

Southern Skies

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Spring 2007



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Trifid Nebula

Credit: Conrad Jung

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President's Message

Adam Thanz
Bays Mountain Planetarium
Kingsport, TN

I hope that you have survived the spring rush of school groups to get in those field trips at the end of the school year. At the time of writing this, I know that Jason Dorfman and I will be getting our fair share.

The 2007 joint conference is coming up and will be held October 9-13, 2007. Along with SEPA, the GLPA and MAPS organizations are also attending. It is being held in Wheeling, WV and hosted by the Benedum Planetarium. Steve Mitch and his crew are working very hard to make this a most memorable event. The Oglebay Resort is its own special place with many buildings with hotel rooms, the planetarium, animal habitats, skiing in the winter, lots of golf, and more. In fact, Steve has said that due to the expected size of attendance, he had to lock in the date seven years in advance since he is reserving every room in the entire facility. Be sure to register before the deadline to guarantee getting a room. I do want to say that the annual conference is possibly the greatest "perk" to membership. Due to the generous support by vendors and unpaid 100's of hours of labor by the host, our conferences are not only great, but reasonable in cost. Please try to attend if you can.

Speaking of conferences, I know that Dave Hostetter and his crew at the Lafayette Natural History Museum & Planetarium in Lafayette, LA are already planning for the 2008 conference. The dates are set for July 22-26, 2008. Mark your calendars now. I have been asked to look over the tentative schedule and I know that Dave will host a great event. He has some special things planned, so expect some interesting activities.

Continuing with the conference theme, based on the show of hands at the 2006 SEPA business meeting in support of a large joint conference, it has been decided by Council to go ahead with the plans to have the 2009 conference in Baton Rouge, LA. The goal is to host all of the US regional organizations as a unique and special event. This kind of meeting may never be repeated. In case there is any confusion, I do want to say that the initial discussions for this meeting came about years ago amongst all of the regional Councils. The vote for SEPA to meet in Lafayette in 2008 came much later than the topic of hosting the 2009 conference in Baton Rouge. Even though there will be two meetings in LA in two consecutive years, they will be very different from each other in all aspects. I think this will be an exciting opportunity. This meeting will allow all of SEPA to be the host to all the other regional organizations. Consider it our way of providing southern hospitality. I also think it will be nice to meet up with past SEPA members who have moved on to other planetariums in the west.

Since I brought up school groups earlier, we at Bays Mountain are adjusting our programming to accom-



SEPA President Adam Thanz

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IPS Report

John Hare
ASH Enterprises
Bradenton, FL

It's almost decision time for selecting the site for the 2010 IPS Conference. As previously mentioned, there are three sites competing for the bid (listed in alphabetical order by country)

Beijing, China
Alexandria, Egypt
Saint-Etienne, France

The March 2007 issue of *The Planetarian* contained comprehensive articles giving detailed information regarding each site. I will paraphrase some of the information from that issue as well as furnish information and comments from other sources.

Beijing, China

The Beijing Planetarium is situated in a large com-

plex that includes several domed theaters, exhibit halls, and meeting rooms. Proposed conference dates are July 4-8. Conference registration fee is about \$300. The suggested conference hotel is the Beijing Friendship Hotel; a 4-star hotel situated about 4 km from the planetarium. Rates in general for hotels vary from \$50 to \$120 per person and no specific rate was mentioned for the above hotel. Pre and post-conference tours include Xinglong Station of the National Astronomical Observatory, visits to the traditional city of Xi'an and the modern city of Shanghai including the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai and, of course, the Great Wall is only a few hours drive from Beijing. In general Beijing has an enormous infrastructure to accommodate large numbers of visitors. It also has a large international airport with direct flights to and from many US cities. US citizens are required to have a visa that is somewhat involved to obtain.

Alexandria, Egypt

The planetarium is part of a large cultural complex known as Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It is a revival of the ancient Library of Alexandria and, in addition to the planetarium, contains six specialized libraries, three museums, an exploratorium, research institutions, permanent exhibitions, and a conference

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Editor's Message

James Sullivan
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

I'd like to acknowledge someone who has become important to SEPA, but none of you know him. Mr. Vinnie Sica is the director of BCC's print shop. Vinnie has been filling the position on an interim basis since I started handling the journal. He helped make this journal look as good as it does (including color), while helping us keep the costs down.

Recently, the position of (permanent) print shop director was opened for hire. I let out a sigh of relief when, after a nationwide search, Vinnie was selected to be the official permanent director. Many qualified professionals applied for the position but I am glad that the college chose Vinnie, not just

because of his qualifications, but because we have come to depend on him and rely on his advice to make this journal look good.

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.



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: _____

SEPA Membership Form

Please send your check for \$25 (or \$15 if outside the SEPA geographical region) to SEPA, c/o Mickey Jo Sorrell, Morehead Planetarium & Science Center, CB#3480 UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.

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

For those who have forgotten, this column is supposed to be about contributions of all of you out there who work in small planetaria. Small can be any way you judge it, just as Jane Hastings, the now retired planetarian from Richmond, VA defined it years ago. You can have a small staff, a small dome (like me), a small budget, etc. Since I never get material from any of you, it becomes a monologue instead of a dialog. This is just a friendly reminder that suggestions and contributions are always accepted. Since I have only gotten one in all the years that I have been doing this column, I thought it a good idea to remind you.

This month is going to be a hodgepodge of random thoughts and musings.

Comet McNaught

Count yourself lucky if you got to see the brilliant Comet McNaught before it took a nosedive to our friends in the Southern Hemisphere. Joe Hopkins of Joe Hopkins Engineering was in my planetarium fixing stuff and we took a lunch break to marvel at it via the web shots, since cloudy skies hindered our view outside. To see what we saw, go to http://www.spaceweather.com/comets/gallery_mcnaught.php to see 23 pages of images of the comet.

An Early Orrery?

You may have been reading about the Antikythera Mechanism in the March issue of *Sky and Telescope* magazine. For those who haven't, I just wanted to mention that it was an ancient machine that gave positions of the Sun, Moon and Planets using gears that was uncovered in a shipwreck and dates back to ancient Greece. Could this be classified as the very first orrery? Look here, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antikythera_mechanism

for details.

Pluto Still Rocks Even If It No Longer Is a Full Fledged Planet

Three cheers for Jim O' Leary and Wendy Ackerman, of Davis Planetarium at The Maryland Science Center in Baltimore, MD for their *New Horizons Workshop For Teachers*. I thought the activities on transiting extra-solar planets and icy Trans-Neptunian worlds were something I could really use in the classroom and were a lot of fun. Now where is my \$100.00 stipend?

...And Speaking of New Horizons...

Have you seen the pictures sent back from its fly by of Jupiter in March? Go here <http://pluto.jhuapl.edu/gallery/missionPhotos.html> for the latest images.

...And Speaking of Pluto...

The man who put that masquerading major planet in its place, Mike Brown, was recently at the National Air and Space Museum for a talk on the bizarre worlds he has discovered at the edge of our solar system. My favorite line from the talk is when he discovered Eris, he phoned his then pregnant wife to tell her, "Honey, I think I just discovered the tenth planet." To which she replied, "That's nice dear, can you stop and get some milk on the way home from work, today?" He also shared his case for demoting Pluto. He mentioned that when giving the same explanation to youngsters at Space Camp, it was totally rejected. They still wanted to have Pluto a planet. Well, if Mike Brown can't win on this, how can we expect to?

If you don't live within driving distance to Washington, DC, as I do, you can go to <http://www.nasm.si.edu/webcasts/archive.cfm> to uncover a link to an archive of the web cam on the lecture.

