

Southern Skies

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Journal of the Southeastern Planetarium Association

Winter 2006



The Pleiades Photo: Conrad Jung

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President's Message

Patsy Wilson

Margaret C. Woodson Planetarium
Salisbury, NC

Greetings and Happy 2006!

The beginning of a new year offers us many opportunities for a fresh start. There are twelve months full of days, hours, minutes and seconds waiting to be filled. It is enough to make even the most pessimistic person feel the urge for optimism. I've completed one year of my two-year term as President of SEPA. In 2005, I felt as if I were taking baby steps, learning something at every turn that would benefit my leadership of this organization. We have been blessed with leadership throughout our history that provided vision, knowledge, creativity and careful planning. It has been my desire to attempt to emulate the performance of those persons. As I begin my second and final year of Presidency, I'm full of optimism for the future of this organization.

In this mailing, you should receive the archival DVD record of our annual conference. This document can in no way reflect the countless hours of work done by Adam Thanz. He hauls a multitude of equipment around throughout the entire conference carefully recording all events: business sessions, paper sessions and even the fun and games. That's just the beginning of his effort. The editing and production of this DVD are quite involved and Adam does this without remuneration. Please take time to email him your personal gratitude for this contribution to SEPA.

Many of you have heard by now that Duncan Teague has asked to be replaced as our Secretary-Treasurer. There have been some changes in his personal and professional life that have precipitated his desire to free up some time. Duncan is still planning to be active in SEPA and is still acting in his

elected capacity pending the Council's decision on his replacement. For many years, Duncan has been a cornerstone of the SEPA Council serving repeatedly in this office as well as editing our journal. We owe much of our stability and financial security to Duncan's attention to detail, his technical knowledge and his desire to do what was best for the organization. I believe that I speak for the entire Council in saying that we will miss Duncan's voice of reason in our decision-making process. It goes without saying that each of you owe a debt of gratitude to Duncan for his years of dedicated service to SEPA.

It is not too soon to begin thinking about this year's conference to be held in Cocoa, Florida. I know that Mark Howard and the staff at the Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory are very busy with preparations. The conference is set for June 20-24, 2006 at the Radison Resort at the Port in Cape Canaveral. There are several things you can do now to make this a conference to remember. First, plan to be there. Start looking for funds at your facility to support this trip for you and some of your co-workers. Second, give some thought to sharing an idea during a paper session. These are not only educational for all, but sometimes quite entertaining as well. Third, this is an election year and the nominating committee will be searching for persons to serve as President-elect as well as Secretary-Treasurer. If you are interested in serving or if you know of a great potential candidate, please share that information with anyone currently

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

IPS Report

John Hare
ASH Enterprises
Bradenton, FL

John Mosley retires

Long-time editor John Mosley announced his retirement effective with the December issue of the IPS



John Mosley Photo: John Hare

journal, *The Planetarian*. Mosley had edited the journal for 76 consecutive issues. Under his editorship *The Planetarian* grew into a respected and on-time publication achieving full-color status in last several years of publication. Mosley also announced his retirement from the planetarium profession, an illustrious career that spanned 35 years, first at the Hansen Planetarium and most recently a tenure of 28 years at the Griffith Observatory.

IPS 2006 Conference

The next IPS Conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia, July 24-27, 2006. The conference theme is "Under the Southern Skies". There will be a pre-conference dinner on Saturday, July 22 for delegates arriving at least 1 day early. There will be a self-guided walking tour of the Old Melbourne Observatory on Sunday, July 23. The formal start of the conference commences with a welcoming reception at 1800 hours on Sunday.

The official conference website is quite comprehensive and will continue to be updated as more conference information becomes known. <www.ips2006.com> Conference registration costs are \$590 Australian dollars up to the early-bird deadline of April 21, after which the rate increases to \$700 Australian.

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Editor's Message

James Sullivan
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

Welcome to Mickey Jo Sorrell, who has taken on the challenge of being SEPA's Secretary/Treasurer. Her contact information is on the inside front cover.



MJ and mamita. Photo by Mickey Jo Sorrell

We would like to encourage you to submit pictures for the cover. Please don't hesitate to include photos and/or logos to go along with your SEPA news. Any format, electronic or hardcopy, is gratefully accepted.

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 _____

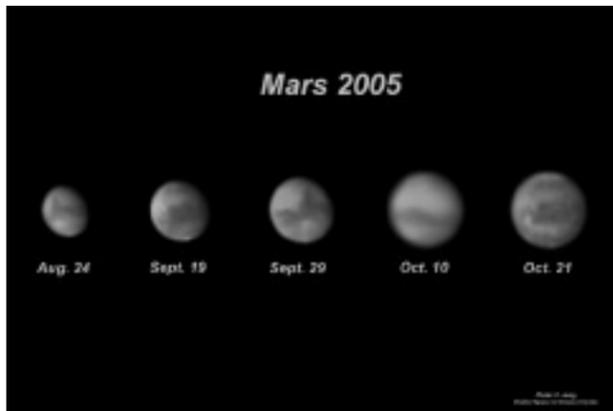
IPS Member? Yes _____ No _____

Contribution to Scholarship Award Account: \$ _____

Small Talk

Elizabeth Wasiluk
Hedgesville High School Planetarium
Hedgesville, WV

As I write this, everyone is recovering from Mars mania that reigned supreme during the fall. I enjoyed some pretty spectacular views that rivaled the views of August 2001. After all, Mars was higher in the sky than it was back in 2001, even if it wasn't closer. I would be interested in hearing your stories about Mars observing. Mine were rather lackluster. For our astronomy club public nights, both clubs that I belong to had very few people showing up to scheduled observing sessions. It seemed the phone was ringing off the wall back in August with the false reports circulating about the red planet. When closest approach finally occurred, most of the local folks had lost interest in what was going on. This was too bad, since the planet performed well and the dust storms stayed away.



Mars got dramatically bigger as it got closer to Earth in Fall of 2005. Shown here in a composite of images. Photo by Conrad Jung of Chabot Observatory in Oakland, CA.

I can't say the same about the paltry partial lunar eclipse we had. Very few folks saw it, unless you were somewhere on the west coast.

The Sun, however, was cooperative. Even being in solar minimum, it produced at least one sunspot for The Shenandoah Astronomical Society to show

off during the public outreach at the Balloon Fest they did in October. (We did have to use a 14-inch Celestron to find it, however.) It cooperated that cold December day when my early morning astronomy class finally got a clear day where they could go outside with solar filters, telescopes and glasses and take a safe view of the Sun to see a relatively large sunspot smack in the middle of the Sun. It was almost worth braving the cold, especially to the eagle-eyed student (pun intended, the school where my planetarium is located has an eagle as a mascot) who was first to detect a sunspot in the sunspotter.

