

Ashton Observatory Public Nights

The Des Moines Astronomical Society invites you to visit the Ashton Observatory Saturdays, 8:00 p.m., April through October.

Many Saturdays include a classroom presentation, followed by stargazing as sky conditions allow.

Meet one of our fine presenters:

Jim VandeBerg



Jim VandeBerg developed a profound interest in astronomy when he first observed craters on the moon through a telescope in seventh grade. His initial instrument was a modest \$30, three-inch Edmund Scientific "Space Conqueror," mounted on a shaky tripod. The eyepiece, measuring just 0.9 inches, was the same standard used for microscopes at the time. Despite the simplicity of the setup, the views were awe-inspiring.

Jim received his formal education at Iowa State University before embarking on a successful 49-year career in business administration. Throughout his life, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to craftsmanship, having built a cabin and two homes from the ground up, including his current earth-bermed residence. Jim is married and is the proud father of five children and grandfather to four grandchildren. Outside of his astronomical interests, he works passionately at a Des Moines charitable organization dedicated to providing beds for children in need of a place to sleep.

Currently, Jim is in the process of constructing a backyard observatory to house his 8-inch SCT telescope. The observatory has a warm-house designed to accommodate computer equipment and ensure year-round comfort for observing. Jim's primary interests in astronomy lie in telescope mechanics and electronically assisted astronomy, with globular clusters being among his favorite celestial objects. He currently serves as the board secretary, newsletter editor, and a member of the observatory committee, as well as a representative to the Astronomical League. Jim also enjoys sharing the wonders of the night sky with Ashton Observatory visitors through the telescope in the south dome there.