



NEWS LETTER

RITTENHOUSE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1888

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June 2006

OPEN TO PUBLIC AND STUDENTS

Upcoming **Meeting on June 16th** at 7:30 PM

Mallon Planetarium

Arcola Intermediate School

4000 Eagleville Road, Norristown PA 19403

FIELD TRIP !

Mallon Planetarium Presentation:

- 1) **"Light Years from Andromeda"**
- 2) **Live Star Talk**
- 3) **Telescope observing (if sky is clear) OR "Volcanoes of the Deep" (if not clear!)**

The Mallon Planetarium in the Methacton School District is named for its first planetarium director Dr. Gerald Mallon. It services the community of Lower Providence Township and the surrounding area. It is located a few miles north of the Valley Forge Exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, on the campus of the Arcola Intermediate School.



The planetarium is a 60 seat Spitz 512 facility and utilizes a Spitz automation system to control 12 slide projectors, 2 DVD players, 2

Laser Disc Players and a host of computer programs that can be projected on the dome by CRT triple beam or DLP projectors.

It provides astronomy education while meeting state standards of science, technology and math at multiple grade levels. The planetarium delivers a cross curricular experience for geography, music and history classes and is open to the public for community presentations.

Ted Williams is currently the director and started with Methacton School District in 1991. You may remember him as a guest speaker last spring. His talk spanned across deep sky sights of the Milky Way's galactic disc generated by the Fels Planetarium digital sky.

This year he will present for us "*Light Years from Andromeda*". It is a Loch Ness production of the same quality that is afforded in larger planetarium venues. We will follow a light beam leaving the Andromeda Galaxy as it travels its 2 1/2 million year journey into the Milky Way. We will watch as human civilization unfolds during the journey. We will conduct a live sky talk after the presentation.

Ted informs us that on occasion you can see the Milky Way from the planetarium which sits on a high ridge north of the Valley Forge Towers. The planetarium is far enough away from the lights of Philadelphia that the Milky Way can be seen when it is highest in the sky. Please consider bringing your telescope (or share our view) if the sky is clear. We have arranged a special Friday night date so that students can also attend (remember we won't be through twilight till after 9:30, but Jupiter will be placed nicely for viewing.)

Ruth List

A map to the field trip location is provided on our web site. You can Google or Mapquest the address at:

Arcola Intermediate School
4000 Eagleville Road
Norristown PA. 10403

THE VIEW FROM THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, by Joel Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams

Developing a new cosmology for a global community that encompasses quantum physics, Newton's laws of motion and General Relativity is an amazing challenge. I find that Dr. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams are up to the challenge, and that challenge is expressed to the readers of their newly published book. It is subtitled "*Discovering our Extraordinary Place in the Cosmos*". They offer a truly extraordinary perspective.

After teaching in a planetarium for 15 years, one can definitely fall into Newtonian thinking. The resulting feeling of insignificance and unimportance to an ever expanding universe that seems incomprehensible to most individuals in its size, scope,

and complexity is a common problem affecting many thinking visitors.

I have felt it at times myself. Although astronomers and teachers help many students discover their place in the universe, we can lose the sight of how we fit into this universe and what possible role we may play.

The Primack/Abrams team not only centers on science, but cultivates the rich cosmologies of past civilizations. They use the power of symbols and metaphors as tools for understanding. They tackle size by increasing the reader's perception of different magnitudes of scale and define a home for our size within the cosmos. From a basic discussion of what constitutes a theory, to the many ways humans interpret and learn new ideas, Primack and Abrams have covered all angles.

I enjoyed their narration of ancient civilization's viewpoints and how they developed their individual cosmologies and their resulting effects. There is great value in looking at what was accomplished with these cosmologies and analyzing their foundations.

Primack and Abrams define what a new cosmology will have to accomplish to be accepted by the world's inhabitants. They strongly believe that people need to be rooted within their cosmology for it to survive.

It is rare to find authors that can be illuminating, entertaining, and thought provoking to the point of individual action when dealing with a topic as foreign to most as the universe we live in. I find they further the efforts of Stephen Hawking in helping the common individual to understand the universe around them.

The Primack/Abrams team follows their own insight on how we encompass a new theory and apply those principals to involve the reader. One cannot help feeling encompassed by the universe through the perspective and insight they share with the reader. The afterglow leaves one with a feeling of importance and responsibility within this new cosmological order.

In conclusion, rather than looking at the view, they offer suggestions of how the human community can get involved. Whether it is a new perspective on politics or resource utilization; they propose that we are at the right time and place to make a great difference.

I am glad to have a hand in bringing these authors, scientists and "humanists" to our society to

share their encompassing view of our universe.

Ted Williams

Did You Know...?

... what would happen if you threw a pebble from Phobos or Deimos? The pebble will come back four hours later (15 hours on Deimos) and hit something on the moon with the same speed it was thrown at.about the Tinted Hand constellation? Cassiopeia, which we recognize as the Queen in the sky, has been called the Tinted Hand in Arab countries. This is a reference to women's practice of painting their hands and feet with a reddish dye to protect their skin from the dry heat.

Visible Planets May 31, 2006

Mercury	Rise 6:23 AM	Set 9:40 PM
Venus	Rise 3:50 AM	Set 5:07 PM
Mars	Transit 4:26 PM	Set 11:48 PM
Jupiter	Rise 5:43 PM	Set 6/1 12:09 AM
Saturn	Transit 5:02 PM	Set 6/1 12:12 AM

We have nearly reached the end of our academic year. Fall dues if paid early will enable you to continue magazine subscriptions for *Astronomy* or *Sky and Telescope* with uninterrupted delivery. We will start the process of printing your certificate of membership and either mail it to you or have it available at our June field trip. A copy of this certificate mailed with your magazine subscription renewal will enable you to reduced subscription rates. We will shortly be posting those rates on our website member's page for easy access.

You can now complete your renewal membership by visiting our member's web-page, downloading and completing the PDF file on your computer, print it out and send to:

Our Mailing Address:

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P.O. Box 24665
Philadelphia PA. 19111

Checks are made out to "Rittenhouse Astronomical Society"