

Offered Title: Astronomy Domine

My title this week comes from the 1967 piece by Pink Floyd. Maybe I can get it to come full circle.

Roughly translated, Astronomy Domine refers to a lord or master of the heavens, of the celestial dome. This is the dome so many of us enjoy looking at with naked eyes and optical instruments. Without it there would be no astronomy, no Astronomy Night at Tye Preston Memorial Library in Canyon Lake, no Astronomy Night anywhere.

If we lived where cloud cover or severe light pollution were a constant, we wouldn't have a clue that there is a beautiful, inspiring celestial dome above us. That is, until someone dared to travel high into the sky, above clouds and light pollution, and discover the universe! How might this grand discovery be brought down to the people in a form they understand and appreciate? How does someone describe a thing you never have experienced, so it becomes real?

Other than taking a trip to west Texas, pictures are way better than words. But, to incite the emotional response on seeing the real beauty of our universe, a facsimile representing the celestial dome is called for.

A Planetarium.

A planetarium becomes your celestial dome, becomes your telescope, your spacecraft, even your translator of ancient languages. Learn the intriguing myths surrounding constellation names, stories of Greek and Roman Gods, all animated on the planetarium's dome. The presenter can zoom in on objects, showing details that can only be seen with great telescopes. You can be taken on a fantastic tour of our solar system, galaxy, and universe!

That's great, but other than showing the beautiful celestial dome, what can a planetarium do?

Today's planetariums can also immerse you in an experience beyond that of any other theater and you can even be given joystick control of your experience, from your seat. Learn about the inner workings of your body, a cell, an atom. Tour faraway lands, be thrilled by panoramic views from mountain tops. Go to a concert and be with the musicians, even stage a wedding within your chosen setting. Oh, yeah, go to a Pink Floyd laser light show. A planetarium is an Astronomy Domine.

The options are limited only by imagination.

Most metropolitan areas have a planetarium. The downside...gotta go to the city, fight traffic and find parking. It's a bit of a hassle. There might be an option. Mick Homer, New Braunfels Astronomy Club's first contact and a building designer, has designed a planetarium that can be situated in the local community. Do you think you would pay a few dollars for a planetarium experience in nearby Canyon Lake? If so, contact me at eweandnle@gmail.com. This is an informal survey and I will pass your response to Mick.

What's in the Sky?

For you early risers, Saturn and Mars are still dancing in Sagittarius, above the teapot. Look to the southwest.