While Seeing Mike Brown...

I got a chance to see the planetarium program at the Albert Einstein Planetarium. It was called *Cosmic Collisions*. Very cool, most fun. I just love flying over planets and having a bird's eye view at galaxies colliding. Sean O' Brien was collecting tick-

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Astro Video Review

Priscilla Bernardo
Orlando, FL

Origins - a workhorse DVD collection for your library

Strap yourself in for 240 minutes of time travel. With Neil deGrasse Tyson at the helm this four episode, two DVD disc set will become an old favorite in a hurry. For \$29.92 at www.wgbh.org it almost seems a steal.

Beginning with "Earth is Born" we explore the birth of our solar system. Using a variety of sciences we work our way back in time to discover what our newborn Earth might have been like, how the moon came to be and how this planet ended up with so much water on it. Roaming the planet, scientists look for clues in both terrestrial and extraterrestrial material.

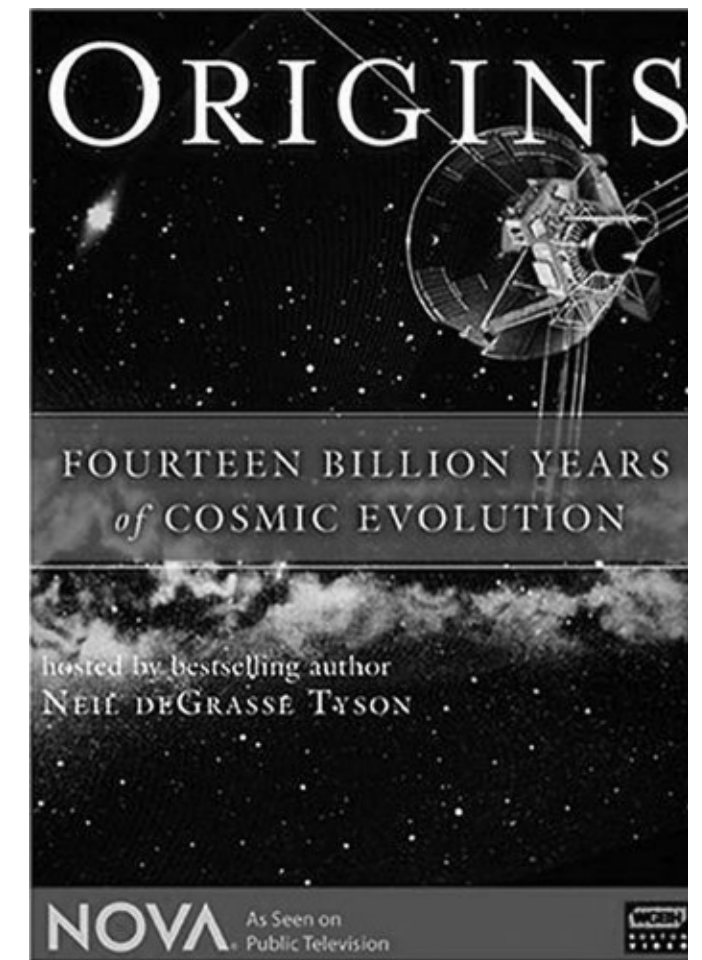
"How Life Began" is sure to be a hit, especially with those who would find the words "snotites" and "phlegm balls" to be entertaining. In this episode we look for how life came to be on this planet. As we explore both ancient and modern recipes for life we look at the miracle of carbon, probe a variety of theories on how life came to be, and search high and low for our ancestors. Discover how a little chlorophyll made all the difference to this tiny planet we can now call home.

Once we have life on Earth, we next turn our attentions to "Where Are the Aliens?" From *Star Trek* to *MIB* the question of alien life vs. "are we just really special" unfolds. Scientists debunk Hollywood's idea

of what alien life should look like and from there we delve into the Drake equation. Are there other planets like ours out there? How about other life forms? Are they smart enough to talk to us and is evolution the only way to get to intelligent life forms? These and more are all explored in an effort to uncover the likelihood of alien contact.

The final trip takes us "Back to the Beginning". Here is a history lesson for human interaction with space, the evolution of science and our understanding of space. On this journey we come to understand how our universe came to be, how old we are, the role stars play in creating the elements of life and ultimately how science can both demystify and glorify this amazing universe.

As said in the heading, this collection is a real workhorse. The first three episodes are very engaging and provide a healthy introduction to the topics that can be further explored by class discussion. The last episode is the weakest and might be best played first to avoid anticlimactic woe. There are also teaching materials included on each DVD. Each episode is



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SAPS 2007 A Good Time Was Had By All

Adam Thanz
Bays Mountain Planetarium
Kingsport, TN

On March 5-6, 2007, Bays Mountain Planetarium was proud to host a fun-filled professional mini-conference that included 35 planetarians & Park staff. It all started when the fine folks at the Sudekum Planetarium in Nashville could not host the annual Tennessee planetarium meeting for 2007. Its theater was slated to be torn down at the usual annual meeting time of January. That would be a good reason not to host a planetarium meeting! They are in the process of building a new wing to the Adventure Science Museum which will include a 62-foot theater and new exhibit space. As such, Bays Mountain offered to host the meeting, but with a slight twist. Due to our placement in the Appalachians, we called it the Southern Appalachian Planetarium Social (SAPS) and invited planetarians throughout our region. The result was the representation of seven states for our get-together!

The focus of the meeting was the sharing of ideas and mutual camaraderie. There were six sessions that included 14 presentations from our visitors and also three planetarium shows. The presentation

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SAPS 2007 - March 5-6, 2007
Southern Appalachian Planetarium Social
Bays Mountain Planetarium
Kingsport, TN

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center that can accommodate thousands of participants. Proposed conference dates are July 12-15. Conference registration fee is estimated at \$350 to \$400. No specific hotel was listed but Bibliotheca receives special rates at nearby hotels with prices that range from \$60 to \$110 for 4 and 5-star hotels. Alexandria is situated on the Mediterranean at the mouth of the Nile. Post-conference tours could include the pyramids and Sphinx at Giza. Alexandria is served by an international airport, as is nearby Cairo with direct flights from several US cities. An entry visa is available at the airport on arrival for about \$5.

Saint-Etienne, France

Planetarium de Saint-Etienne is situated adjacent to a large convention center in the city of Saint-Etienne located in southern France. Saint-Etienne has a regional airport and is about 50 minutes from Lyon International Airport and 2 hours 45 minutes from Paris via high-speed rail. Proposed conference dates are July 17-20. Conference registration fee is \$430. Various hotels are located in proximity to the planetarium and conference center with rates that range from \$60 to \$85. No specific pre or post-conference tours were mentioned but it was suggested that their location was ideal for trips to the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Mediterranean, French wine country and other southern European destinations. No visa is required for US citizens.

The vote will be taken at the 2007 IPS Council meeting that will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, August 4-5. Since our next SEPA conference will be *after* the IPS Council meeting, it is important that I hear your feedback NOW regarding the site choice and any other IPS issues.

Don't forget, Chicago's Adler Planetarium will host the 2008 IPS Conference. Look for details in an upcoming issue of *Southern Skies*.

Your feedback please!

