

# KU DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS & ASTRONOMY

College of Liberal Arts  
& Sciences

OCT/NOV 2011

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS & ALUMNI OF PHYSICS & ASTRONOMY



*Understanding  
Nature  
Starts Here*



Department of Physics  
& Astronomy



ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION

The University of Kansas



**LAST REMINDER – We Promise!**

**REUNION – 2011**

**Saturday, November 5, 2011**

The Fall Reunion is approaching rapidly. If you are still considering attending, especially the dinner on Saturday evening, *please go to the REUNION WebPage*

[http://www.physics.ku.edu/alumni/alumni\\_reunion.shtml](http://www.physics.ku.edu/alumni/alumni_reunion.shtml)

*and fill out the on-line form for the Reunion*, if you haven't already done so. This will permit us to more accurately set the numbers for dinner, which we need to finalize by Oct. 25. All the details are available at the site. If you have questions or would prefer to call the department to let us know that you are attending, please contact Kim Hubbel or Teri Leahy at **785-864-4626**. All events, including the dinner, are free to alumni and friends of the department.

One of the key events of the Reunion day is a public lecture by **Prof. Steve Hawley** at the Spencer Museum of Art. If you receive the KU Alumni Magazine, you may have noticed the cover article this Fall was a story on **Our Place in Space**, which featured extensive discussions with Steve and a nice plug for the talk and book-signing. If you don't get the magazine but still have an interest, the article is accessible on line at

<http://www.physics.ku.edu/momentum/pdfs/kansasalumni.pdf>

### Coming Home - II

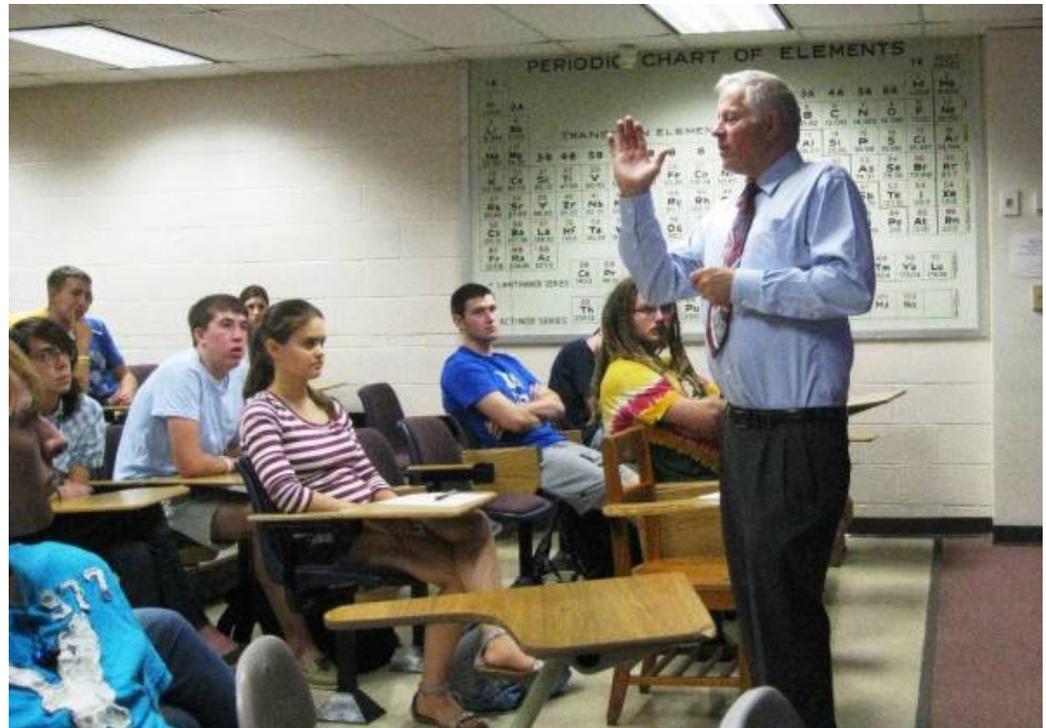
Speaking of visitors, the Department has been busy place this semester thanks to a number of alumni who were able to come by to talk with their faculty mentors and