After the first snow day of the year, we looked at an archived image from spaceweather.com that I projected on the dome of the planetarium so they could compare their drawn images.

A woman recently called my planetarium requesting the address of the International Star Registry and was kind of miffed when I wouldn't give it to her. The main reason is I do not know the address, but even if I had it, I wouldn't give it out. I don't wish to promote them and I don't think anyone out there in SEPA-land would want to promote them either. If you have been a regular reader of this column, you might have been aware that I have written the folks at Abbey Press about dropping the selling of International Star Registry merchandise. I also asked people to write in and ask the gift shop at the National Air and Space Museum to quit selling ISR certificates. Last I checked, they were gone from the gift shop and Abbey Press gift catalog. Our next group to enlighten is National Public Radio. I don't know about you, but I listen to NPR quite a bit and I am extremely annoyed at the International Star Registry's sponsorship of traffic reports and programs on National Public Radio. Random web searches can provide information on the many attempts of people to try and thwart the International Star Registry from existing, to very



(Continued on page 10)

Dues Dilemma

Patsy Wilson
Margaret C. Woodson Planetarium
Salisbury, NC

Persons attending the 2005 conference in Atlanta are aware of the discussion regarding annual payment of dues. This is a SEPA issue that won't go away and almost defies a satisfactory decision that serves 100% of the membership. There is much diversity of thought regarding the most convenient and fairest time to collect dues.

Our by-laws intentionally make a general statement about the amount of dues ["Annual dues shall be an amount determined by a majority vote of the membership at the Annual Business Meeting."] without stating in what manner they should be collected. The vote taken last June stated that dues would be due each year at the Annual Business Meeting instead of at the beginning of the calendar year. We could spend a lot of time discussing the procedures that led to this vote, as well as the pros and cons of the vote, but our ultimate goal is to keep dues payment fair for all.

SEPA Council has given some thought to the decision made at last year's conference and the impact of its implementation. On the surface, the only change made by the vote was to collect dues at the Annual Business Meeting, typically held during the yearly conference. As this vote is analyzed, several factors must be addressed. First, what should be done about the large percentage of members who paid in January? Will they receive six months free membership while waiting for the 2006 conference? If they pay now, will they owe again in June? What happens in 2007 when our conference is scheduled for October, not June? The business meeting will probably be held during the conference, so will everyone delay paying dues four months that year? It quickly

becomes apparent that this is not only an accounting nightmare, but could also be quite confusing for members.

This is the Council's plan for implementation of the dues vote. Your membership will be renewed yearly, but based on the quarter you last paid your dues. The quarters of the year are:

- 1st Quarter: Jan.-Mar.
- 2nd Quarter: Apr.-Jun.
- 3rd Quarter: Jul.-Sept.
- 4th Quarter: Oct.-Dec.

Therefore, if you last paid your dues during January through March of 2005, your dues would be due January 2006. If you last paid your dues at the conference in June 2005, then your dues would be due April 2006, but not past due until July 1st, and could, therefore, be paid when registering for conference. This gives everyone a full year's membership regardless of when they joined.

It should be obvious to everyone that dues payment this year is going to be irregular. There is no way to have everyone pay in June and not have members, myself included, with an expired membership for six months. As a result, this will be a transition year. Anyone wishing to continue paying dues First Quarter (January-March) should do so. If you prefer paying in the next quarter (when you register for conference), please do that. Persons who paid in January last year, but choose to wait until Second Quarter this year will not be penalized. All current members will receive the conference registration mailing.

In summary:

- 2007 dues will be due in the same quarter that you pay 2006 dues.
- Dues reminders (invoices) will be sent the quarter prior to your expiration date.
- Your membership will expire on the last day of the quarter.
- You will receive **one grace issue** of *Southern Skies* after membership expiration.
- Only members may register for conference.

I hope this solution is desirable for all. Should you have comments or questions, please contact any

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SEPA Conference 2006

Mark Howard
**Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and
Observatory**
Cocoa Beach, FL

The Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory in Cocoa, FL is pleased to announce that we 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.

(Continued from page 3: President's Message)

on the SEPA Council. Finally, consider nominating someone for the Paul Campbell Fellowship Award. The nomination form is located in this journal. No one received the award last year because there were no nominations. There is a list of persons who've received the award on the website. Any nominations must be submitted to the SEPA Council no later than May 1st, 2006.

I've gained a new perspective on education this fall. In an effort to work toward National Board Certification, I've spent every afternoon since the beginning of the semester in August teaching Science to 6th graders in a local middle school. I run planetarium shows each morning then race over to my "other" job. These 22 stu-

Now more than ever it is clear that our choice of presentation style is no longer one or the other - basic traditional vs. modern high tech. The tools of our trade are just a means to an end - teaching astronomy. That 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 laser pointer. We want to hear your stories about how you communicate the wonder of the cosmos to your students and public visitors.

For more information, visit <http://sepadomes.org> or <http://www.brevardcc.edu/planet>. We hope to see you in Cocoa, FL next summer!



dents (15 boys and 7 girls) have made it "real" for me again. I've been in the trenches, so to speak, and can speak firsthand about the state of scientific knowledge among our young people. My students are labeled "EC" and have a multitude of issues, but one thing is uniform---they love to do hands-on! It has been an exciting and exhausting process, and as of this writing, I have ten days left in the classroom. Even if certification eludes me, this journey has been productive. I have a new view of the classroom teachers who bring classes to me in the planetarium and I have a better understanding of the student and what constitutes a meaningful learning experience for them.

Best wishes for a prosperous and satisfying new year.

SEPA Archive 2005

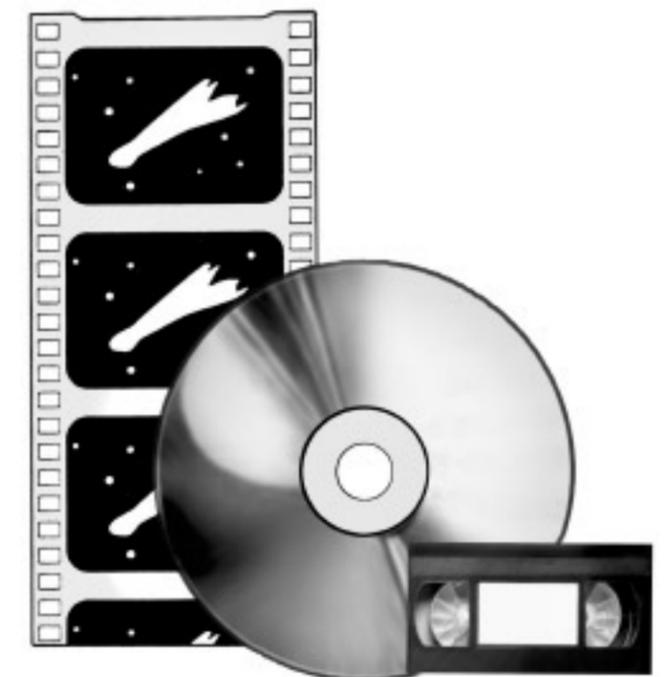
Adam Thanz
Bays Mountain Planetarium
Kingsport, TN

Enclosed in this issue of your journal is a DVD that includes an archive of the year 2005 for the SEPA organization. The majority of the archive covers the conference that was held in Atlanta, Georgia in June, 2005. The other part includes official documents for SEPA. Aside from the usual by-laws and related documents, there are copies of the SEPA journal for the year. All documents included are in PDF format so anyone can read or print the files regardless of availability of special software. A free PDF viewer is all that is needed. Also, there is a PDF document that you can print that includes the SEPA members and additional conference attendees. These include name, address, phone number, e-mail, etc., and if available, a high-res image of the person. It is a very good address book for you to use on a computer or printed out.