Ads For Sale

Jon Elvert
Irene W. Pennington Planetarium
Baton Rouge, LA

The Southeastern Planetarium Association (SEPA) is now offering advertising space in its quarterly journal *Southern Skies*, beginning with the summer issue. Rates and submission formats are as follows:

Rates	Dimensions
\$100.	Full-page 7" wide x 10" high
\$50.	Half-page 7" wide x 4.5" high
\$25.	Quarter-page 3" wide x 4" high

These rates are per issue and in black & white copy. The entire back cover of our journal is also available either in black & white for \$125, or in color for \$150. A 10% discount to any size ad can be offered only with a year's (four issues) commitment of advertising. Ads accepted on a space available basis. Ads must be camera ready and conform to dimensions listed. Payment must accompany advertisement order, made payable to the Southeastern Planetarium Association. The underlying mission of our advertisements is to promote resources, products, and services related to the planetarium profession. SEPA reserves the right to refuse advertisements. Deadlines or all submissions to the *Southern Skies* are as follows: January 1 (winter issue), April 1 (spring issue), July 1 (summer issue), October 1 (fall issue). The *Southern Skies* journal reaches over 200 members nation wide, a good reason you should advertise with us.

Payment may be sent to:
Mickey Jo Sorrell, SEPA Secretary/Treasurer
Morehead Planetarium & Science Center
CB#3480 UNC-CH
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
(919) 962.3300
Email: sorrel@email.unc.edu.

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modate the changing needs of our teachers and students. There is a greater focus on basic astronomy knowledge like planet names, their positions in the Solar System, and some *fun facts*¹ about them. The moon and its phases is a main focus. This would be OK if it was constrained to some of the earlier grades, but all of the elementary grades in Tennessee require this material to be covered, in just increasing detail as the student rises through the grades.

Thankfully, not all teachers teach to the test, and they request a greater span of topics to be covered, as well as greater understanding. Regardless of what I say, it's what the teacher needs to get his/her job done. The focus also needs to be on what the student needs to better understand the concept of science, why things are the way they are in astronomy, and the skill of critical thinking. That last one is the most important in our society, yet the least understood. Should I refer to Dickens' "A Christmas Carol?" The Ghost of Christmas Present shields two sickly children under his splendid robe. The little girl is "want," the little boy is "ignorance." He says to Scrooge to beware them both, but especially the boy.² How true this is.

Getting back to the world of planetaria, I am sure that each of us try in our best way to not just "go for the rote," but to inspire each child and adult that travels through our doorways. Yes, we cover the planets and/or moon, but we strive to increase understanding. We show why the planets are the way they are. We help them learn how the moon goes around the earth and why we see its phases. In fact, we may even provide a little milk of human kindness, too. We have two great tools in our theaters: us and that machine in the middle of the round room. The machine can do some neat stuff, but it means nothing if we can't get the message across. I have seen a number of programs, both taped and live, that cover all sorts of topics from all sorts of planetariums. I always get a thrill at seeing how an educator tackles a concept. The greatest gift is seeing the light come on in a child when he/she "gets

it." We do have a cool job.

¹ When I was a grad student at the University of Florida, waaay back in 1987, we had a course on the Solar System we nicknamed "Fun Facts." It covered a lot of detail about the planets, but with minimal understanding. Later, there were more advanced courses offered that started to look at the planets as geological systems and studied the various systems within our Solar System. An example was a course called "Small Bodies." Planetary geology was just starting to become mainstream within the professional astronomy circuit.

² In the 1970 movie musical "Scrooge" with Albert Finney, the entire part about the two children is not present.

(Continued from page 6) *Small Talk*

ets and my cover of being just an ordinary lecture attendee was blown when he recognized me.

Do You Teach An Astronomy Class To High School Students?

If so, you might like to contact Larry Krumenaker, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Mathematics and Science Education at The University of Georgia, and take his survey at <http://lkrumena.myweb.uga.edu> and let your opinions be heard.

Women's History Month Pondering

I have been reading the book *Almost Heaven: The Story of Women in Space* by Bettyann Holtzmann Kelves and also attended a lecture at the Air and Space Museum with author Doris Rich on her book *Jackie Cochran: Pilot in the Fastest Lane*. It was fascinating to learn of the role that Jackie Cochran had in delaying the flight of women into space until Sally Ride flew in the Space Shuttle in 1983. Also at the lecture was producer, Lauren Ladivitch to show her PBS documentary, "Fly Girls" on women pilots in World War II. This is a fabulous introduction to women who paved the way for women to fly

into space and the shameful blot on the American space program for taking so long to integrate women into the program. To learn more about the lecture and Jackie Cochran, go to <http://www.nasm.si.edu/events/eventDetail.cfm?eventID=605>

If you are interested check out the above-mentioned books or order the PBS video at 1-800-Play-PBS. Does anyone have an equivalent program on women astronomers or astronauts? I don't know of any, however, you might like to go to http://womenshistory.about.com/od/aviationspace/Women_in_Space_Female_Astronauts_and_Cosmonauts.htm to learn more about women astronomers and astronauts. This is a great women's history site. Something to file away for next year's Women's History Month.

Stare Into The Hexagon

And check out this image <http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/multimedia/images/image-details.cfm?imageID=2549> from Cassini. What on Saturn can be causing this? Since the south pole on Saturn is round (see <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap061113.html>), a reader, Richard Haydon on spaceweather.com claimed it to be a nut and bolt holding the two hemispheres of Saturn together? Get it? A little joke for the toolie in your planetarium.

What Was The Last Bad Program You Gave?

It happens to everyone. With all good intentions you try to have planning a planetarium program, something bizarre can occur to destroy it. For example, a Cub Scout group reserved a program recently and their reservation form for the planetarium said "25, as requested". (My dome is tiny and comfortably, that is all we can accommodate at a time.) The group shows up in the evening when the school is normally closed. All the lights are off in the building and I can't find a custodian to turn them on.

The group shows and there are 120 instead of 25 and the guy in charge states that he thought that meant cub scouts but you could bring unlimited amounts of parents, friends, neighbor's kids etc. I tried to offer to do another program, but no one offered to leave. So I did it anyway with all the seats taken and folks on the floor. Midway into the program, there

was this loud pounding on the door and another group of folks come in and try to find a seat when all are gone and people are all over the floor. They had ignored requests by custodians and security that no one could be seated after the planetarium program had begun. The custodian was this guy over eighty who probably couldn't stop anyone anyway. Needless to say, I did the best I could under the circumstances, but I keep wondering how you people out there manage to stay smiling and professional when people insist on ignoring your rules about baby strollers, kids under 5, etc. I would be fascinated to know.

A One Day Walk Out

Teachers from Berkeley County where my planetarium is located opted to join 14 other counties in West Virginia in a one-day walk out and held informational picketing to inform legislatures that the meager 3.5% raise offered by the state was unacceptable. Unlike most of y'all, West Virginia is on a statewide school system and school districts that border surrounding states are losing teachers by the truckload to states that pay better. With West Virginia teacher salaries at 47th in the nation, going anywhere else is practically better than staying put, especially with the high cost of living found here in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia.

Since I am a certified teacher as well as a planetarium director, I was out for the first time since an



topics included building a new theater, seeing a demonstration of planetarium technology, updates of current programming at other theaters, and participating in a laboratory exercise to model the size and scale of the earth-sun system. Another goal of the event was to keep the costs and time frame to a minimum. Registration was only \$12! We felt that this would attract not only those who usually attend meetings, but also those that may not due to cost restraints. Limiting the event to only two days meant being away from home only one night. To minimize costs to our guests, we allowed them to sleep in the Nature Center. It doesn't take a lot of money to have a fulfilling, professional gathering like we did.

