Planetarium
Jackson, MS

Gary Lazich reports: The Planetarium escaped unscathed except for a small leak over one corner of our lobby. If we lost power at all, it could only have been for a moment. Nonetheless, we remained closed through Labor Day so staff members could tend to their families and homes or assist emergency relief operations. By that time, nearly all of our small staff (including me) had spent time either handling telephone calls to the City Action Line or working in a Community Center set up as a temporary shelter. I also spent one afternoon at the Mississippi Coliseum helping evacuees find housing.

Our Senior Accounting Clerk and I received Red Cross orientation arranged by the City two weeks ago. She helped provide information and referral at a new processing site last Friday afternoon, Saturday morning, and all day today. I worked at the Red Cross Service Center yesterday afternoon and will report this afternoon as soon as I finish this message. These temporary reassignments have somewhat impeded the work flow here, but the needs of evacuees are so great that I don't begrudge the time spent away from the office.

We had prepared for the storm as well as we could until our lights went out at home Monday afternoon, August 29. I had been re-reading *Lucifer's Hammer* as a way of putting the situation in perspective. As the eye passed east of us, we experienced tropical storm force winds with gusts of Category 1 force. Many trees could not withstand the onslaught, snapping power lines, pulling down power poles, and damaging houses and vehicles as they fell. Providentially, the eye passed farther east and more quickly through the state than originally anticipated.

At one point, over 90% of the Metro Jackson area had lost power. The power outages affected the water plants, so we had to boil our water through September 6 - a daunting task for those without power or liquid propane stoves. As it was, power company crews from around the country worked around the clock and restored power to areas with amazing speed. (The summer Milky Way did look beautiful when our neighborhood was dark, though.)

The most critical need soon after Katrina passed (other than food, water, shelter, and cool air for at-risk residents and coastal evacuees) involved fuel for automobiles. Many service stations had exhausted their supply; those that had not typically had long lines of exasperated customers, a limit on purchase, and sometimes even a requirement to pay in cash. Since then, we have enjoyed some relief as panic purchases decreased and the fuel supply increased. However, because the hurricane destroyed nearly all of the Gulf Coast's production capability, the long-term prospects could prove discouraging.

As for the Gulf Coast and New Orleans...because our house did not regain power until 9:00 p.m. on September 1, colleagues outside Mississippi probably saw more of their situation via television than we did. Anyone looking for Mississippi information and images can visit the Web sites for our major newspaper (*The Clarion-Ledger*) and our major network television affiliates (WLBT, WJTV, and WAPT).

Katrina has dealt our city and state such a crippling blow that we won't be doing "business as usual" in Mississippi for quite some time. Things *are* getting better but more slowly than we would like. To paraphrase something I heard in a chapter meeting for The Compassionate Friends (a self-help support group for bereaved parents), "We will never get over what Katrina did to us, but we will get through it."

On September 2, the morning after our power returned, something I saw as I came to work sparked a *haiku* I believe crystallized the situation then.

Migration

after Katrina,
circling overhead at dawn -
nestless mourning doves

Rainwater Observatory & Planetarium
French Camp, MS

James Hill reports: Hurricane Katrina left Rainwater Observatory with only minor damage. Limbs down and one of the roll-off roofs had to be rebuilt when it flew about 75 yards down the hill. Already rebuilt and ready for service.

Our web site admin. tool got erased and a lightning strike took out our modem so we are rebuilding our data base from old files. Because we can't get access to the web site to update items at the moment we are using this independent mail program courtesy of Craig Hodges to keep communications going. We will be in regular operation and better than before soon.

To quickly catch up on happenings: The dome for the new 25" research telescope is here and waiting for the walls to be completed. The control room will get siding this week and then sheet rock. We hope to put up the walls during September so we can get the Ash Dome rep. to come supervise putting it together before winter. The new shower house/bunk room and exhibit/meeting room has tile floors in.

Rainwater Observatory will be 20 years old this October. We want to celebrate its development, but the physical facility has grown to the stage that we need to have a long term vision and organization in place. We will be having get togethers this fall to solicit suggestions and plans for how we can be ready for the next generations of educational and scientific service.

