

Triple Conjunction Conference Speakers

Wednesday, October 10 – Luncheon – Charles Wood

Title: Exploring a New World: Titan as Revealed by Cassini's Radar

ABSTRACT: Saturn's moon Titan is larger than the planet Mercury and has a dense atmosphere like a planet. Until Cassini and its atmosphere-piercing radar got to Saturn little was known of Titan. Now with 20% of the surface revealed Titan is seen to have a very young surface, seas of dunes, and hundreds of lakes and a few large seas of liquid methane/ethane. We can infer that Titan is dynamically active, possibly with erupting volcanoes, blowing sediments, rainfall and rising and falling lake levels. In the debate about what is a planet, Titan would be considered a planet in all ways - except that it orbits another one.

Wednesday, October 10 – 8:00pm – Keynote Speaker, David Levy

Title: A Nightwatchman's Journey: My Life and Hard Times as a Comet Hunter

ABSTRACT: During the summer of 1965, we were each assigned to do a project. The director did not wish to see the projects completed by the end of the summer. Instead, he hoped for some progress, even if that progress were to end in failure. I believed he wanted to see some failure, because in his view, failure is the great teacher. It was not until October 1965 that I decided to begin my telescopic search, which subsequently started on December 17, 1965. This talk recounts that adventure, which continues to this day. The talk is accompanied by a Power Point presentation and music.

Thursday, October 11 – 7:45pm – Carnegie Lecture Hall – Professor James B. Kaler

Title: Annual Astronomy Update

Each year, delegates look forward to learning the latest discoveries in the field of astronomy from Jim. He presents his talk in a thoroughly understandable and often in an amusing way. Jim is the author of several astronomy books and articles. Jim is Professor Emeritus of Astronomy from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign. He is currently the President-Elect for the Astronomical Society of the Pacific Board of Directors.

Friday, October 12 – Banquet Talk – James Sweitzer

Title: A Journey to the Stars

The ability of planetarium technology to transport us is evolving faster than ever. Fifty years ago real space travel began with the launch of Sputnik. Twenty years after that, "Star Wars" revolutionized how we imagine cosmic adventure. Today, digital planetariums can simulate travel anywhere in the universe. Like Luke Skywalker, today's planetarium director must navigate an "asteroid belt" of digital technology and an explosive pace of scientific discovery. As exciting as the new digital planetariums have become, production and maintenance costs threaten our missions. Yet over all these years, no matter what the technology or science, a meaningful human story has been our most trusted guide star. This presentation will explore a scientific story based upon the visualization of a relativistic journey into deep space to the newly discovered Gliese 581 c. What mistakes did George Lucas make in his films? What would it really be like to travel near the speed of light? What will we find along our journey? "A Journey to the Stars" promises to tackle these and other mind-expanding questions.