



Friends of the Austin Planetarium

Fall Fundraiser

It's that time of year again, when FOTAP holds our annual fall fundraiser. If you've enjoyed our planetarium shows, newsletter, or website, we hope you'll respond with an end-of-year donation. Look for our mailing after Thanksgiving. Many thanks in advance for your financial support!

Remarkable Donation

With your own Randall's Remarkable Card, you can make a donation to FOTAP. Simply fill out the Good Neighbor program section of your Remarkable Card form and indicate #11231 as your charity of choice.

Poet's Corner

EVENING STAR

'Twas noontide of summer,
And mid-time of night;
And stars, in their orbits,
Shone pale, thro' the light
Of the brighter, cold moon,
'Mid planets her slaves,
Herself in the Heavens,
Her beam on the waves.
I gazed awhile
On her cold smile;
Too cold- too cold for me-
There pass'd, as a shroud,
A fleecy cloud,
And I turned away to thee,
Proud Evening Star,
In thy glory afar,
And dearer thy beam shall be;
For joy to my heart
Is the proud part
Thou bearest in Heaven at night,
And more I admire
Thy distant fire,
Than that colder, lowly light.

-THE END-

Edgar Allan Poe, 1827

WAC 2007, Alaska

Each year the Western Alliance of the International Planetarium Society (IPS) holds the Western Alliance Conference (WAC) somewhere in the western United States. Previous locations have been Denver, Colorado and San Diego, California. This year's WAC was held in Fairbanks, Alaska, and board member Torvald Hessel attended for the Friends of the Austin Planetarium. FOTAP provided \$1000 towards travel and conference expenses.

The WAC is a three day conference and consists of a large number of presentations by consultants, vendors and planetarium professionals, with subjects ranging from what topics to present in a planetarium, global warming, new NASA missions and experiences on equipment upgrades. However, one of the most important reasons for FOTAP to attend is to network and learn from other planetarium directors.

Actually, Fairbanks is like Austin in that it does not have a planetarium, but like Austin, they are working on it!

Along with presentations, there were also several excursions organized, and one was an actual trip through the Alaskan wilderness to the Arctic Circle. Board member Torvald Hessel can now proudly say that not only did he observe the Northern Lights from Fairbanks, but also actually crossed the Arctic Circle.

Did You Know?

Do you sometimes have astronomy questions, or would like to learn about astronomy? The FOTAP website offers an AstroNews page with all kinds of tidbits of information. Each month we talk about what planets are visible and how to find them and other astronomical events. We also explain different astronomy topics, and of course, you can ask astronomy questions.

For example, do you know what the Arctic Circle is precisely? Because the Earth is tilted in relation to the Sun, the Sun is higher in the sky in the summer than in the winter, and this is why we experience seasons. However, when you travel (far) to the north or south from Austin, you will notice that the Sun is higher or lower in the sky. Of course this is because the Earth is round! The further north from Austin you travel, the lower the Sun will be in the sky. In the most extreme, on either the North- or South Pole of the Earth, the Sun will not even rise above the horizon for 6 months of the year, and the other six it will stay above the horizon day and night. The imaginary line where at least one day there is 24 hours of sunlight and one day at least 24 hours where the Sun does not come above the horizon is called the Arctic Circle. This happens to be at about 66.56 degrees latitude (Austin is at about 30 degrees northern latitude).



At the Arctic Circle! From top left clockwise: Miles Allen (Australia), Robin Sip (The Netherlands), Mike Snail (Baton Rouge, LA), Board Member Torvald Hessel, Laura Misajet (Philadelphia, PA), Mark Mathews (Great Britain), Ann Wagner (Germany), Wilfried Lang (Germany)



Friends of the Austin Planetarium

Newsletter

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Did You Know?

Austin is the largest city in the U.S. that does **NOT** have a planetarium.

Gift Ideas!

Don't forget to check out the fabulous merchandise on our [website](#) next time you need a birthday gift for family or friends. We offer t-shirts, bumper stickers, license plate frames, mousepads, and mugs. Every purchase helps bring us closer to our goal.

Board of Directors

- Larry Forrest
- Sharleen Forrest
- Torvald Hessel
- Ron Johns
- Steve Rung

Advisory Panel

- Anne Adkins
- Matthew Michael Agee
- Lucia Brimer
- Rebecca Johnson
- Mark Diaz
- Barbara ten Brink
- Roger Williams

Summertime is Planetarium Time!

Every summer, when our board members go on vacation, we try to combine this with visits to other planetariums. This gives us an opportunity to learn about other facilities, and to get ideas on building design and exhibit design. This year is no different. Currently, we have 'scoped out' six planetariums. We've also visited two planetarium show producers (Mirage 3D, and IB-Creations) and one software provider (Sky Skan). The planetariums visited were:

1. Science Center of Iowa (Des Moines) - Cosmic Jukebox planetarium design
2. Ridderkerk Planetarium, The Netherlands
3. Amsterdam Planetarium, The Netherlands
4. Kiel Planetarium, Germany
5. Hamburg Planetarium, Germany
6. Fels Planetarium, Philadelphia PA



The Hamburg Planetarium is built in an old watertower. Quite an impressive sight!

The one planetarium that stood out was in Kiel, Germany. As board director Torvald Hessel explains, "the Kiel planetarium is part of a university, and the students are stimulated to invent new ideas on how to use a planetarium. The most spectacular show I saw was a musical performance. There was one classical guitarist using looping software to record himself live and create beautiful music in front of you, while on the planetarium dome there were visualizations of his music. The result was a spectacular show in both sight and sound, and the show has been sold out for months." Hessel added, "There are so many ways of using a planetarium, and this show would be an absolute hit for the live music capital of the world!"

Individual board members paid for their own travel; no FOTAP funds were used.

Website Hits New Milestone!



As FOTAP becomes better known in and around the Austin community, the traffic to our website has been steadily increasing. Currently, our web traffic is averaging between 1000-1500 visitors every month checking our progress, reading the Monthly AstroNews, or asking questions about astronomy.

Sometimes, we receive 100 visitors on a single day when something exciting is happening in the world of astronomy or one of our board members makes a TV appearance.

Word is getting out! The success of FOTAP is driving significant numbers of visitors to its website. As a result, our business sponsors gain greater visibility. If you have a business or know of someone who would like to promote their business and at the same time support the Friends of the Austin Planetarium, please contact us for more information.