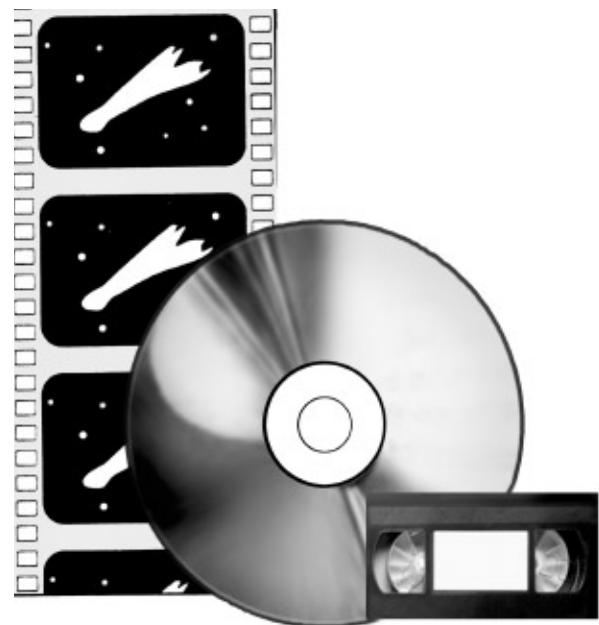
The planetarium shows were all in-house productions by Bays Mountain and was a great way to show off our skills and talent. Our guests were impressed by the artistry of the shows from our exhibits staff and the high production values from the planetarium staff.

The Park naturalists even got into the spirit of the meeting and provided an inspiring wolf howling program and a relaxing barge ride. The attendees truly enjoyed the Park's outdoor activities. How often is it that planetarians get to see the light of the sun, let alone enjoy a unique experience that only Bays Mountain can provide?

In order to focus the event on planetarians, we limited vendor support to only one company, Seiler-Zeiss. They graciously supported the cost of the special dinner of Persian cuisine on Monday night. I don't think that any of us will forget that meal!

Jason Dorfman and I were exhausted by the end of the event, but were filled with satisfaction that the event was very successful. We feel that our goal of focusing on the planetarian was accomplished and well-received.

designed to stand alone which is great for "rainy night" applications but you can also view them in succession for a more comprehensive approach. My only caution concerning this series is for those of you who find they have to worry about the potential offensiveness of both the concept and the word - evolution. If your guests find the idea of evolving from stardust, slime and rats intolerable, this is not the series for you.



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Spitz' Charlie Holmes Retires

Joyce Towne
E&S Spitz

Charles H. Holmes Jr., former CEO of Spitz, will retire in late June, after 45 years with the company. Charlie notes that he started work at Spitz on a Friday the 13th in 1962. He spent many years in the installation, service and contracts departments before becoming Spitz' President in 1988, and Chairman of Spitz in 2001.



Photo provided by Joyce Towne

Working for Spitz, Charlie traveled to 44 of the

50 states, three territories, and 29 foreign countries. He sold 29 planetariums and installed 48 personally (many of the latter were A3Ps), and participated in the expansion of the industry at a time when hundreds of planetariums opened world wide.

He was involved with the first non-earth-bound, computerized planetarium - the STP, and the first tilted dome planetarium - the STS, and he positioned Spitz for the digital projection age and new product development in the 1990s.

Congratulations, Charlie.

11-day walkout in 1990. On the way to the picket line, my 1999 Saturn blew up and had to be towed to the Winchester, VA dealership for repairs. All in all an expensive day, but well worth it for the card I found in my mailbox from fellow teacher, Annette Bowers thanking me for walking out and offering support since she could not afford to walk out being a single mom. How did we ever manage 12 days without pay back in 1990? Has the cost of living really gone up that much? To read about the nitty gritty of the walkout from CNN, go here: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/EDUCATION/03/14/teacher.walkout.ap/index.html>

How Is The Climate Out There For Planetarium Folks Small and Otherwise?

I noticed on the IPS web site that job announcements in the planetarium field seem kind of few. Since I don't regularly get announcements from Dome-, am I wrong about this? With the loss of at least three people this year in the field, and some that I consider brilliant and talented, am I the only one to think that the rewards for being a creative and talented planetarium person is so little that the potential of losing one's job is quite real. Do you feel threatened? Am I mistaken about this? Do you agree? How can I know unless I hear from you? Drop me a line at isbeth4@hotmail.com.

News From SEPA States

FLORIDA

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Florida Planetarium Association (FLORPLAN)

Contact George Fleenor for details.

GeoGraphics Imaging & Consulting Bradenton, FL

George Fleenor reports: I would like to correct some confusion. GeoGraphics Imaging & Consulting still exists. I still offer content of various sorts such as still images, all skies, pans, star shows for traditional domes as well as full dome and specialize in animation sequences provided by Joe Tucciarone. Many of you have seen me at various professional conferences registered as associated with AVI/Konica Minolta Planetarium. I (GeoGraphics Imaging and Consulting) have been on retainer with Konica Minolta Planetarium for several years now. I am part of their sales and technical service team. This is a relationship that has proven beneficial to both parties and I look forward to continuing my relationship with them and everyone else as I have for many years. I am still here.

Bishop Planetarium South Florida Museum Bradenton, FL

Jeff Rogers reports: They lurk in the universe like cosmic dragons, ready to devour entire stars and so

powerful that nothing, not even light, can escape their grasp. Unseen voids with the gravity of a million suns, black holes are among the most intriguing and least understood objects in our universe. Only now are we beginning to understand their true nature.

Black Holes, produced by the Clark Planetarium, has been added to the space show lineup at the Bishop Planetarium, along with *Passport to the Universe*, *Search For Life: Are We Alone?*, *The Secret of the Cardboard Rocket*. *Black Holes* is an exploration of the most intriguing and least understood objects in our universe: How are black holes made? Where did the idea of a black hole come from? What was Einstein's connection to them? How do we detect them? What would happen if you were to approach one? Will the Earth ever get sucked into a black hole? Are there really such things as "worm holes"?

Designed for all audiences, this 38 minute presentation features intense 3-D simulations of black holes and the strange physical and visual effects they can create.

Black Holes opened to the public on March 1. It will be presented Monday - Friday at 2:00 pm; Saturdays at noon and 3:00 pm; Sundays at 3:15 pm; Thursday nights at 7:30 pm and Saturday nights at 8:00 pm.

Admission to all planetarium shows is included in your museum admission, except on Saturday nights, when admission to shows is \$5.95 for adults and \$4.95 for children under 12 for the first show, and \$4.00 for each additional show.

Buehler Planetarium Broward Community College Davie, FL

Susan J. Barnett reports: The Buehler Planetarium & Observatory is running public shows four days a week. Weekend shows and monthly specials include *The Little Star That Could*, *Dawn of Astronomy*, *Comets Are Coming* and *Explorers of Mauna Kea*.

We continue to rotate shows on Wednesdays, and

these shows include *The People*, *Egyptian Skylore*, *Endless Horizon*, *2061: Secrets of Mars*, *To Worlds Unknown* 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 usually set up a scope to view sunspots, and watch flares through a Hydrogen-Alpha filter on another.

Hallstrom Planetarium Indian River Community College Fort Pierce, FL

Jon Bell reports: The Hallstrom Planetarium in Fort Pierce is wrapping up its school year with very good attendance figures. For the past two years field trip visits were down significantly, owing to the aftermath of Hurricanes Frances, Jeanne and Wilma. As a result of these storms, field trips had been cut out of many school curricula. But now things are returning to normal again, and the theater's been completely booked since January.

Public shows have also been well-attended and well-received. *Ringworld* just closed out, and *Report From Venus* will open in late April. Next fall I plan on doing a show about space exploration, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Space Age. It will probably be a live, multimedia presentation that features the current evening sky, plus a 50 year retrospective on the space program. (Unless someone has a really cool show to sell?)