When archiving the conference, I tried to record most of the presentations. If I was able to record a presentation, then the images and audio were included in a slideshow format on the DVD. If I was able to get the original Power Point file from a presenter, then those images were substituted for my video-based ones. This provided a much cleaner image. There are also some true video files on the DVD. Since there was about 12 hours of video recording and over 1000 still images taken by Jack

Dunn, John Hare, Conrad Jung, Becky Lowder, Kris McCall, Gary Meibaum, and myself, it was a challenge to include all the material I had collected. I think the video compression came out good due to the space available.

The DVD works like any other movie-style DVD. Use it in a DVD player or your computer with a DVD drive. The menus will guide you through the conference activities. The photos and documents are accessed by your computer through the DVD-ROM part of the disc. There is also a catalog of all the photos and included browsers for Mac & PC. This way, you can search on any name, date, etc. and find photos. Double-click on the thumbnail and you'll access the full-res. version of the photo. I listed all names that I could for every photo in order of left to right within the photo. Note: Kris' photos came later than the creation of the catalog. Her photos can be found with everyone else's, under the "SEPA 2005 Photos" folder. Make sure you don't miss these extra goodies. After many hundreds of hours of work, I hope you enjoy this DVD. If you have any comments or ideas, let me know. I'll be doing the same for 2006.



(Continued from page 6: Small Talk)

little avail. Even the International Planetarium Society and International Astronomical Union's statements have done little to change people's minds about the program. Once when I was attending a Lenten retreat at a monastery, someone had a star named for the monastery using the International Star Registry. Does it ever end?

I just came across an interesting blog item from Alan Doyle titled "Cosmic Log" that stated that now SLOOH the automated telescope will show you a star you named on the International Star Registry. Go to <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/3217961> to read the blog entry on December 16th. I am not sure I like this step that SLOOH is taking towards going to search for stars people have bought through the International Star Registry. At least it might keep people away from asking those SEPA members with observatories at their facilities to try and locate these stars. For those who do not know what SLOOH is, it is a for pay automated telescope linked to the internet that will send you pictures you request of areas of the sky and conducts live telescopic views of the sky on a fee basis. If you subscribe to *Astronomy* magazine, you can get a free preview of the SLOOH live viewing by heading to their <http://astronomy.com> website or checking them out at their own website at <http://www.slooh.com/>.

I remember while attending the SEPA meeting in Baton Rouge, LA, someone, perhaps Phil Groce, making a prediction that digital and all sky video would someday minimalize someday small planetaria and large planetaria programs. Another step in this goal is the announcement of Starlab going digital. Has anyone seen a demo yet of this system? You can be sure that many folks will be eager to see demonstrations of this new system at both the SEPA 2006 meeting in June in Cocoa Beach, FL and the IPS 2006 meeting in Australia. I would love to attend both, especially with the extremely attractive post tour arranged by our hosts in Melbourne. I am unsure if I can swing the expenses. Here in Berkeley County we did receive a modest raise that was immediately eaten up by our increase in health premiums, so it is a wait and see deal for me at this point.

I do have goals for 2006, however, and it is at

this point, trying to find a way to do some laser programs in the planetarium by finding a sponsor, trying to find a way to get my astronomy students a bus so they can visit the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green Bank, West Virginia, a 185 mile journey from the school and planetarium in Hedgesville, WV and taking a class in how to be a better astronomy teacher offered by the American Astronomical Association in Washington, DC at their winter meeting.

So how did your holiday season go at your facility? Regardless, I wish you a 2006 that is even better. Drop a line or two either by snail mail and/or e-mail about your thoughts about anything in the column and/or what you would like to see me cover in the column later this year.

(Continued from page 4: IPS Report)

The conference hosts recommend that US participants arrive at least 1 day early in order to adjust to the time difference. They also point out that travelers from the US will "lose" a day when they cross the International Date Line.

Resource Guide and Directory.

An updated version of the IPS Directory and Resource Guide was distributed to IPS members this fall on CD media. Editor Dale Smith is particularly interested to learn of any portable planetariums that may not be currently 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.

As always, don't hesitate to contact me for membership forms or anything else IPS-related.

(Continued from page 7: Dues Dilemma)

member of the SEPA Council. Names and contact information are on the inside front cover of the journal and on the website (www.sepadomes.org).

Product Review

Arno Van Werven
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

The Night Sky Deck

A wonderful observing tool, or not?

Written by Martin Ratcliffe and Charles Nix, **The Night Sky Deck (NSD)** is an observing tool developed to aid a novice sky watcher. The box is beautifully designed with a gorgeous montage of several planets lining up on the front. It is well-made from sturdy cardboard. Inside you will find several folders and a red led flashlight/compass. The flashlight is needed to see the charts in the dark and the compass is to help the observer face north.

The first folder is called 'Introduction to the Universe' and explains what the other folders contain, and on 8-panels, it gives a description of our universe by starting to explain the large structure and the big bang. It then steps to smaller and smaller units, going from describing galaxies, to stars, to our Solar System with its comets, asteroids, and meteors.

The second folder is a practical guide to astronomy. It gives handy tips on how to use the charts, explains the celestial sphere, shows how to measure angular distances by using your own hands, and it gives a description of the different types of telescopes. On the back of this 8-panel folder is a Glossary of terms used in astronomy.

The next 9 folders deal with the Sun, the Moon, and our Solar System's planets. It gives tips on how to observe those objects, it lists interesting facts about them, and it highlights the spacecrafts that explored those worlds. These 4-panel folders contain a wealth of information and will help a beginning observer well on the way.