## Alumni News

our students. We are fond of claiming that our graduates can go out and do just about anything. A distinguished visitor to campus in September bears out that claim to an unprecedented degree. Physics PhD (1983) alum General **Pahol Sanganetra** serves as the deputy permanent Secretary for Defense for Thailand. As part of a tour of the military facilities at Leavenworth, he and his wife (pictured above) returned to KU to participate in a moderated discussion sponsored by KU's East Asian Studies & Global & International Studies Programs as well as KU's Office of Professional Military Graduate Education, with a stopover in the Department to reminisce with the faculty, students, and his thesis advisor, Doug McKay.



We enjoyed the visits earlier this month of Dr. Raj Venkatapathy and alum **Dr. James Arnold** (BS - EPHX 1962), both from NASA Ames. Raj and Jim spoke to a diverse lunch crowd about entry systems for future missions (as in, to Mars, maybe!). Jim later met with the PHSX 150 freshman seminar class. Our newest majors were treated to a fascinating but somber history of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board, of which Jim was a member.





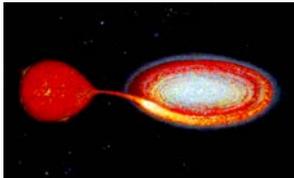
Other visitors this semester included **Dr. Jeff Robertson** (BS Physics, Astronomy 1989) (seen above with Profs. Twarog and Anthony-Twarog). Jeff returned as part of the Homecoming celebration because, as those of you who know Jeff may remember, he was Big Jay during his undergraduate years at KU and KU was having a 40-year reunion of those who served as Big and Little Jays. Jeff, who has spent the last 14 years on the Arkansas Tech faculty in the Physical Sciences Department and is a past recipient of the Arkansas Tech Faculty Award of Excellence in teaching, was appointed Dean of the College of Natural and Health Sciences by the Tech Board of Trustees last May. In his new role, Jeff will have oversight of the biological sciences, mathematics, nursing and physical sciences departments at Arkansas Tech.

Not to be left out, we also had visits from alumni **Dr. Mohammad T. Ahmadian** (PhD: Physics, 1979) and **Dr. Moncef Boufaïda** (MS: Physics, 1987, PhD: Physics, 1995), both students of Dr. Tom Armstrong. Dr. Ahmadian was visiting KU with his son, checking out potential options for college. Dr. Boufaïda, currently based in Wichita, will be returning for the Reunion in November.

## Nobel Connection



Those of you who regularly watch the PBS Newshour may have seen the feature on Saul Perlmutter, one of three co-winners of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics for their work on the accelerating Universe and dark energy. What you may not know is that the grad student shown working at the telescope controls taking data with Perlmutter for the SNIa observations is none other than KU alum **Hannah Swift** (now Fakhouri) (BS Astronomy, Math, Physics – 2006). Hannah is a grad student completing her PhD in Perlmutter's group at Berkeley. To see what you may have missed, the video is accessible on line at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/science/july-dec11/physics\\_10-04.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/science/july-dec11/physics_10-04.html)



## Update

We noted in the first two newsletters that, as part of the sesquicentennial celebration of the state of Kansas, the public science group *Ad Astra* coordinated a project called *Science in Kansas, 150 Years and Counting*, highlighting 150 Kansas scientists, both **past and present**, and their contributions by providing free trading cards with information about them; the selections to date included five with KU ties. One additional Department faculty member was added to the list with the September release. If you didn't check it out at the web site for the project



the final selection was **Dr. Barbara Anthony-Twarog**. Dr. Anthony-Twarog was also featured in a Sunday edition of the Lawrence Journal World in July, discussing 16 interesting things about her life and career. A video of part of the interview is accessible at

[http://www.adastra-ks.org/events/150\\_scientists\\_index.html](http://www.adastra-ks.org/events/150_scientists_index.html)

<http://www2.ljworld.com/videos/2011/jul/22/34790/>

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