NORTH CAROLINA

contact: Patsy Wilson
Woodson Planetarium, Salisbury, NC
wilsonpk@rss.k12.nc.us

Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators (CAPE)

This organization, targeting small to mid-size planetaria and science centers, held its inaugural meeting June 24th and 25th at Robeson Planetarium in Lumberton. A small, but dedicated group of planetarium professionals in NC and SC enjoyed sharing ideas, participating in teleconferences with Alan Gould, April Whitt and Kay Ferrari. Jim and Shirley Smith of LTI brought a StarLab and presented their newest techonology and programs. Ken Brandt moderated and hosted the meeting. He has been elected President of the organization. The next meeting is set for May 10th and 11th at the Ingram Planetarium in Sunset Beach. Rik Zawadzki will host.

Robeson Planetarium and Science Center
Public Schools of Robeson County
Lumberton, NC

Our 5th, 6th, and 9th grade students are enjoying cool space exploration updates and star talks. We are using a Jeopardy style quiz game that is a big hit with students. Useful pre and post test information about student learning in the framework of a 45-minute planetarium presentation is being gathered.

Our entrance sidewalk, a model of the solar system, received a fresh painting by a local art teacher. Science center layout and design as well as planetarium programming is being revised to adhere to the Standard Course of Study. Lesson guides and visiting guidelines can be found in the left hand navigation bar of our website, www.robesonsky.com.

The Robesonian, our local newpaper, is featuring a new column, Under the Dome. The exploits of our local astronaut, Bill McArthur, aboard the International Space Station will be included as well as items of interest from current planetary probes.

PARI StarLab
Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute
Rosman, NC

Bob Hayward reports: The school year started a bit late due to recent state legislation so school programming has not reached its usual momentum yet. The summer NSF-IPSE program (on which I presented a paper at SEPA and CAPE) went very well. On September 8th, the prototype radio sky StarLab cylinder produced by students at UNC-Asheville and Furman University got its baptism by fire. It was taken to a Spartanburg County high school where one of the IPSE interns is student teaching. Programs were presented to four groups of students with the cylinder. A new third grade program based on the Standard Course of Study has been developed. It's called The Moon and Stars: Now You See Them; Now You Don't. Area teachers were asked for input and many valuable suggestions were received and implemented in the program.

Margaret C. Woodson Planetarium
Horizons Unlimited, Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Salisbury, NC

Patsy Wilson reports: In October and November, the planetarium is full of 3rd graders who've come to *Explore the Moon*. We use Bowen's *Moonwitch* and a variety of hands-on activities to help fulfill curriculum objectives for these students. In addition, we've done some special programming for the NASA SEEMA program housed at Livingstone College and have helped local elementary schools kick off their accelerated reading programs.

Horizons Unlimited will host the North Carolina Fossil Club's Annual Fossil Fair on November 5th. We will be showing *Dinosaurs* as part of that day's activities which include exhibits, paleontology experts, Smithsonian scientists and noted authors in the field.

Rotary Planetarium
Anson County Schools
Wadesboro, NC

Patsy Wilson reports: The planetarians in North Carolina would like to officially welcome our newest member. Last May, the Anson County Schools held the grand opening of the Rotary Planetarium. This is the vision of an industrious group of Rotarians who wanted the planetarium experience for the students in this small, rural county. Mr. Chris Stinson, a local high school teacher, has been given the job of development and programming. We wish him well!

SOUTH CAROLINA

contact: Glenn Dantzler
Settlemyre Planetarium, Rock Hill, SC
dantzler@chmuseums.org

DuPont Planetarium
Ruth Patrick Science Ed. Ctr. , USC
Aiken, SC

News from the DuPont Planetarium: The Dupont Planetarium at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center on the campus of the University of South Carolina Aiken is busy preparing for the debut of its new show, *Mission to Mars*. This show is a local production and features new scriptwriter and assistant planetarium director, Darlene Smalley. The premise is a discussion between the planetarium presenter and a patron who begin to talk about Mars after a night sky presentation. The patron's uncle recently took a trip into space and would like to take his nephew with him to Mars some day. In their discussion they explore the many attributes of the Red Planet. Darlene and John Hutchens did the narration. John is another member of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center team and has been presenting shows in the planetarium for many years.

Believe it or not, we had people show up at the planetarium on August 27 to see that planet Mars that was as big as the Moon! We were able to have some articles in the local press about the August 27 non-phenomenon but the Internet was just too powerful. We are planning a special viewing of Mars on the first weekend of November and will include a special "Opposition Viewing" on November 7, 2005. We will have a special visit from Johannes Kepler on November 7, too! You can find out how we did this at http://home.att.net/~johanneskepler/kepler.html.