Our local astronomy club, the Treasure Coast Astronomical Society, has also been very generous and funded *ViewSpace*, available from the Space Telescope Science Institute, and this wonderful internet-based program is now showing in our theater in between shows. It was quite a hit with the 500+ folks who came out for our Astronomy Day/Lunar Eclipse event on March 3 (although clouds kept us from seeing the eclipse - drat!)

One of the really nice things that has happened is that from time to time, I find myself being visited by colleagues who have retired and who come down to Florida in the winter. Dr. Norm Dean of the Wat-

son-King Planetarium in Towson, Maryland, has dropped in a few times, and Peter Connors from Half Hollow Hills Planetarium (and former MAPS president) has not only dropped in, but actually helped out with show production and presentation. Pete re-built a swirling clouds effect that we'd gotten from the former Hansen Planetarium in Salt Lake City, and he repaired a sunset projector we'd gotten from Brevard Community College's planetarium (hmm, we seem to be gathering up some cool old technology here...) Also, Pete has gone one step further and is teaching an introductory astronomy class to IRCC college students on our Stuart campus.



I must also thank Kris McCall for sending me on some projection lenses and other things from the Sudekum Planetarium in Nashville. Kris, Peter and Norm are terrific ambassadors for our profession, showing a willingness and enthusiasm to share knowledge, skills and even equipment with their fellow planetarium operators!

Kika Sylva Pla Planetarium Santa Fe Community College Gainesville, FL

Laurent Pellerin reports: As of Tuesday, April 3, 2007, I formally accepted the position of Planetarium Coordinator of the Kika Sylva Pla Planetarium at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville Florida. I will be starting at the KSP Planetarium on June 4, 2007. Derek Demeter, my assistant at the SCC Planetarium, will be running the place until

my position is reclassified and opened for hiring...he has been here for 3+ years now and knows all of our systems as well as having produced shows on his own here.

I'll let you know when I have a new e-mail address there at Santa Fe. (G. Fleenor's note: Best of luck Laurent!)

**Planetarium
Science Center of Pinellas County
St. Petersburg, FL**

Madeline McNaughton reports: The average person is likely to discover a better route to work or a better way to dress; but very few people will discover a new planet during the course of their lifetime.

"It doesn't matter if you're 8-years-old or 80-years-old," says Executive Director of the Science Center of Pinellas County Madeline McNaughton, "you don't need to be intimidated by astronomy. If you make it a hobby, who knows where your passion will take you."

That's the point of the Astronomy Expo, which takes place at the Science Center on Saturday, April 14th from 8:00 pm. to 11:00 p.m.

For Astronomer Daryl Schrader, astronomy evolved into a lifetime passion. Professor Schrader is an adjunct astronomer at USF and a member of the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club - which organizes the Astronomy Expo event.

"Most amateur astronomers aren't motivated to discover new planets when they look through the end of a telescope," says Professor Schrader about the difficult challenge of planet detection. "Most people just want to know what is out there, how big the universe is, and they want to try to understand the universe."

Professor Schrader says what thrills him most about astronomy is looking back in time. A light-year is about 6 trillion miles; astronomers can view cosmic features that are dozens of light years away.

"The Astronomy Expo is very hands on," says

McNaughton. "We have planetarium shows and the public gets an opportunity to use a research grade telescope to look at the majestic, ringed planet Saturn which is very visual and exciting for beginners. Plus we show people how to use telescopes and even how to build them."

The Science Center has an optical lab where the public can build telescopes with help from the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club. Only one other place in the U.S. has something similar.

**The Saunders Planetarium
Museum of Science & Industry
Tampa, FL**

Al Peche has resigned.

GEORGIA
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**Planetarium
Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, GA**

Becky Lowder reports: These are images from some events at Georgia Southern.



Winners of Cassini model and Saturn at RingWorld 2 Public Evening.




Visitors on Sun-Earth Day casting shadows.



Planetarium Assistant, Jimmy Sheahan, doing hands-on activities with school children on Day/Night and colors of stars.

KENTUCKY



**The Gheens Science Hall & Rauch Planetarium
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY**

Scott Miller reports: We move into our 6th year of operating in our new facility maintaining a steady stream of K-8 students as well as college astronomy classes here at U of L. Like many planetariums around the country, we will be participating in Astronomy Day, partnering with Meade and Astronomy magazine in giving away a telescope to those attending our events. And, from some of our early bookings, it looks like we may be pretty steady through the summer months as well as day camps and day care centers come to visit.

**Golden Pond Planetarium & Observatory
Land Between The Lakes Natl. Rec. Area
LBL, KY**

Welcome to the Golden Pond Planetarium and Observatory! Explore such phenomena as white dwarves and black holes, all unveiled on our planetarium's 40-foot dome. Novice astronomers can learn to identify the constellations on a simulated night sky. Or head to the Golden Pond Observatory, where you can observe the stars through one of our four telescopes or spy solar flares through our Hydrogen-Alpha refractor.

The Golden Pond Planetarium offers the latest in digital imaging technology to present breathtaking, full dome view of the night skies and celestial events. The planetarium is located inside the Golden Pond Visitor Center. It is a fully-equipped, 81-seat, 40-foot diameter dome planetarium designed for multi-image projection of video, slides, and simulated night skies.

The planetarium is also home to the Western Ken-

tucky Amateur Astronomers (WKAA), a group which meets here each month for stargazing sessions and discussions. The public is invited to attend these meetings at no charge. Please call the Golden Pond Planetarium at 1-800-455-5897 for more information.

Planetarium Shows:

Far Out Space Places. Weekdays at 10am; Saturday and Sunday at 4pm. Take a virtual vacation as you visit the most extreme destinations in our cosmic neighborhood. Scale the cliffs of the Mariner Valley on Mars, glide on the winds of Neptune, and visit the original lunar landing site of the Apollo astronauts. Breathtaking images that will put you in the midst of these far out space places.

Blown Away: The Wild World of Weather. Daily at 3pm. This show is a virtual adventure produced by the New Detroit Science Center. You will see an incredible view of the many forms of our earth's weather through spectacular footage, projected on our 40-foot dome.

Search for Life in the Universe. Daily at 11am and 2pm. Are we alone in the universe? Host Leonard Nimoy (Star Trek's Mr. Spock) poses this question, which has puzzled humanity since its beginning. Learn about the attempts being made to establish contact with extraterrestrial civilizations. Examine the ingredients necessary for life on our planet as we ponder the possibility of life in our solar system and beyond.

Kentucky Skies. Saturday and Sunday at 1pm. Get a sneak preview of tonight's sky! How? Through the magic of our 40-foot dome, plus the expertise of our Planetarium staff, learn the constellations, lore of the night sky, and some celestial events you can see for yourself.

Summer Nights Planetarium Shows:

Friday Summer Nights. Fridays only at 8pm.

Greek Mythologies and the Night Sky. One listed daytime programs will be shown followed by a tour of the sky and the mythology behind the constellation names. See *Greek Mythologies and the Night Sky* Fridays only at 8pm. Doors open at 7:30pm and close at 8pm sharp, so be sure to arrive early!

Saturday Summer Nights. Saturdays only at 8 pm. Join us each Saturday night in the summer (begins May 26) for a very special indoor/outdoor show!

Summer Nights Show Schedule

Far Out Space Places - 5/26, 6/23, 7/21, 8/19

Search of Life - 6/2, 6/30, 7/28, 8/25

Kentucky Skies - 6/9, 7/7, 8/4, 9/1

Blown Away - 6/16, 7/14, 8/11

Show times are 8pm, Saturday nights only. Doors open at 7:30pm and close at 8pm sharp, so be sure to arrive early!



