The Planetarium at UT Arlington Newsletter, February 2007

"That telescope was christened the Star-splitter
Because it didn’t do a thing but split
A star into two or three…"
- Robert Frost, American Poet

Romancing the Stars
Calling all starry-eyed lovers!! For Valentine’s Day, the Planetarium is pleased to offer Romancing the Stars!

This unique star show is a “light-hearted,” romantic tour of our elegant universe! You’ll experience the “Magic of Night” far from city lights. You’ll hear wonderful stories about the “Constellations of Love.” Romancing the Stars is rated “AC,” meaning for adult couples only. Sorry, no children.

FREE roses and chocolates for all starry-eyed lovers!

WHEN: February 13 at 7:00pm & 8:00pm
February 14 at 7:00pm & 8:00pm
Reservations Recommended!
Call 817.272.1183 to reserve now!

COST: $10 per couple—no discounts.

WHY: Because love is written in the stars!

Heart Shaped Universe?

The Big Eye Turns 400!

A telescope is nothing more than a big eye. If your eyes were bigger, you’d collect more light—you’d see the big picture!

The mirror or lens on a telescope is like a big rain bucket. The bigger the mirror or lenses—the more photons you collect. The bigger the rain bucket—the more water you’ll get.

Our eyes are pretty small—the pupil is only about ¼ inch in diameter. When we go into a dark room—like the Planetarium—our pupils dilate, or grow bigger, to about ½ inch wide. This helps us see the stars much, much better.

If some Planetarium educator turned on the lights real quick—your eyes would hurt! Ouch! This is because twice as much light is hitting your eyes than normal!

Galileo was the first person to use the “big eye” nearly 400 years ago in 1609. In two years, the world will celebrate this amazing astronomer.

Galileo’s scope changed everything. With his new “spyglass” he saw what had never been seen…….

- Spots on the Sun,
- Craters on the Moon,
- Rings around Saturn,
- And Moons Circling Jupiter.

These discoveries told people that the heavens in the physical sense—were not heaven. They had blemishes and imperfections. And Jupiter’s new moons meant not everything went around the Earth.

Galileo was not very popular in some circles. His telescope challenged the status quo so much—that some refused to even look in his ‘big eye’ to witness what he was claiming.
Is the universe sending us signs for Valentine’s Day? How else can you explain these heart-shaped objects from space? Could they be from aliens? Sculpting these stunning features on a grand scale to send us a loving message—you are not alone!!

They say change is the only constant in the universe. You, me, and the universe are always on the go—always changing.

Galileo’s new universe was such a drastic change in two ways. It not only drastically altered how we view the heavens—but also changed how we view ourselves. We and the Earth were no longer motionless. Our graceful globe was no longer at the center of the universe.

These paradigm shifts could be used to argue that the telescope was the biggest scientific discovery in human history.

Since 1609, new and bigger “eyes” have kept revitalizing our curiosity about the cosmos. As they do so today. We are simply insatiable when it comes to seeing the faint, fuzzy, and far away.

The telescope will soon be 400 years old! Happy Birthday “Big Eye.”

**STAR SHOW SCHEDULE**

All Shows are 1 hour long and include Texas Stargazing: a tour of the current night sky.

**FEBRUARY SKY SIGHTS**

On Groundhog’s night, February 2, don’t miss the magnificent Moon and Saturn close in the sky! The moon is near full and Saturn will be a ruddy, bright yellow-looking star to the right.

**Saturn** is up all night long this February. The ring jewel is at opposition on February 10—meaning it is opposite the Sun. Saturn will rise as the Sun sets—and set as the Sun rises. Saturn is located in the constellation Leo. Leo looks like a “backwards question mark” or a “hook.” This pattern represents the Lion’s head and heart.

**Venus** is not so inconspicuous anymore. Glance southwest after sunset and you’ll easily spot the goddess of love. A nice crescent Moon will glide by Venus on the nights of February 18 & 19.

**Mercury** makes a strong appearance in the evening sky near Venus in early February. However, this little planet is still a tough find—especially compared to conspicuous Venus. With an arm out-stretched, look one fist-wide to the lower right of the much brighter Venus.

**Jupiter** is gorgeous in the dawn. Look south for this bright, white planet. Nearby, you’ll spot a brilliant, twinkling red star named Antares—meaning “rival of Mars.” A nice crescent Moon can be seen below Jupiter on the morning of February

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The real Mars is slowly making itself known in the morning sky. It’s still a tough spot though—low in the southeast. Look for the red planet near the Moon on Valentine’s morning—February 14!

**COSMIC CSI COMING SOON**

*Cosmic CSI: Looking for Life in the Universe* — is a new original production by the Planetarium at UT Arlington. It premieres on Saturday, March 24. This show will take a practical prospective on the chances for life beyond Earth.

Glenn Morshower—Hollywood actor and native Texan—provides the narration. Glenn has played parts in shows and movies like “24,” “CSI” and “Star Trek.” So he “knows” a little about space and being a detective.

8 New Songs—Van Halen, Pink Floyd and many more!!! Don’t miss it! Thursday AND Fridays at 8pm for the Rock Show!

**COOL PICTURES!**

While the Hubble Space Telescope is hurting (they just lost one of its cameras and it will get a tune-up in September 2008), don’t forget we still have the Spitzer Infrared Space Telescope. This exquisite picture of the Eagle Nebula in the constellation of Serpens reveals a stellar nursery.

Numerous stars are being born here. Hubble’s image of the Eagle Neb, or M16, is sometime called the “pillars of creation.” You can see these pillars just to the right of center in the above Spitzer picture.

For more cool pictures, click here for the astronomy picture of the day! [http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html](http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html)

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