The public show for September was *Journey Into the Living Cell* from the Buhl Planetarium and Carnegie Science Center. In October we showed *More than Meets the Eye* from Lochness Productions. The public show for the month of November is *Mission to Mars*, already mentioned above.

Settlemyre Planetarium
Museum of York County
Rock Hill, SC

Glenn Dantzler reports: We here at the Settlemyre are off to a slow start as regards school field trips. I suppose the cost of fuel and some restrictions placed on travel by school districts is to blame. We offer curriculum based programming for K-4 through 9th grade. I sure hope the noise and chaos of the kids coming to the planetarium begins soon. Our last year's attendance was the second highest since 1992 and we were really on a roll. Curriculum based programming has been very successful for us and just the ticket for racking up the numbers.

We also offer Saturday and Sunday programming for both adults and children. Families really enjoyed *Rusty Rocket's Last Blast* as both a summer show and early morning Saturday show. Our holiday program will be the traditional *Season of Light* and is always well received.

No news as yet on the new museum or planetarium except the powers that be want a full dome planetarium to complement the planned museum.

I hope other planetariums are not suffering from lack of school attendance and wish you all a great autumn and happy holidays. That's all from South Carolina.

TENNESSEE

contact: Kris McCall
Sudekum Planetarium
Nashville, TN
krismccall@adventuresci.com

Bays Mountain Planetarium
Kingsport, TN

Mike Chesman reports: Currently the planetarium is running *Journey To The Stars*, a new program scripted and produced by Mike Chesman. The show features an imaginary starship trek to a few spectacular sites imaged by the Hubble Space Telescope. The shows uses mostly a video format and includes some new animation by our artist Allen Davis and cinematic soundtrack music by Robert J. Resetar.

Adam Thanz has been busy modifying the live version of his *What Is A Solar System?* show. This is our 3rd grade school program and Adam is a stickler for keeping the information in the program up-to-date. Teachers appreciate being able to bring their classes to Bays Mountain each Fall for information sorely lacking in their textbooks.

In early October Konica-Minolta demoed its latest Media-Globe projector in our dome for several regional educators and our own park commissioners and association board members. A Thank You to George Fleenor and Phil Groce for making the event possible. This was a great opportunity for us to show a bunch of non-planetarium folks what all-dome video is about.

On October 22 and 23 our facility hosted its 22nd annual StarFest gathering for amateur astronomers. The gathering brought about 70 enthusiastic stargazers from around the Southeast to Bays Mountain Park for a weekend of talks, observing, gastronomy and comraderie. Our featured speaker was Lonnie Puterbaugh, of Nashville, who has spearheaded a project called the "Astronomy Channel." Basically, Lonnie brings some super hi-tech imaging equipment packed into a mini-van to public stargazing events. With his 14" telescope and all this gear he displays real-time deep sky images on a large screen monitor that spans the entire rear of his van. It's almost unbelievable to see things like the Horsehead Nebula in a fully lit parking lot.

The planetarium staff will finish up the year with a free 20 minute mini-program as a gift to our visitors from Thanksgiving to New Years. This program will be shown in addition to our regular public program. It will feature winter scenes, wildlife and abstract imagery in a multimedia that will evoke the many moods of the winter season.

The Warp Factor Five Planetarium at Heritage High School, Blount County School System
Maryville, TN

Thomas R. Webber reports:

1) Third year of record-breaking attendance - 33,600!

2) New solid-state laser entertainment system

3) Working toward new flooring and seats this year; looking into all sky by 2007-2008

4) Director (moi) is a science writer for the *Knoxville News Sentinel* (and recently went out on a limb to discuss cosmology and evolution in the same column. I didn't come out from under my desk for a week!)

5) Will be running the seasonal Christmas program and laser holiday program right after Thanksgiving.

Sudekum Planetarium
Adventure Science Center
Nashville, TN

Kris McCall and Drew Gilmore report: We spent the rest of the summer, after SEPA, along with six other Adventure Science Center staff members, reviewing mountains of drawings and descriptions in order to complete the Design Development phase of the Sky and Space expansion project. This was on top of running shows seven days a week and preparing for the next school year. In mid-August, the City Council voted to allocate $5 million in capital funds to the project. At this time, more than 50% of the total cost has been pledged, and it still has not been announced to the public. (shhhhhh)

In September, we opened a new public show called *Mars Update*. The objectives of the show are to BRIEFLY recount how our view of Mars has changed, where you can see Mars in the current night sky, and highlight some recent or current activities on Mars. The first segment is prerecorded - with the sky tour and exploration highlights presented live. It concludes with a two minute space trip set to dramatic music. Unfortunately, we were not able to complete the soundtrack on time, and so Kris has been doing the show completely live every day since September 1st. We have a soundtrack now, but it is being tweaked and should be online by late October.

