

# Giving for the future

## Scholarship fund established for planetarium training

Long-time planetarian and astronomy educator Thomas Wm. Hamilton of Staten Island, New York, has established the Hamilton Planetarium Scholarship Fund Inc. to provide financial incentives for talented individuals to enter the field.

The organizing statement says both public and governmental officials need to gain a better understanding of astronomy and space-related issues, particularly in a world where many question whether the Apollo landings took place and others question whether ancient Mayan prophecies foretell doom from the skies.



Thomas Wm. Hamilton

“One of the ways such matters are confronted is from the nation’s nearly three thousand planetariums. However, professional training for planetarium work has lagged,” according to the statement. The scholarship hopes to encourage

talented students to pursue the planetarium field.

Renewable student stipends will be for one year and will include a paid one-year membership in professional organizations in the planetarium field.

Those interested in being considered for a scholarship must complete an application form, available by email from [tham153@hotmail.com](mailto:tham153@hotmail.com) or by regular mail from Hamilton Planetarium Scholarship Fund Inc., 153 Arlo Road, Staten Island, New York 10301.

### Suggested curriculum

Under the philosophy that good planetarium presentations will be a balance of science, education, and drama, the scholarship suggests a well-rounded curriculum, including:

- **Astronomy:** An absolute minimum of a year, but more is highly desirable. You should definitely take a course in the History of Astronomy if one is available.
- **Education:** A course of methods of science teaching (usually will have a semester of another education course as a prerequisite).
- **Geology:** At least one semester, so that you at least can recognize the differences among igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks, particularly on the inevitable day when someone wanders in with a

terrestrial rock or industrial slag they mistakenly think is a meteorite.

- **Meteorology:** Weather can be the enemy of observational astronomy, but what you learn in such a class can be applied to other planets.
- **Optics:** A valuable help in making special effects for the planetarium, as well as understanding types of telescopes. (Planetarium personnel are often asked questions about purchase of telescopes.)
- **Photography:** Learn how to take great photos that you can put up on a dome.
- **Planetarium Technology/Planetarium Show Design:** This is not offered in many schools, but if offered you must take these. If not offered, check your school’s policy on independent study, special topics study, and individualized curriculum.
- **Theater (in some schools called rhetoric):** Learn something about drama and appealing to audiences.

### 25 Years Ago column

Because work with the scholarship fund will take more of his time, Hamilton has stepped down from writing the “25 Years Ago” column in the *Planetarian*. He brought a unique perspective to the column, having taken part personally in many of the events the column described.

Hamilton himself is a colorful personality. He was a child actor from 1946-1952 and starred in the role of Barnaby in the stage production of *Barnaby and Mr. O’Malley*, based on Crockett Johnson’s comic strip Barnaby. (Johnson’s later works include children’s books centered on Harold, including *Harold and the Purple Crayon*.)

Educated at Columbia University, Hamilton worked in the mid-60s at Grumman Aircraft in Bethpage, New York on the Apollo Project, a fact he admits is still his proudest. He later worked for a planetarium manufacturer, writing planetarium shows provided to purchasers of Apollo model planetariums. He produced about 30 shows for general public audiences and for elementary school groups.

From 1970 to 1983 Hamilton ran the Wagner College Planetarium in Staten Island, New York, did consult-

ing work for other planetariums, and taught courses in astronomy, the history of astronomy, science fiction, and MBA-level computer management.

Hamilton was the originator of the theory that planetarium shows be based on the triple concepts of science, education and drama, with a successful show utilizing a balance of all three. While planetariums that mainly offer concerts or laser shows do not follow this philosophy, it remains one of the main concepts in the field.

With the temporary closure of the Wagner College Planetarium, Hamilton worked at the Newark Museum Planetarium while teaching at the College of Staten Island. He retired from teaching in 2003.

He is a Fellow of the IPS and, in 2009, had asteroid 4897 named Tomhamilton in his honor. He is the author of dozens of articles in the planetarium field, two books on computers, and an alternate history science fiction novel published in 2008, *Time for Patriots*.

### The fund trustees

Hamilton is one of three trustees for the Planetarium Scholarship Fund. Also a trustee is Sheldon Schafer, director of the Lakeview Museum Planetarium in Peoria, Illinois. Schafer is a past president of the Great Lakes Planetarium Association. He has been in the planetarium field since 1973, and has taught astronomy at Bradley University for 30 years.

Rounding out the trustees is Pam Eastlick, director of the planetarium of the University of Guam since 1993. This planetarium is noted for being the most isolated on Earth, nearly 2000 miles from its nearest planetarium neighbor. ☆

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