

January's Speaker, Larry Deckman

If you happened to pick up a copy of the *Eugene Weekly*, 12/28/06, you might have noticed that our January speaker, Larry Deckman, was showcased as the "Happening Person" for that week. After reading this *EW* introduction to Larry, I especially looked forward to what he might tell us about himself in the ENHS interview--his inventions, his interests in philosophy, religions, books, law, preserving public land, and, oh yes, astronomy, his topic for Friday evening's talk.

Larry Deckman's passion for seeking knowledge about the universe evolved naturally from his early interest "in the overarching reality--the celestial sphere." He remembers a fine moment in the fall of 1971, when, looking into the Oregon skies, he saw Orion and Taurus together. He says, that this "tuned" him into the constellation display. He also remembers his enthusiasm upon "seeing Jupiter shining amidst the stars, easily visible to the naked eye." These experiences roused in him the spirit of investigation as well as invention, and he subsequently designed products to help and encourage amateurs to locate the constellations and planets.*

The fall of 1971 not only opened up the Oregon skies to Larry but also commences the beginning of a long relationship with Eugene. He moved here from his birth place, Los Angeles, to attend the University of Oregon in September of 1971. "Passionate descriptions of its beauty from previous residents" helped to direct his choice. And he adds, "Fortunately the UO was here to welcome me."

Eugene and Oregon have been the fortunate recipients of this choice. Besides considerable and ongoing community volunteerism and activism, Larry has served as treasurer of the Library Board, has been a member of the Board of the Native Forest Council since 1999, has an active law practice, runs his own company selling his celestial inventions and products, and is currently working on his "Magnum Opus," a book about the heavens. We'll have to ask him more about that on Friday evening. I suspect it's a book we'll all want because it cannot help but reflect his passion: "I find the universe endlessly fascinating and beautiful--there's a lot of stimulation in all directions large and small."

One direction he traveled recently landed him in the Southern Hemisphere. In March of 2003 he flew to New Zealand "to gaze at the southern hemisphere sky." A wonderful result of this trip is Larry's own design "glow-in-the-dark star map of the southern heavens visible from down under."* He found New Zealand "delightful--Eugene's counterpart in latitude and disposition."

I found out a little more about what energizes Larry Deckman when I read comments by Ed Dorsch in the 1999 Annual Native Forest Council Report. Dorsch states that when Larry first accepted a position on the Council's Board, he quoted conservative George Will who criticized environmentalists for being so negative, then countered

with. "We're always against something; it's time we we're for something." This positive approach has helped steer the ongoing efforts of the Native Forest Council. Dorsch adds that Larry's interest in stargazing actually kindled a concern for environmental issues. This happened when Larry realized: "The sky was better 25 years ago, and if you can't see the stars, then something is in the way."

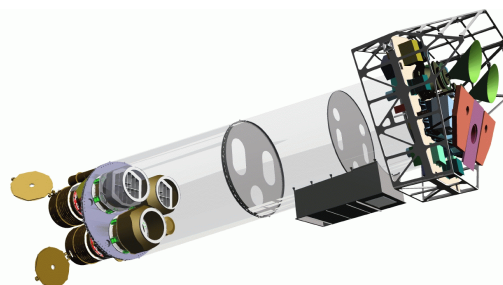
When I asked Larry what we might expect to hear about at Friday's talk, here's what he said: **"A journey to the outskirts of the universe, moving from 150 miles above earth's surface to the realm of galaxy clusters. Images from telescopes and spacecraft provide the rungs on our trip to the heights, and accompanying commentary serves to steady the ladder."**

One more bit of insight into the heavenly interests of this diverse speaker: He did his undergraduate work at the University of Oregon in World Religions, receiving a degree in Religious Studies in 1979. He earned his Law degree from the UO Law School in 1985 and now focuses on preventative legal services, averting problems before they arise by helping clients with wills and trusts, setting up sustainable businesses, and providing real estate assistance. "I've always made a determination to stay out of litigation. Much of the court system today is lawyers butting heads at the expense of their clients so I practice non-advocacy law." And Larry practices law right here in Eugene.

He also does his inventing right here in Eugene. In 1977, *Games* magazine recognized "The Kaleidoscope Game," designed by Larry Deckman, as one of the top 100 games of the year. He sells his stargazing products from his website.*

Take a look at the StarFinder website and you'll wish you had known about its offerings before the gift giving season. It includes star finder and constellation guides, glow-in-the-dark star maps, and related star gazer products sold around the country at the Smithsonian and other natural-history museums. The Star Finder is made of two plastic discs that spin around each other, showing the constellations throughout the year and it glows in the dark. To gaze at these celestial products go to www.starfinders.com.

Cover: "An evocative celestial photo," says Larry. And it's just one of the many heavenly photos we're going to see. So bring your friends that love the stars and treat them to stunning pictures accompanied by a great talk. Editor



The Hubble telescope