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

Jon Elvert reports: For the third consecutive year, the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium participated in Baton Rouge's annual Red Stick Animation Festival - a five day event offering workshops and lectures about digital animation presented by Sony Imageworks, Pixar, and Dreamworks. The planetarium hosted a scientific visualization session that included a screening of DomeFest 2005 and the premier demonstration of our Digital Universe (Sky-Skan) software, as well as showings of entries from independent animators. In addition to the planetarium, the Red Stick Festival is sponsored by the city, the nearby Fine Arts Center and our Old State Capital museum.

School-wise, we've now established a closer relationship with our local school board by providing staff development in-service augmenting the content for our state's standardize testing, and by targeting specific curriculum needs in our school programming. In turn, the content curriculum coordinators encourage the school districts to both attend the planetarium and budget future funding for trips to the planetarium.

This spring, we installed a new LED cove lighting system and, as mentioned above, the Digital Universe program. Although we've gone completely digital, we always use our Minolta Infinium star ball when presenting the night sky, which is a part of every show.

Lafayette Planetarium Lafayette Natural History Museum Lafayette, LA

Dave Hostetter reports: School attendance is finally starting to return to normal in Lafayette after the two hurricanes of 2005. Numbers are up and we are seeing groups from schools in the heavily affected areas of the state for the first time since the 2004/2005 school year. It's a hopeful sign that things are getting better, although there are still devastated regions.

Since 2007 is the International Heliophysical Year, we are emphasizing the sun in our programming. Mostly cloudy skies put a damper on our Sun-Earth Day activities but in the spring we have weekly solar viewing in a park behind the museum during the museum's popular lunchtime concert series, as well as solar telescopes going to local festivals and school science days. During the summer we will continue the lunchtime sidewalk astronomy with which we had success last year.

Our springtime planetarium program is Sudukum's *Nine Planets and Counting*, with an addition at the end about the IAU's new planet definition.

Planetarium staff participated as judges in contests in the regional Science Olympiad at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. We are offering astronomy instruction to the teams going to the state contest.

We are looking forward to a busy summer with lots of interesting programs and children's activities, and continuing preparation for the 2008 SEPA conference here in Lafayette. Best of all, we expect to see a new Assistant Planetarium Curator hired and doing programs by early June!

St. Charles Parish Library Planetarium Luling, LA

Gary Meibaum reports: The Saint Charles Parish Library Planetarium is proud to announce the completion of the full-dome version of *Wilbear's Adventure*. This was an original slide based show produced by Sharon Shanks of Youngstown State University in Ohio. My associate Jason Talley has done a fine job of fleshing out the show to full-dome. Sharon has generously granted free distribution rights for our full-dome version. Although the show was produced for our MEDIAGLOBE projector, it should be runnable on any 1024x1024 full-dome projector that can use mpeg2 files. It is a delightful 23 minute show aimed at the younger set. Wilbear is a real 'teddy bear' that wants to fly. In his cartoon world he learns about flying from his grandpa bear. We offer this show to you for free. Please contact me at gmeibaum@stcharles.lib.la.us and I can get a copy for you.



Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators (CAPE)

The James H. Lynn Planetarium will host this year's meeting of the Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators (CAPE) on May 7th and 8th. All planetarium educators are welcome. The theme for the conference is "The Budget Conscious Planetarium or How to do Practically Anything with Practically Nothing." The Lynn Planetarium is located in the Schiele Museum of Natural History, Gastonia, NC.

Morehead Planetarium and Science Center University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, NC

Two new programs for adults are available at MPSC this spring - *Starry Spring Nights* and *Beginning Skywatching*. Visitors to *Starry Spring Nights* will

learn how to identify the planets, bright stars and constellations best seen this spring while enjoying stories from various cultures about star patterns in the heavens. In *Beginning Skywatching*, a six-session course, participants will focus on what can be seen with just the unaided eye and will include planetarium and classroom instruction, hands-on activities and a “planet walk.” Each participant receives a planisphere for home use, plus plenty of take-home instructional materials

MPSC’s new exhibit, *Zoom In: Science at the Extremes*, is now open to the public on weekends. Admission is included with each purchase of a planetarium show ticket. (Of course, MPSC members enjoy free admission!) Snap a photo of outer space using a real telescope in Chile. Magnify an object 200 times its normal size. Take a virtual trip inside a dog! This two-part exhibit highlights the big and small of our universe through the story of a gamma ray burst discovery and the examination of the inner workings of a human lung. *Zoom In* visitors will find lots to do including interactive learning adventures involving both lung cilia and remote telescopes in Chile, South America. Visitors can even relive the action of a star explosion recorded by UNC- Chapel Hill professor Dan Reichart and MPSC’s own Josh Haislip.

James H. Lynn Planetarium
Schiele Museum of Natural History
Gastonia, NC

Jim Craig reports: The James H. Lynn Planetarium is gearing up production for its new planetarium program, *Dream Catchers: Sky Lore of the American Indian*. This program is designed to complement the museum’s *Buffalo Nation: Plains Indian Cultures* exhibit as well as help meet requirements of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Written and illustrated by Jim Craig, this program will be produced entirely in-house.

PARI StarLab
Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute
Rosman, NC

Bob Hayward reports: Beth Snoko Harris joined

the PARI staff on March 1. Beth is well-known throughout North Carolina as she has been active in a number of science education endeavors. Currently she is the webmaster for North Carolina State University’s The Science House and for the North Carolina Science Teachers Association. She comes to PARI with education and experience in educational technology and will work with PARI’s website and publications as well as join Mike Castelaz, Christi Whitworth and Bob Hayward in PARI’s education department. Some of you had the pleasure of meeting both Beth and Christi at the March SAPS (Southern Appalachian Planetarium Social) hosted at Bays Mountain Planetarium. (Great meeting, BTW!) Welcome aboard, Beth!

Progress is continuing with the Cherokee legend narrations under the SERCH-PLATO (Southeast Regional Clearing House - Planetarium Learning and Teaching Opportunity) grant. Four legends have been recorded in both English and Cherokee by sixth grade students from Cherokee Middle School on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, NC. These were presented in rough form at the recent SAPS and will be in a more polished format for the upcoming CAPE (Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators) at the Schiele Planetarium in Gastonia in May.

Nine Radio Sky STARLAB cylinders are now available for piloting in STARLABs. If you have a STARLAB and are interested in participating in this effort, please contact Christi cwhitworth@pari.edu. These are the cylinders that were developed by undergraduate majors in physics and multimedia arts and sciences from the University of North Carolina at Asheville and Furman University in Greenville, SC. This effort was funded by a National Science Foundation IPSE grant. Once the pilot testing is complete, these cylinders and associated curricular materials will be available through STARLAB vendors. For more information visit <http://campus.pari.edu/radiosky>.

Planning is in full force for a busy summer. Once again PARI will host a two-week session for students from Duke University’s TIP (Talent Identification Program). This is also the second year for the SSL (Student Science Laboratory) program for high school students from three local counties. SSL

is funded by the Burroughs Welcome Foundation. In addition, the education department is working with the ROBOTS (Robotics: Opportunities for Building Outstanding Talent in the Sciences) program for sixth grades around the state. And, of course, there will be the regular offerings for homeschool groups, camps and teachers especially through the Pisgah Forest Institute. So, we look forward to a busy summer.

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

Patsy Wilson reports: Attendance at the newly-implemented Saturday afternoon planetarium shows has steadily increased since the beginning of the school year. Funds from a SERCH grant provided staff and paid admission for several underserved groups to visit our facility which primarily reaches school children. Adult day care, senior citizen groups and residents of group homes for mentally challenged adults are some who have enjoyed the planetarium through the funding of SERCH.