The last 12 folders contain sky charts for each month. The front of these 4-panel folders highlights the constellations and objects visible during a particular month. The inside displays two circular charts. The left side has a dark chart with 'glow in the dark' stars on it, while the right side has a white chart with black stars. The white chart can be used with the supplied flashlight. The charts are in the form of planisphere charts, with stars up to 5th magnitude and some deep-sky objects outlined. The last page of the folder has lists of the visible constellations, deep-sky objects, and brightest stars for that month.

All in all, the **NSD** is very well made. The pictures are beautiful, the folders are well organized, and the information is plentiful and well organized. Even though the folders are made of sturdy paper with a smooth coating, I believe that a couple of night in dewy conditions will severely damage the looks of the folders and maybe even its usefulness. The 'glow in the dark' stars on the charts did not work well for me. They are too faint to be very useful. Now I must say that I observed from a fairly light polluted area, but even locking myself in a dark room did not give me bright enough stars. The white chart though works great with the supplied flashlight. The compass is a nice touch so that a novice observer will not have a problem finding north. Even though the compass is pointing to magnetic north and not celestial north, which is about a 5 degree difference in South Florida, it should get an observer close enough to Polaris to identify.

I would recommend the **NSD** to any budding astronomer, but a more seasoned observer should get a more serious star chart. It is a perfect gift though for a well-reading child with interest in the night sky.



Product Review

Suresh Atapattu
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

Camera: The Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II

The digital age of photography is here. However much one may be attached to a 35mm SLR and film, the writing is on the wall. Of course, the resolution and quality of film are still the benchmarks but all serious observers ruefully admit that digital is the way of the future. Additional features such as faster turn around time and the readiness of other media to accept digital files make the transition easier and more palatable.

Most of us have used digital cameras of either consumer, pro-consumer or professional levels before. While there is a large range of cameras that fall into to these classes, there are some clear leaders whose acceptance in the professional circles is not without merit. One such camera that is a benchmark in the digital photography world of professional photographers is the Canon 1Ds Mk II.

It was announced in September 2004 and is the recent development in the 1Ds line. Improving on its predecessor, the Mark II has a full size 35 mm (36 x 24 mm) sensor which means it introduces no field-of-view crop; an 18 mm lens on this camera will provide exactly the same field-of-view as it would on a 35 mm film camera.

The first time a person places his/her hands on the camera, it makes a physical impact. The tactile sensations of the layout of the design are tremendous. It feels like a block of very light weight metal that

has been machined to fit snugly into the grip of the user's hand. The fit and feel is beautiful with the matt-black body alternating between black metal and rubber. It is an understatement to say that the 1Ds MK II has a solid robust feel about it. It has very tight seams and absolutely no movement or play in any part. The quality control on this design, fit and finish is amazing. According to the manufacturer, rubber seals around compartment doors and rubber seals around all controls provide full weather proofing, when used with L lenses which feature a rubber O-ring; hence, the entire camera is 'shower proof'. The writer has not tried this feature and would be happy never having to try it but it is reassuring that this camera will survive the elements, if need be.



Canon 1Ds MkII photo by Canon

In addition, the engineers at Canon went further to make the professional experience with this camera to be perfect. The EOS-1Ds Mark II has a control system which is designed to avoid accidental settings which can be particularly devastating for the photographer in the middle of an important and dynamic photo project. Almost all setting changes/navigation require the combined use of a button and a dial. This can take a little getting used to but does soon become second nature. The large quick control dial dominates the rear of the camera and provides control over LCD functions as well as exposure compensation and aperture selection in Manual exposure mode.

The settings available in this camera are key and only second to the fantastic CCD sensor. The options are placed at the fingertips of the user via a series of menus which are intuitive but definitely requiring hours of practice to assure install recall under the demanding conditions of professional photography or those that require a guaranteed good photograph within a reasonable time. The myriad of options, LCD screens and buttons of various sizes and placements can be daunting to the first time user. This is not a camera that one can pick up and shoot. It needs some practice and training; however, it rewards the patient learner with wonderful photographs and a powerful tool for the planetarian/astronomer.

There are four modes to choose from: **Av Mode**, **Manual**, **Shutter Priority** and **Bulb** mode:

Aperture Priority (Av Mode):

In this mode, one selects the aperture and the camera will calculate the correct shutter speed for the exposure (depending on metered value; metering mode, ISO). Aperture is displayed on the top LCD; roll the main dial (top) to select different apertures. A half-press of the shutter release causes the camera's exposure system to calculate the shutter speed; if it is outside of the camera's exposure range, the nearest shutter speed will blink.

Manual Exposure (M):

In this mode, one selects the aperture and the shutter speed from any available combination. Main dial (top) selects shutter speed, quick command dial (rear) selects aperture. A half-press of the shutter release will activate the camera's meter and the relative exposure difference (+/- 3 EV) will be indicated on the viewfinder meter (right of the viewfinder screen). A difference of exposure of more than 3 EV is indicated by either an up or down pointing arrow.

Shutter Priority (Tv):

In this mode, one selects the shutter speed and the camera will calculate the correct aperture for the exposure (depending on metered value; metering mode, ISO). Shutter speed is displayed on the top LCD; roll the main dial (top) to select different shutter speeds. A half-press of the shutter release causes the camera's exposure system to calculate

the aperture; if it is outside of the camera's exposure range, the nearest aperture will blink.

Bulb Exposure (B):

The Mark II has a dedicated Bulb exposure mode. In this mode, one can select the aperture by rolling the main dial (top) then press and hold the shutter release for the length of exposure one requires (normally in conjunction with a remote release). During the exposure, the top display gives a readout of the exposure length in hours, minutes and seconds.

CANON 1Ds MK II specifications Table

Sensor	o 36 x 24 mm CMOS o 16.7 million effective pixels
Image sizes	o 4992 x 3328 o 3600 x 2400 o 3072 x 2048 o 2496 x 1664
Processor	o DIGIC II
White balance	o Image sensor
Sensitivity	o ISO 100 - 1600 o Boost: ISO 50 (L), ISO 3200 (H)
Color matrix	o 4x sRGB o Adobe RGB o 2x user configurable
Contrast	o Tone curve o 5 level contrast control
Sharpness	o Level
Continuous	o Max. approx. 4.0 fps
Buffer size	o JPEG: 32 frames o RAW: 11 frames
Flash	o E-TTL II
Storage	o Compact Flash o Secure Digital (Dual writing capable)
Digital connection	o IEEE 1394 (FireWire) o USB 1.1
LCD monitor	o 2.0" TFT o 230,000 pixels
Orientation sensor	o Yes
Playback zoom	o Yes, up to 10x

Now that one has seen the features of this camera, the expected question of price arises. This camera

is not cheap, with a current price of approximately \$7999.00 at publication time. Additionally, one needs some very high quality Canon L lens with possible Image Stabilization built in. The very large high quality files generated by this digital camera giant dictates large capacity flashcards in the 1GB to 2 GB range which add to the expense.

