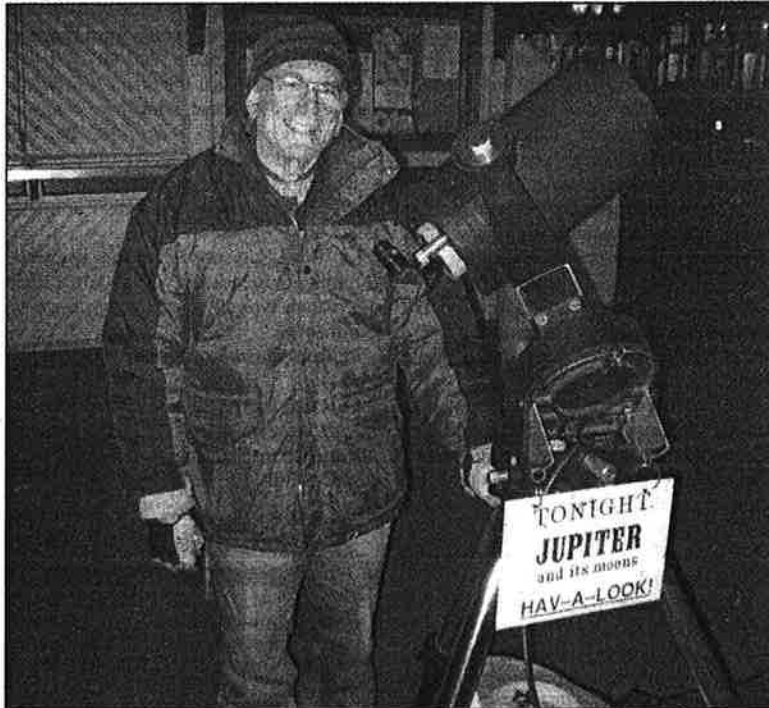


Baltimore GUIDE

SERVING EAST BALTIMORE SINCE 1927

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2012



Herman Heyn has shared his telescope, and his knowledge of the night sky, for 25 years in Fell's Point. Here, he offers a view of Jupiter.

Photo by Erik Zygmont

Staring into space for 25 years

BY ERIK ZYGMONT
EDITOR@BALTIMOREGUIDE.COM

"Folks, take a look at the planet Jupiter," says Herman Heyn, offering a view through his telescope to passers-by in Fell's Point's Broadway Square. "It's the experience of a lifetime."

Since he was a boy, the night sky has grounded Heyn's otherwise fluid life.

"It's been a serious hobby since Miss Wicker in the 8th grade," says Heyn. "She drew the Big Dipper on the blackboard one day, and told us to go out and look for it that night. I went out, looked for it, found it, and fell in love with the stars."

The stars and planets have been there through Heyn's many jobs—substitute teacher, soldier, office manager, concrete inspector on the Harbor Tunnel, and delivery driver, to name a few.

Astronomy is more than a hobby to him. Heyn has been setting up his telescope in Fell's Point's Broadway Square since Nov. 13, 1987.

"The moon was up, Jupiter was up, and it was a nice clear night," he says. "I just decided to share it."

Acting as a tour guide to the stars and planets for interested passers by, Heyn has brought out his telescope to share his pas-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Herman Heyn: numerous jobs, a singular passion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sion 2,490 times according to his own records, with 40 to 50 percent of those outings occurring in Fell's Point. He has a street performer's license and pays the taxes on the income he makes.

"I think everybody, once in their lifetime, deserves to see the rings of Saturn through a telescope, or the mountains and craters on the moon, or the moons of Jupiter," says Heyn. "I see these things as beautiful, and I want to share that beauty."

Beyond astronomy, Heyn dabbles in physical science in general.

"I'm a wannabe physicist," he says.

Wannabe or not, he made an interesting discovery about some of Baltimore's north-south running roads, such as Calvert St., Charles St., and Broadway.

"They look like they run north-south, but they don't," Heyn says. "They run 3 degrees west of true north."

Whenever he sets up his telescope, Heyn must align it with true north so that its tracking mechanism can follow the stars as

they move across the sky. The tracking function keeps the same stars and planets in view, even as the earth moves.

Some time ago, Heyn found that if he aligned the telescope 3 degrees off the above mentioned city streets, he would find true north. His theory, which he later proved true, was that the streets were laid out using magnetic north, which is often not equivalent to true north. Magnetic north depends on the position of the fluid, magnetic material in

I think everybody, once in their lifetime, deserves to see the rings of Saturn through a telescope.

the earth's core, which "wanders arbitrarily," closer and farther from true north.

Sure enough, Heyn discovered that in 1730, when the streets were laid out, the magnetic compass read 3 degrees west of true north. He found the information in the Maryland Geological Society's library, in a paper that had been written on magnetism in Baltimore, which included a chart.

Now Heyn has written his own paper on the discovery, which is about to be published in the Journal of the History of Surveying.

Heyn notes that he temporarily "got out of" astronomy, soon after high school. He had lent all his books on the stars and planets to an acquaintance, who never returned them.

The Leonid Meteor Shower brought him back into the fold. Heyn remembers that he read about the Leonids as a teenager, and had hoped that that he would live to see them again. Sure enough, they came back in 1966. Heyn was married at the time, with children. He remembers reading about the meteors in the newspaper.

"Wow, I'm alive," he thought.

Since then, Heyn has been gazing at the stars with a vengeance.

"Everybody has some sort of interest," he says. "Some people fall in love with animals or trees or flowers—it was the stars for me."

Heyn still comes to Fell's Point regularly, but his 40-pound telescope gets heavy. He says that finding parking can be a hassle sometimes.

Heyn's friends are planning to hold a jubilee celebration to commemorate his 25 years in Fell's Point. Check the Guide's Community Calendar for details over the next weeks.

48 Oz. Cartons
**Turkey Hill
Ice Cream**
\$2.99

9-12 Oz.
**Dole Classic Romaine
or Greener Selection**
3 FOR \$4



Advertise your business in the Baltimore Guide's
SERVICE DIRECTORY

Baltimore's Best

SUSIE MOORE • 443.406.0752