We offered laser shows here for the first time since 1999 and the community responded with great enthusiasm. We were overwhelmed with the attendance and excitement generated by Skylase system from AVI. The week following our run of shows, the facility director wrote a grant to purchase a system for future use. When a 30-foot dome, 75 seat facility that averages about 30 persons per weekend opening can clear over \$600.00 in 2 hours, it makes a rather compelling argument for owning a system.

Patsy will be directing the Rowan-Salisbury Schools trip to Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama in June. Forty-six students, grades 4-8, and four adults will travel for a week of space excitement. We sponsor this trip every two years.

Finally, we have three summer camps planned: “Mission to Mars”, “The Great Space Treasure Hunt” and “Starry Nights - Constellations and Art”. The last camp is a collaborative opportunity with Waterworks, the local art gallery.

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 (RPSEC) on the campus of the University of South Carolina Aiken continues its celebration the 20th anniversary of the RPSEC. The events so far have included a kick-off fund-raising dinner, a teacher appreciation breakfast, the first annual Galaxy Gala that provided supporters with an opportunity to “adopt” a heavenly body at the DuPont Planetarium, a lunar eclipse event and National Astronomy Dayactivities. On May 31, 2007, we will have a “Blue Moon Festival” on the second full moon of May to finish out the year of celebration.

Early in 2005, we began experiencing some difficulties with the Bechtel Telescope housed in the RPSEC Observatory. The Bechtel Telescope is a 16 inch, Meade LX-200. On occasion, the drive motor began to slew for no apparent reason. At first it seldom occurred but the frequency of the event increased over time. Eventually, the telescope became unusable. After some repeated communication with Meade, the company agreed to repair the drive motor problem. Meade even agreed to pay for shipping both ways, which was a welcome gesture. The telescope was put back in service in March and has been working fine so far.

Unfortunately, this was not the first time that such a problem developed. In 2003, the telescope had to be shipped to Meade for the same problem. Hopefully, a more permanent solution has been reached.

In February, the planetarium showed *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by the New Jersey State Museum Planetarium and the Raritan Valley Community College Planetarium for the general public and for school groups. We were contacted about the show and concerns with the show’s accuracy were addressed. Our staff has been considering the points and has already made some appropriate adjustments to the show. This included introducing some of the “controversies” prior to the show to provide the audiences with background information to make informed conclusions. With the factual information addressed appropriately, we feel that the show is a

valuable component of our offerings, and we plan to continue showing it in the future.

A local production called *Dark Shadows* which discusses moon phases and eclipses, was the public planetarium show for March. Another local production *Mission to Mars* and *Journey Into the Living Cell* from the Buhl Planetarium were available for school groups. We had a successful viewing of the lunar eclipse on March 3 even though there were significant clouds on the horizon. Fortunately, we were able to see the last 40 minutes of the eclipse.

The public shows for April were *Blown Away: The Wild World of Weather* by The New Detroit Science Center and a local production called *Cruising Through the Constellations*. These two shows were also presented on the night of National Astronomy Day, April 21, 2007. In addition to the planetarium shows, the Astronomy Club of Augusta set up telescopes on the lawn and the Bechtel telescope was available for viewing the wonders of the heavens. Finally, there were a number of hands-on activities available that were related to the event that we called, "Earth and Sky Night." *In My Back Yard* by the Calgary Science Centre and *Mission to Mars* will be available to school groups in May but the general public will have the opportunity to see *Mission to Mars*.

The 3rd annual meeting of the Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators (CAPE) is coming in May. The conference is scheduled for May 7 and 8 at the Lynn Planetarium in Gastonia, North Carolina. Darlene Smalley and Gary Senn hope to see many other Carolinians at the conference.

Settlemyre Planetarium Museum of York County Rock Hill, SC


Glenn Dantzler reports: The Settlemyre Planetarium is experiencing the usual school rush this spring. We have had an unusual amount of younger visitors than I remember from past years. The astronomy club is again growing and we are pleased with turn of events. However, I feel left out with all the new members using GPS scopes and CCD camera and here I am with charts and my old Dob! We will be

doing a public star party the first of June on the lake. I know it will be late before we can start but you have to go where the people are. We usually gain at least one new member at these events.

We are looking forward to a busy summer to boost planetarium attendance numbers which seem to be a little down from last year. With the new museum on the horizon we don't change exhibits as frequently and perhaps that is the reason. Speaking of the new museum; I have been promised a full dome immersive planetarium. We are planning a 40 foot dome but may have to scale back to a 30 foot dome.

TENNESSEE

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Bays Mountain Planetarium Kingsport, TN

Adam Thanz reports: The folks at Bays Mountain are quite entrenched with projects. As of this writing, they are showing an in-house produced show that was written and narrated by the planetarium's educational interpreter, Jason Dorfman. It's entitled *Exploring the Winter Sky*. It covers some of the major constellations, asterisms, sky lore and planets that are visible in the early 2007 evenings. I think Jason did a great job, especially since this was his first show production of this magnitude. He even got to run the show in front of many other planetarians during our SAPS meeting in March. Would that be a little stressful? Read about the crazy shenanigans that went on in the separate article within this journal issue.

We are currently working on a new show called *The Case of the Disappearing Planet*. It was written by Assoc. Professor Robin Byrne from Northeast State Community College in Blountville, TN. Many of you met her at the last conference in Cocoa, FL. She portrays the main character as she tries to deci-

pher what happened to the ex-planet Pluto. It's done in a humorous, film noir detective story format. All the other voices are from myself and other Park staff. The artwork is by Deborah Mann and Allen Davis and sports lots of humorous characters and scenes. It is a visual treat for the whole family. Music is being created by Jason Dorfman as I write this and is going to be really well done. He's in a quandary as he wants to play with the cool, new software we purchased (Logic Pro), but needs to get the job done by the deadline. I fully understand his dilemma.



Preparations started on Friday afternoon when parents started showing up to help get the materials and snacks ready for the evening. The busses arrived right on time, about 6:45 p.m. They were split into three groups for the three venues of observing, indoor activity, and snacks. Arriving at the observatory grounds at 7 p.m., the BMAC was ready and waiting for the first round. All three rounds received a short introduction at the steps of the observatory and then were allowed to look through many telescopes, each on different celestial objects. The night sky couldn't have been better with clear skies, a

waxing crescent moon, Venus, Saturn, and Orion high in the south. The students were well behaved and attentive. Many positive comments were made by the club members about our guests. The visitors were most impressed with the views through the telescopes and our volunteerism.

Once the last group left, the BMACers packed up the equipment and headed in around 9 p.m. for some "spacy" snacks. I especially liked the sausage ball inside an onion ring. It was a great way to end a successful evening. Many thanks goes to BMAC for supporting such an activity. I feel that we'll see



All of the 90 students were able to make models of a rover as part of their evening activity at Bays Mountain Park. Photo by John Rochelle

some of those students again when they bring their parents for a public StarWatch program.

That is all at this time. Our next installment for TN news will have a recap and some new project info.

Sudekum Planetarium Adventure Science Center Nashville, TN

Kris McCall and Drew Gilmore report: The following narratives are taken from our monthly star charts. It gives readers a sense of the progress of our expansion.

January 2007: See Ya 'Round The Galaxy

It doesn't matter when in January you're reading this, the planetarium staff is going to be busy.

Maybe we'll be scurrying around trying to move, store, give away or trash 30-plus years worth of accumulated stuff in our offices, the dome, the back storage rooms, and other nooks and crannies. We may be fighting sleep in the midst of a 32 hour show marathon. Or we'll be sweating bullets as we strip the theater of all its equipment in just one week. Late in the month, we'll probably be outside, curled



Young, budding stargazers at our observatories getting a "heads-up" in finding constellations in the night sky. Photo by John Rochelle

up on the grass, crying as the yellow bulldozers reduce our domed home to a pile of rubble.