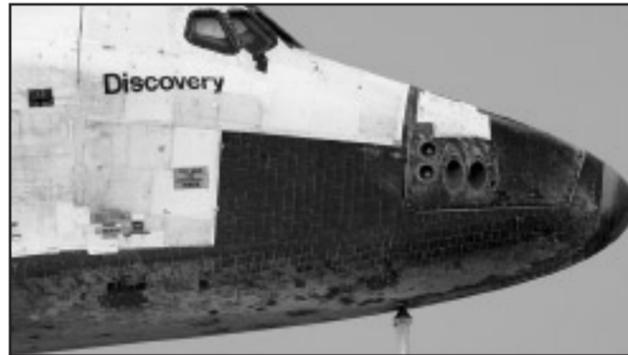
This camera has many details that make it a very popular and desired camera among the industry. It has superb resolution and detail (the highest resolution digital SLR to date). Its full frame 35 mm size sensor delivers film-like shooting experience and real wide angle. The huge, bright viewfinder view is very nice and useful in framing the photograph. Also, its very low noise at higher sensitivities maintains detail even when noise is visible. The impressive four frames per second continuous shooting (considering file sizes) guarantees that digital lag does not slow down the photographer on those dynamic shoots. In the writer's experience of framing very dynamic moving targets and photographing continuously, the buffering system backed up by fast media throughput was adequate and did not interfere with the photography.



Canon 1Ds MkII; ISO 200, shutter speed 1250, lens 400mm IS L lens; Tv Mode *photo by author*

It is superbly well built, 'a solid block', fully environmentally sealed, totally robust and has an

instant start up that is extremely useful. Its focus is extremely fast and responsive and one feels like the pilot using a billion dollar Department of Defense targeting system when one is peering through the view finder.



Canon 1Ds MkII; ISO 200, shutter speed 1250, lens 400mm IS L lens; Tv Mode *photo by author*

The images can be saved as RAW+JPEG with immediately selectable JPEG image size. Also, directly selectable JPEG image quality (compression ratio) per image size is available. Equally importantly, the battery available with this camera is a monster. It runs and runs and runs. In the writer's experience of fully charging and using this camera on extended photo sessions, the battery has been incredible. It is rechargeable and a charger is provided with the camera.

At publication time, the Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II represents the ultimate in current digital SLR technology. For the professional photographer or institution (especially if they already own Canon lenses) to whom price is not a deciding factor and who wants the ultimate in high resolution, a full frame sensor, professional features, build quality, speed and reliability the choice of this camera is obvious.



1Ds MkII; ISO 200, shutter speed 1250, lens 400mm IS L lens; Tv Mode *photo by author*

News From SEPA States

FLORIDA

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



Florida Planetarium Association (FLORPLAN)

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 *In My Backyard*, *Galaxies*, *Voyager's Great Space Adventures*, *African Sky Lore* and *Women Hold Up Half the Sky*.

We continue to rotate shows on Wednesdays, and these shows include *The People*, *Endless Horizon*, *2061: Secrets of Mars*, and *To Worlds Unknown*.

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 have one telescope set up to view sunspots, and watch flares through a Hydrogen-Alpha filter on another.

The big news at the Buehler Planetarium is that we have joined the digital revolution. As of our 40th anniversary in December 2005, we are up and running with SkySkan's DigitalSky and SkyVision. We have been scanning and alpha channeling like crazy the past six months in order to open with a good-sized menu in January 2006. Of course, we still have a list of shows from our old library that we want to bring into the new system. Our staff have become an assembly line, from slide scanning to prep to programming. This keeps both the day and night shifts busy, while making certain that we do not impact school shows or public shows. Our cup runneth over, and we are tired of cleaning the floor. But it's a good problem to have!



Buzz Lightyear helps celebrate the Buehler Planetarium's 40th Anniversary and installation of full dome digital projections. *Photo by Arno Van Werven*

Hurricane Wilma did not help us with the change-over. The college was closed for two full weeks, and the majority of the area got power back after three weeks. We did have great views of the sky and no damage to the facilities.

We are quite happy that we got through the transition (relatively) easily. Our new motto is "Be careful what you wish for - you might get it!"

Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory Brevard Community College Cocoa, FL

Mark Howard reports: The Astronaut Memorial

Planetarium and Observatory in Cocoa, FL is busy getting ready to host SEPA 2007. Look elsewhere in this issue for details.

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

Marie Stempinski reports: The Science Center is a remarkable example of how a community can come together to meet a common need. In 1959 a non-profit group headed by cofounders William Guild and Nell Rodgers Croley, founded this well-equipped, well-staffed facility to foster people's desire to understand the world around them.

The Science Center, located at 7701 22nd Avenue North in St. Petersburg, was the first of its type in the United States. It offers full physics, chemistry and other labs, special exhibits, a 600 gallon Marine Touch Tank, a replica of a 16th Century Indian Village, a display of African/American Scientists and Inventors, a Florida wetlands exhibit and much more.

The Science Center's mission is to inspire an interest in and understanding of science. Each year more than 25 thousand school children explore their world through field trip classes at the Center. The Mobile Outreach Program provides workshops for 12 thousand individuals throughout the Tampa Bay area and 1,500 children enjoy summer and holiday break classes. There are also preschool classes for parents and youngsters and computer and science classes for seniors. In addition, the Center offers "Train the Teacher" workshops, tours and workshops for the public and special events and activities throughout the year.

This year the Center has been chosen to host Pinellas County Schools' Elementary Science Expo and it will be the showcase for the Homeschool Science Fair. The public is invited to tour the Center and enjoy special demonstrations such as Gator Feedings and Planetarium Shows every Friday from 1-4 for a \$5 fee. Groups and organizations of 10 or more can tour the Center and enjoy a Planetarium Show for \$4 per person by reserving ahead.



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

Jon Elvert reports: The Irene W. Pennington Planetarium and the Burke Baker Planetarium in Houston, TX produced a new, full-dome digital Star of Bethlehem show for the month of December. The 40-minute program included an in-house production of a tour of the winter sky. This was our first year we presented a Christmas show and we saw attendance jump (we'll definitely bring this back next December).

Passport to the Universe, a production of the American Museum of Natural History in NYC, premiered as our public show in January and runs through April. Our family shows this winter and early spring are *Legends of the Night Sky: Orion* and *The Secret of the Cardboard Rocket*. The large format film premiering here on March 1 is *Bugs!*, and the full-dome digital version of *Pink Floyd: Dark Side of the Moon* still is popular (profitable) enough for us to continue it. Overall attendance has bounced back to last year levels following two and a half months of post Katrina attendance shock, but we're hopeful that those schools which had booked and then cancelled shows in September - November will reschedule for this spring.

