

REMEMBERING JOHN D. WEINHOLD



John D. Weinhold (left) observes the projected image of the Sun at the April 8, 2005 Solar Eclipse seen partial at the Christina Alley Observatory in East Pittsburgh. Others are (left to right) Glenn Walsh , Theresa Marie Graham and William Blake Hall.

We have lost one of our Meridian Circle. Sadly, John Weinhold of Beechview passed away a few days ago. For many years, he was a volunteer at the Buhl Planetarium and Institute at Allegheny Center in Pittsburgh, and was well informed and able to answer questions in almost all matters astronomical. More than anyone I knew, he fulfilled the original goal of the Buhl Planetarium and Institute, to satisfy the public curiosity about science and astronomy. John also had a past career as a magician and entertainer, and was the only person I knew who could recline on a bed of nails (“It’s simple, really,” he told me.)

When the Children’s Museum proposed to acquire the planetarium building, John, as a member of Friends of the Zeiss, tried to keep the planetarium projector in action. On September 30, 2001, he wrote in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*:

“The topic pales in significance to the events of Sept. 11. Yet the fate of the Zeiss Planetarium projector and the Siderostat telescope that are in the former Buhl Planetarium on the North Side cannot be ignored.

Seddon Bennington, director of the Carnegie Science Center, said he would like to see the projector become an artifact in the center's proposed expansion.

Preserving the Zeiss strictly as an artifact is absurd. It is not the device, but what the device does, that remains in the memories of everyone who attended the "sky shows" in the now-vacant Buhl Science Building.

The Zeiss is not an ‘art object’ to be put on display. It is a functional educational tool that can supplement, not compete with, the Digistar planetarium projector that is currently in use at Carnegie Science Center's Henry G. Buhl Jr. Planetarium.

Experienced volunteers (I am one) are available to operate and maintain these educational tools. Their benefit to the children of the Pittsburgh area is dependent upon using them effectively, which can be best done if they remain at their current location and periodically be made accessible to the public.”

John’s advice was not taken. The Zeiss model 2 from the Buhl Planetarium is now a static exhibit at the Carnegie Science Center on the “North Shore”.

Meridian Passage will keep you informed of a future memorial service remembering John. He was also a member of the Friends of the Beechview Library.