Our temporary offices will be much smaller and 'cubicle' in shape. That's gonna take some getting used to, along with not working in the dark. Much of the equipment we have been using for more than 30 years is moving on to new homes at other planetariums across the country, in Georgia, Illinois, Texas, and California. We will continue to distribute our original shows to other planetariums, even while we have no dome of our own. Over the next seventeen months, we'll be writing text to accompany the 12,000 square feet of cool new astronomy and space exhibits. And there are new shows to produce for the new planetarium, taking advantage of the advances in technology we will have at our disposal. Anyone who thinks we will be taking sixteen months off is sorely mistaken.

With all the activity going on this month, we mustn't forget to thank YOU for visiting us, whether today was your first visit ever, or your thirtieth. It is more rewarding than a paycheck when adults leaving the planetarium stop to comment on what they learned

about the universe. We'll miss the hugs around our legs from kindergartners who just had their first exciting visit to our funny round room with the upside down bowl ceiling. There is nothing we love more than to turn on the stars and hear a chorus of "oooooh, aahhhhhh." Except maybe for those same sounds heard underneath the real sky. So thank you for your time, your attention, your questions and your comments good and bad. We know we'll hear more oohs and ahhs when the new planetarium is open, and we can hardly wait.

February 2007: Construction Update

Well, the planetarium is gone. All that remains is a pile of rubble and twisted metal. Soon, even that will be gone. We're happy, though, because that means we're well on our way to begin construction of the new Sudekum Planetarium and Sky and Space Wing, to open in May 2008.



"Portable planetarium"

We noticed construction workers digging this large curved trench today. Whatever could it be for? Hmmmm....Not only was there a lunar eclipse on this date, but it also marked the 55th anniversary of the opening of the first Sudekum Planetarium, way back in 1952 and the Nashville Children's Museum.

To say that this has been an emotional experience would be an understatement. It is exciting, scary, sad, aggravating, exhausting, and mind-boggling;

all at the same time. In the meantime, we have been working intensely on exhibit content and design. Every time we go out on the roof to look at the site, there is something new to see. On more than one occasion, in the middle of a meeting, the building



"Naked dome"

shakes. First there was the blasting. Then, there was tearing down the wing of the planetarium. Lately, it has felt like that scene from Jurassic Park because they have begun taking a chunk out of the main building. Everyone watches the water in their glass ripple from the vibrations.

This is the longest time for both Drew and I that we have been without a round room. For me, that is



"Oh, the agony"

more than 31 years. It's gonna be a really neat theater with some pretty unique exhibits - if we survive the next 15 months.

April 2007: Construction Update

Once the old planetarium was torn down, it took quite some time for the site to be readied for construction to begin. Concrete has been poured for exterior walls, and the large drum that will house the new planetarium is starting to take shape. Even the main building of the Science Center looks a little different since the right front corner has been nibbled off by a hungry backhoe. This will be one of the primary connection points to the new wing that opens into the two-story Test Bed area. Visit <http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com> to see video of the construction including a growing timelapse movie of the process. You can also read the press release and see the renderings of what the new building and exhibit will look like.



"Interesting trench"

channel sound system, vibrant LED cove lighting, and additional theater control systems. It's gonna be awesome!

Meanwhile, there are billions and billions of details from contracts filled with legalese to the location of electrical outlets behind the dome that fill our waking hours. Drew and I are spending 95% of our time working on the expansion. If we are not in endless meetings discussing the minutiae of exhibit design and content development, we are chained to the computer writing content, commenting on exhibit fabrication drawings, and trying to keep track of 12,000 square feet of exhibit information. There has been amazingly little time to work on 'planetarium' stuff in the last three months. Believe it when we say that we are missing six shows a day, finicky slide projectors, and even working nights

and weekends in the dome.

Planetarium projects are fast moving up the priority list as you read this. We are working with the talented creative team from the National Space Centre in Leicester, England, on the inaugural show which has the working title of *Stars*. We also had the great opportunity to travel to England to learn from them about the intricacies and potential pitfalls of full-dome production. While they work on the big fancy show, Drew and I are adapting some of our classic shows for the full-dome realm. Soon, you too will be able to run *Our Place in Space* and *Nine Planets and Counting* on that fancy new digital demon.

As mentioned before, check our website, [_www.SudekumPlanetarium.com_](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com), regularly. Drew updates it fairly regularly. There is so much more we can say and show but not enough time to write it or room for it in the Journal. We have some really cool video of demolition, blasting, and more to share the next time we see you.



“Center”

Virginia Living Museum Planetarium Newport News, VA

Kelly Herbst reports: Life is settling down a bit here in southeastern Virginia. In addition to myself and our new Science Educator, John Wright, Staff Educators Jim Drummond and Judy Molnar are training on planetarium operations and are excited to be presenting astronomy programs to children.

As part of our connection to the 400th anniversary of Jamestown celebration, at the end of March we will reopen the planetarium to the public for the two weeks of local Spring Break with *The Skies of Jamestown*, a mixed recorded and live program focusing on the importance of the sky to the early colonists, and showing the skies above Jamestown today. Discussions are in the works for opening the theater to the public at least part-time over the summer.

I attended the SAPS gathering in early March and had a grand time. Thanks to everyone who made me feel so welcome and supported. I learned a great deal too, and came back to work with fresh perspective on our coming (hopefully) upgrades.

Thomas Jefferson HS Planetarium Richmond, VA

Leslie Bochenski reports: Finally, after years of crumbling plaster behind the dome, the problem has been fixed! Plaster pieces the size of golf balls falling on and through the suspended ceiling tiles forced closure of the Planetarium for the last 3 school years, and forced me to take the show on the road with outreach programs.

Over Winter Break, 2006, a construction crew removed over 2 tons of plaster, and left behind what seemed like 1 ton of plaster dust! After a thorough cleaning, I resumed programs before the end of January. I have been looking at *The Moon's Changing Face* with third grade; and the fourth grade classes are *Spinning in Space* (which some of you might remember from the Cocoa Beach Conference).

I'm just happy to be back under the dome!

VIRGINIA 

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Avampato Discovery Museum ElectricSky™ Theater Charleston, WV

Curt Spivey reports: I'm happy to report the Electric-Sky™ Theater received a computer upgrade. We've had a problem with heat and concrete dust causing catastrophic computer failures since we opened in July 2003. Last summer we had a new cooling system installed in the computer room, and this upgrade has all but eliminated the problems. We still have concerns with two of our three video servers, but we know how to work around issues with them. We are beginning our budget cycle, and I've put in a beg to get an upgrade to eSky II -- I'm not hopeful, but it doesn't hurt to ask. In the meantime, no more Windows 2000 machines! Of course, we get XP right when Vista is coming out. Can't have everything.

Our current planetarium show is the National Space Centre's *Mars*, a real crowd pleaser. We are hoping to run it for a while until we learn how to use our other new toy, a super powerful Mac Pro loaded to allow us to start producing our own shows! Hopefully by the fall we'll be putting new content on the dome. Last but not least, mark your calendars for July 4-8. Two local astronomy clubs, the Central Appalachian Astronomy Club and the Kanawha Valley Astronomical Society are putting on a super star party event, StarQuest IV in conjunction with the National Radio Astronomical Observatory at Greenbank, WV! All the Rocket Boys (sans Homer Hickam) will be there, as well as many other great speakers. Lots of great radio and visual astronomy! You can find out more at <http://www.greenbankstarquest.org/>