On January 19 we offered another special event in our series of Starry Nights presentations - live, quarterly presentations on current celestial events with emphasis on audience participation in locating seasonal constellations and planets.

**Lafayette Planetarium
Lafayette Natural History Museum
Lafayette, LA**

Dave Hostetter reports: The Lafayette Natural His-

tory Museum & Planetarium was fortunate enough to be missed by both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, and so we are in pretty normal operation. However, the chaos since the storms coupled with increased gas prices has caused a sharp drop in our school attendance, and we suspect it will be some time before attendance begins to approach the norm. Public program attendance also dropped sharply after September, but is beginning to rebound (however, attendance in museums all over our area is significantly down in 2005, so this is a return to uncomfortably low levels).

During the autumn our public program was *Hubble Vision 2*, and our Saturday children's programs were *Bear Tales* and *Rusty Rocket's Last Blast*. We also had a couple of star parties in a local park, and had some success with star shows and sidewalk astronomy for Art Walks in Lafayette and nearby New Iberia. A mini-exhibit, *Mars Beckons*, was installed in exhibit cases near the planetarium during the recent Mars opposition.

The Museum's primary exhibit this autumn has been *Cosmic Questions*, a major astronomy and cosmology exhibit developed by the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, sponsored by NSF and NASA, and on loan from ASTC.

Planetarium Technician Dexter LeDoux and Assistant Planetarium Curator Doug Nelson attended the Lunar Outpost 2018 conference at the Alabama Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville. We expect to use the information they got there and the networking they are doing with participants from other museums to help develop a small exhibit and some visitor activities supporting the Moon Mineralogy Mapper and Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter to be flown in 2007 and 2008.

We hope to see more attendance in 2006, which is shaping up to have a number of interesting programs and events.

**St. Charles Parish Library Planetarium
Luling, LA**

Gary Meibaum reports: The planetarium at the St. Charles Parish Library was essentially untouched

by the ravages of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Save for lack of electricity, clean water, and a working sewage system, we did just fine. Reopening just two weeks after the storm on Monday September 12, our MEIDAGLOBE projector fired up without a hitch and has been working flawlessly ever since. Earlier in the year, I had chosen for our autumn program to run *Blown Away, the Wild World of Weather* from the New Detroit Science Center. Little did I realize way back then how timely the show would be. After spending most of the summer converting the show to full dome format, the show was to premiere on September 5! Upon reopening the next week, those people who were still around felt no desire to see a show about the ravages of weather. Although it is a good show, it was the wrong time and attendance suffered greatly. I will however be rescheduling it for another time.



**Russell C. Davis Planetarium
Jackson, MS**

Gary Lazich reports: "It's been a quiet month at Davis Planetarium" - at least, it was right after the one-two punch Katrina and Rita delivered. The recovery effort put a dent in our school group attendance, yet December still brought our annual "storm surge" of school and public visitors.

During October, the local NBC affiliate presented WLBT Weather Theater in our dome on Mondays (when we're normally closed). The three weather forecasters from the station took turns showing how marshmallows expand in a vacuum, how the column of air in a straw can pierce a potato, how sublimating dry ice can make sealed film canisters "pop," and how a strong updraft can keep frozen water droplets circulating in a cloud until they fall as hailstones. Each program began and ended with a "bang" in the form of a simulated thunderstorm. I thought briefly about having our presenter use water pistols to make the simulation more realistic

but quickly rejected that idea as “all wet.” The 15 shows attracted over 2,500 students and their teachers.

On December 29, Jackson enjoyed its first direct flyover of the International Space Station. Since the launch of the first modules, I’ve been checking predictions for passes daily using the Heavens Above Web site (<www.heavens-above.com>), which I found had a more user-friendly interface than NASA’s J-Pass program. To avoid crying, “Station!”, I alert the media only to the highest and brightest passes. In this case, we attracted the attention of one of the WLBT meteorologists. His plan to broadcast the evening weather reports live from the Planetarium sidewalk fell victim to “breaking news,” but he did send a cameraman and even came by himself between newscasts. We watched spellbound as the Station rose in the southwest, brightened nearly to magnitude -1 as it soared overhead, and then faded into Earth’s shadow in the northeast. The forecaster included excerpts of the taping along with basic facts about the Station in his 10 p.m. report.

For holiday shows, we’ve offered Brevard Community College’s *The Alien Who Stole Christmas* and *Laser Visions: A Fresh Aire Christmas* since 1992 and Loch Ness Productions’ *Season of Light* since 1994. The programs are still performing reasonably well after all this time - especially *Fresh Aire*, now that Production Supervisor John Williams has returned our laser projector. Mannheim Steamroller’s distinctive Christmas music now gets “highlighted” by delicate shades of pink, orange, magenta, cyan, and violet as well as by red, yellow, blue, and green.

We shut down for the holidays on New Year’s Eve through January 31 for facility maintenance and program installation. Because business is slow in January, we devote the month to accomplishing things that activity during the rest of the year pre-empts - cleaning carpets and seats, painting walls, installing new exhibits, and installing new star features like GLPA’s *Solar System Adventure*.

After having been closed for a month, the Russell C. Davis Planetarium reopened in February with swept and polished entrances, a freshly painted and

scrubbed Lobby, a restocked Discovery Shop, a thoroughly maintained Theater, and a spectacular new large-format film. The facility has not received this much concentrated attention since the installation of new carpeting and seating in 1994 and the opening of large-format cinema in 2000. Lane Smiley, John Williams, and Bruce Robertson get the credit for having done most of the work with assistance from clerical staff members, custodial workers, and volunteers.

From February through April, the Planetarium’s McNair Space Theater show schedule includes the films *Forces of Nature* (earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, and hurricanes) and *Ocean Oasis* (Baja California and the Sea of Cortes) as well as sky features *Our Home in the Milky Way* and *Rusty Rocket’s Last Blast*. *Forces of Nature*, the Planetarium’s newest film, should reassure audiences traumatized by last autumn’s hurricanes with profiles of progress toward understanding, predicting, and preparing for such disasters.

In January, Manager Gary Lazich participated in an exciting tour of two newly transformed and now spectacular multi-use downtown buildings. He believes these projects represent the vanguard of a wave of residential development downtown - a critical factor for resumption of weeknight shows and increased attendance. That same month, the new Mississippi Telecommunications and Conference Center - only half a block west of the Planetarium - hosted the first of many scheduled meetings. With a convention center approved for the space between the two buildings - and a skyway to link the complex to the Planetarium under consideration - the number of out-of-town visitors should progressively increase.

Another critical factor in attendance involves TOMA (Top Of Mind Awareness), a concept Gary learned several years ago and has kept as a long-range goal of the Planetarium’s marketing efforts. The Planetarium will have achieved that goal when its name immediately comes to mind as one of the three best places for family enrichment in the Metro Jackson area. In fact, in several of the past six years, readers of the monthly magazine *Parents & Kids* have named the Planetarium as an annual Family Favorite.