As many of you know, Kris can be a little verbose, and so the show tends to run almost an hour. However, the show has been VERY well received by young people and adults - with comments and questions during the presentation and more following. Almost all have stayed. First, it helps to have good material to start with, and I have certainly had plenty of opportunities to smooth out the content and delivery. It's been fun.

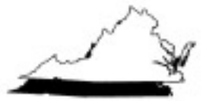
Mars Update will soon be available for purchase with all images and video provided in digital format. This will make an excellent program for an opposition or anytime Mars is in the news - such as during a specific mission.

The first week of October was spent doing what the Development Office calls "awareness tours." This is bringing in interested and influential people, some of who are potential donors, to showcase what the Science Center has accomplished in the last few years and inform them of our plans for the next ten years. This series of events was targeted specifically at Sky and Space. The Science Center Board has approved a resolution allowing us to move forward with the project to the Construction Documents phase.

The next big project is producing a new solar system show for next summer which will focus on frequently asked questions and current topics.

VIRGINIA

contact: Dave Maness
Virginia Living Museum
Newport News, VA
david.maness@valivingmuseum



Chesapeake Planetarium
Chesapeake Public Schools
Chesapeake, VA

Dr. Robert Hitt reports: The Chesapeake Planetarium is now starting its 43rd year of operation. Current plans for an addition are on hold due to budget issues and the decline of the economy in operating a school system these days. Plans are underway to increase our video systems and we are starting to consider replacing all of the slide projectors with video projectors. This will be difficult to do we find for all the video projectors on the market today are replaced as soon as new models are introduced. Does anyone out there have suggestions on this topic?

The planetarium is still working mostly with grades 1-6 and some grade 9 students. We now have over 40,000 students in our school system and the number of planetarium programs has grown to capacity. Generally speaking we are in fine shape and are lucky to be supported by a school system that appreciates the value of the planetarium.

Virginia Living Museum Planetarium
Newport News, VA

Dave Maness reports: With the demise of the dinosaurs again (the exhibit that is) we are now running a shortened version of *The Stargazer* program from GLPA. Administration thought that the program was a bit too advanced for our family audiences. So, reluctantly, we cut out most of the deep science and left the inspirational bits. With an added live

sky talk at the beginning, it is a program that, we hope, will get people to look up. After that, *Star of Wonde*r will make its return for the 40th season. To those who have purchased the full show and want a fresh copy of the soundtrack, I have new CD copies available for $30 (shipping included). I can still put together complete show packages too. Contact me for details.

Our Meade 16" scope is on another journey to California for servicing. In the meantime the C14 from the old observatory is in service, in its place. In fact we may leave it there and use the Meade as an outdoor, tripod mounted scope when it returns.

It was definitely a busy summer. We ran 17 (out of 18) week long sessions for many different grade levels.

Our part time summer staff helper John Moormon has gone off to college and we are back to a 2 full time one part time staff.

With the sun setting earlier, we have started up our *Starry Night Thursday* programs again. The August 12 *Meteors, Monsters, and Mars* night brought in over 120 people.

Plans are in place to hold a dedication ceremony for the newly renovated building (the former exhibit building) which will be the new Harry Wasson Education Center in November.

FREE, FREE, FREE, LUMILINES - Now that I have your attention, I still have a load of 30 watt Lumiline lamps, left over from our lighting conversion. Some are white with the colored sleeves and others are the original yellow and blue type. If anyone out there could use them, please contact me to arrange shipping. I hate to throw them out if there is a planetarium out there that still uses them.

Planetarium
Children's Museum of Virginia
Portsmouth, VA

Dan Borick reports: They are running Sky Quest from Loch Ness Productions. The show focuses on the path of a young girl from playing astronaut to her future role as an astronomer.