Recently, Planetarium staff noticed another increase in level of awareness. Although readers of *Jackson Free Press* did not include it as a Best Bet in Museums for 2005, the paper did afford the Planetarium a comparable distinction. In their recent annual list of Ins and Outs, the editors listed the Planetarium as In and *Planet Weekly* (a competing alternative publication) as Out. They were probably just making a play on words, but - as Gary learned from a Chamber of Commerce head in northern Minnesota - usually the only bad publicity is no publicity.

Rainwater Observatory & Planetarium French Camp, MS

James Hill reports: On January 13, the Rainwater Observatory & Planetarium in French Camp (<http://rainwaterobservatory.org>) unveiled a spectacular new mural-sized image taken by NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope. The stunning photograph of the famous Great Nebula in Orion shows the turbulent star birth cloud in exquisite and unprecedented detail. The 4-foot-by-4-foot picture, an immense seamless mosaic of 104 Hubble images, reveals a tapestry of star formation with features never before seen. It is one of the largest and most magnificent images ever taken by the Hubble telescope.

Several days later, Director Jim Hill traveled to Houston for a science conference about the Stardust mission. He delivered a presentation on what he (and we) have learned from the mission along with news on the *New Horizons* mission at the February meeting of the Rainwater Astronomical Association.

Progress continues on the new Sangre facility for the new 16” Ritchey-Chretien telescope. With the dome up, work has begun on the inside of the dome. Paneling is going up on the walls and the first work on the spiral stairs to get from the control room to the observing floor has begun. The water line up the hill has been hooked up and the septic tank for the bathroom and sink has been put in. Work has begun on the stairs to get from the ground to the deck so visitors can get to the telescope without having to go through the control room.

It’s been coming together - just in time for the Mid-South Star Gaze April 26 - 29! For Star Gaze information and reservations, point your Web browser to <http://rainwaterobservatory.org/stargaze/index.htm>.



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

Ken Brandt reports: The Robeson Planetarium will be presenting the interactive program *Our Very Own Star*, provided free by the Lawrence Hall of Science’s Holt Planetarium in Berkeley, CA. This program features many interactive opportunities for students to predict and answer questions about some of the most basic motions of the Earth, and how the Sun appears to move in the sky as a result. Robeson County native Bill McArthur, Jr. is finishing up his stint as commander of Expedition XII aboard the International Space Station. Students from Robeson County Schools made holiday greeting cards for the Expedition XII crew, which were sent to Bill McArthur’s family in time for the winter holidays. In our continuing outreach efforts, we are working with the UNC-Pembroke Astronomy Department and the regional office of the 4H.

PARI StarLab Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute Rosman, NC

Bob Hayward reports: PARI has had three successes in obtaining grants to support its growing K-12 education programs.

First, PARI received a grant from the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) to support the development of a new *Observing*

the Diverse Skies (working title) StarLab program. Under this grant PARI has obtained four new projection cylinders (Native American Mythology, African Mythology, Chinese Seasons and Mayan Skies) to be used in support of local school students of the diverse ethnic backgrounds. These cylinders will also be used to enhance current programs. In addition, the grant funded the purchase of a computer and projector to be used in the StarLab.

The CFWNC grant also includes funding to facilitate a transition from a part-time to a fulltime position for an astronomy educator on the staff. This individual will have the primary responsibility for the StarLab outreach and will participate with other staff in various aspects of PARI's growing offerings to K-12 and post-secondary in Western NC and Upstate SC. Individuals interested in the position should contact PARI Vice President Dr. Dave Clavier: E-mail dclavier@pari.edu.

Second, PARI received a grant from the Burroughs-Wellcome Foundation to develop a summer institute, called *Space Science Lab*, for underserved high school students from three adjoining counties. Under this grant ten students from each of these counties will attend a summer institute at PARI and then continue during the following school year with research projects mentored by astronomers from PARI. Since this grant runs for three years, a total of 90 students will benefit from this opportunity.

Third, the American Institute of Physics Meggers Award was granted to support PARI's School of Galactic Radio Astronomy (SGRA). SGRA operates a 4.6-m radio telescope which high school teachers can access remotely from their classrooms to meet National Science Curriculum Standards related to astronomy and the physical sciences.

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

Patsy Wilson reports: Over 500 people attended the Fossil Fair held on November 5th. The planetarium was used as a site for two noted authors to speak about their findings in addition to regular shows that day. The projection and technical support and the

seating capacity made the planetarium an ideal spot in our small facility for this purpose.

The winter scheduling season offers a new approach for serving kindergarten and first grade students. Traditionally, we have served one class at a time and only two classes per day doing a 50-60 minute program. In an attempt to serve more students and in recognition that small children have a limited attention span, our staff will be serving 90-120 students at once. The students will cycle through four teaching areas-an aquarium/rainforest room, a Native American history area, an interactive health room and the planetarium. Each group will spend approximately 25 minutes per area. This allows them to be introduced to our entire center and be prepared for more in-depth classes as they progress through school. The challenge of the day is how to craft the current, very popular, 50 minute kindergarten program into an equally-successful and exciting 25 minute outing!

**SOUTH
CAROLINA**



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

**Settlemyre Planetarium
Museum of York County
Rock Hill, SC**

Glenn Dantzler reports: We here at the Settlemyre are happy to report the school kids are back after the fuel crunch! We had a very successful holiday show run and are now looking forward to winter and spring programming. We will be offering *Follow the Drinking Gourd* for Black History Month and *Bear Tales and other Grizzly Stories* for our winter and spring offerings on weekends. We will also be offering a two afternoon workshop for teachers on astronomy. These workshops are targeted for fourth and eighth grade teachers.

TENNESSEE

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



**Tennessee Organization of Planetariums
(TOP)**



Photo: Adam Thanz

Adam Thanz reports: The 2006 Tennessee planetarium meeting was "out of the world." It was held at the Sudekum Planetarium in Nashville, TN. In attendance were, from left to right, Drew Gilmore, Deborah Mann, Allen Davis, Kris McCall, Mike Chesman, Jeri Panek, and Adam Thanz. Attendee not present in photo: Jana-Ruth Ford.

VIRGINIA

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



**Alexandria Challenger Center
Alexandria, VA**

Patrick McQuillan reports: He is suffering through his first real winter in 10 years, having returned full

time to the Commonwealth of Virginia from Jacksonville, Florida. He is working with Director Bill Gutch creating activities and Teacher Guides that may be used in Challenger Centers across the country. He can be reached at the address and phone number below. [Welcome back, Pat!]

Patrick McQuillan
pmcquillan@challenger.org
Phone - 703-683-9740 ext. 353

**Chesapeake Planetarium
Chesapeake Public Schools
Chesapeake, VA**

Dr. Robert Hitt reports: Not much new news from Chesapeake. We are doing school shows every day and the students and teachers seem to be enjoying some of the new graphics and videos that we have incorporated into the SOL lessons. The planetarium is in some need of new carpet but the budget for the school system is limited at this time so we will have to do with our old carpet and turn down the lights.

I will be traveling to North Africa to see the total solar eclipse on March 29th. This will be my 11th total solar eclipse and the third longest lasting almost 4 minutes. This will be quite a time luxury since the last one in the South Pacific on April 8th, 2005 only lasted 32 seconds! I will incorporate this trip into the Chesapeake Public Schools curriculum and the students can follow along with me via the internet. If any SEPA members want to follow along you can click on the planetarium's web site button found at www.cpschools.com. You can also see some of the photos from the last two solar eclipse trips on our web site. Happy New Year to everyone!

**Virginia Living Museum Planetarium
Newport News, VA**

Dave Maness reports: *Star of Wonder* will have made its 40th successful return for the Holiday season. By the time this goes to press, we will be running an updated version of *Deep Impact*. There were some file problems so we recorded a new soundtrack and took the opportunity to change the

tense in the script to make it sound more up to date than out of date.

Once again the C14 from the old observatory is filling in for our sick Meade 16" scope. This can't be good advertising for Meade. If anyone has some experience with this scope, contact me.

School programming has taken a slide since our renegotiation of contracts with local school systems. We are hopeful the non-contract schools will take up the slack.

With the New Year, our *Starry Night Thursday* programs will become *Wild and Starry Nights*. For our 40th full year of operation we will be celebrating our Ruby Jubilee by opening the entire museum (except for the out door trails.) Admission will be free so long as we can find sponsors to pay the bill.

Lastly, the Lumilines I offered for free last time are spoken for.

Radford University Planetarium Radford, Virginia

Dr. Rhett Herman reports: I don't know if this counts, seeing as how I'm not an official member of SEPA, but, in the past couple of months, the RU Planetarium has gone "digital." I put that in quotation marks since we're not at the digital projector level. Our main projector is a Spitz-Goto SG-8 which, according to Eric Melenbrink, was the last of that type installed in North America.

However, what I have done is inherit a half dozen Proxima (9600+ projectors, I think) projectors and some good Mac G4 computers, and I've gotten some new shows that came in digital format. The first one was *The Explorers of the International Space Station* and it was a big hit in its first two months of showing. With some powerpoint help, the slides are moved along with some quick fingers, with three computers/keyboards handling the panoramas, and three others handling the various individual slides and DVDs. Next week, I'll get this information up on the RU Planetarium website, listed below. (I haven't updated the main page, either, and I'm about 2 years behind on the "about

the facilities" information.)

Thomas Jefferson HS Planetarium Richmond, VA

Dave Maness reports: Leslie Bochenski must be on a well deserved vacation. No word from her this time.

(A reminder that 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."

Retired (but not tired) planetarians George and Jane Hastings, Richmond, VA

Jane Hasting reports: She and George continue to help out with live programs at the Science Museum of Virginia. They hope to make SEPA next year.

Unfortunately, I have bad news. Dr. John Wells, former head of the Physics Department at James Madison University, died December 18, 2005. He was 91 years old. Dr. Wells was my teacher at JMU. His first planetarium in 1950 was a Spitz A2.

He installed it in the attic of the Science building under a canvas dome that he had built. I remember our class going up in the creaky, groaning old freight elevator to the attic to see his presentations! His second planetarium, the one they have now, is a Goto Mark II, installed in 1975. As far as I know, he is the only planetarian who had a planetarium named for him (in 1975, the John C. Wells Planetarium) WHILE HE WAS STILL ALIVE! He and his wife and daughter came to some planetarium conferences in the 1970s. He loved SEPA people and totally enjoyed the conferences he attended.

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

Eric Mellenbrink reports: Not much new here. Our

current feature planetarium show is *Stella Returns! The Evolution of Stars*, produced in cooperation with the Astronomy Department at UVA.

We still have several school show offerings for groups to choose from, and offer our once per month (third Friday) *Live Sky* program. The *Live Sky* programs are presented alternately by Leslie Bochenski, David Hagan, Jane & George Hastings, and Ken Wilson.

IMAX films dominate our schedule, with a huge successful run of *The Polar Express* from Thanksgiving through mid-January and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* running this winter.

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

Mark Hodges reports: They are running *Jewels of the Night* a seasonal sky show from November 26, 2005 - March 3, 2006 Explore the night sky over this region in winter, with a tour of the constellations visible over Southwest Virginia this season, and the mythological stories associated with these constellations. Viewers learn how to locate constellations, starting with the bright, easy-to-find stars and then use them as guideposts to find the way to more obscure groups.

WEST VIRGINIA
contact: Curt Spivey
Avampato Discovery Museum Planetarium
Charleston, WV, cspivey@theclaycenter.org



Avampato Discovery Museum ElectricSky™ Theater Charleston, WV

Curt Spivey reports: More of the same, here in

Charleston. Things have settled in now that we have adjusted to being part of the Program division here at the museum. The good news is Andrea, my new/old supervisor does not have her attention distracted by running the box office, as Casey did, so we are getting more attention to our needs under the dome. As I'm sure most of you are experiencing, our attendance was abysmally bad this fall, due to that lovely specter of "No Teacher Left Standing". Thanks, W! The good news is we are already having schools sign up for after the tests are over, so we are keeping our fingers crossed for a strong rebound this spring.

Our planetarium show *Mars* has been retired after 11 months of meritorious service. We have begun to run our old standby *Oasis in Space* which is back after a one and a half year hiatus. The plan right now is to run it until April 15, and then begin the old Loch Ness show we are currently converting, *The Cowboy Astronomer*. Our problem though is our Spitz StarScape has a mind of its own right now and doesn't always go where we want it to -- which is a big problem when running that particular show. Hopefully our upcoming PMA will correct the issue. Plans now call for *Cowboy* to run into summer and then begin a kid-friendly show for fall. The reason for that being that our museum scored a real coup: this fall our first ever traveling science exhibit will be an exhibit on the Body from our friends at the Children's Television Network. We expect a huge influx of third grade and younger this fall. We hope to determine what that show will be exactly in the next month or so.

On the film front, I'm happy to report our schedule is set until the middle of 2007, something I've been lobbying for two years now! *Pulse: A STOMP Odyssey* went away on January 27, and the classic *Alaska* is our current film. In July, *Coral Reef Adventure* will arrive, followed by *Africa: The Serengeti* in January 2007. We also plan to bring back some of the films in our library as B-films during the run of these three.

Clear skies, all!