Thomas Jefferson HS Planetarium
Richmond, VA

Leslie Bochenski reports: This *^$#) Blasted Building! While the Planetarium was closed for the summer the air conditioning unit quit, and the back of the plaster dome is falling apart! I am waiting for the installation of a new air conditioner and a building inspection to assure that the ceiling is safe. I don't want to be responsible for the sky falling on the heads of my precious 3rd-graders. As soon as these repairs are complete, I will be re-opening for 3rd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 9th grade programs. I guess I need to get used to these things happening, after all, the building is over 75 years old, and whatever happens to that old roof affects the Planetarium.

On a lighter note, thanks to an unusually dry August & September in Richmond we've had plenty of clear nights to enjoy Saturn, Jupiter, Venus and Mars. I even caught a glimpse of Mercury despite the light pollution. Wishing clear skies to everyone, especially friends in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

(A reminder - Leslie volunteered to be the SEPA Historian at the last SEPA meeting) "So if you are a past officer, have old journals or other information that should be included in the archive, please contact me at Bochenski@verizon.net."

Richmond, VA

Retired (but not tired) planetarians George and Jane Hastings, Richmond, VA report that they… "Don't have anything to report. George and I are fine and enjoying retirement. Hope to make SEPA next year."

Still, that is all good news.

Ethyl Corporation IMAX®DOME
& Planetarium
Science Museum of Virginia
Richmond, VA

Ken Wilson reports: We've just opened a new planetarium show about binary stars, entitled *Stella Returns*. This fall we are hosting the annual meetings of the Digistar Users' Group and ASTC.

We also just opened a whole renovated exhibits wing in our main concourse (the Thalhimer Hall of Science Exploration) which includes eight new astronomy exhibits: One on the phases of the moon; one on the seasons; one on 3D star patterns (the Big Dipper); one on the celestial sphere; three interactive telescopes with seven simulated celestial objects to look at; a touchable Canyon Diablo meteorite; a plasma screen running the Space Telescope Science Institute's "View Space" program; and a 15 foot fiberglass dome with Digitalis' Digitarium projector running in a stand alone/exhibit mode showing the current night sky.

Hopkins Planetarium & MegaDome Theater,
Science Museum of Western Virginia
Roanoke, VA

Mark Hodges reports: Here at Hopkins Planetarium we are now showing the seasonal show *Autumn Skies* and in the Megadome theatre we are showing *Pulse - A Stomp Odyssey*.

Also, we have a new exhibit "Alien Earths" from the Space Science Institute and ASTC. This is an exhibit about how astronomers are searching for extra-solar planets and searching for life around other planets. This exhibit will be at SMWV through the end of December.

Falls Church High School Planetarium
Falls Church, VA And
Oakton High School Planetarium
Vienna, VA

Dave Maness reports: After 25 years in the Falls Church High School planetarium, Gary Purinton has retired to Pennsylvania. In case anyone wants to reach him his new address is Gary Purinton, 427 Tippin Drive, Clarion, PA 16214. His new telephone number is 814-902-1019. He also mentioned last time that Jack Steiffer is also retiring from Oakton High School, where he has been the planetarium teacher since October of 1982. I wish good luck and good times for the new retirees!

WEST VIRGINIA

contact: Curt Spivey
Avampato Discovery Museum Planetarium
Charleston, WB, cspivey@theclaycenter.org

Avampato Discovery Museum
ElectricSky™ Theater
Charleston, WV

Curt Spivey reports: Hi all! We have had some changes around here. My former boss and ElectricSky™ Theater Manager Casey Crouch has left our happy little family to pursue other interests in sunny Florida. Our theater, which up until now has been its own entity in our Museum's hierarchy, is now part of the Program Department for the Museum. My title has changed to ElectricSky™ Theater Manager; however my day-to-day duties are little changed.

On the show front, we have switched our star talk to my favorite, the fall sky. I have polished the "Clash of the Titans" story over the last ten years, and it always gets a great response. We have run into snags in creating a black hole show to replace Mars, but with opposition on October 30, I guess it is good to be topical despite the fact the show has run since January. We may end up adapting my *Journey to the Beginning of Time* presentation I am presenting at Blackwater Falls Astronomy Weekend in October to celebrate the Einstein Centennial instead.

We are deep in the slow time for the Museum, and we are concerned about the rising cost of fuel adversely affecting out Christmas tour season -- at least one local school system has announced curtailing field trips to save costs -- but we are hopeful schools will find ways around this.

Lastly, hang in there to our Gulf Coast brethren! I hope your domes will be full of stars again quickly!


SOUTHEASTERN
PLANETARIUM
ASSOCIATION