

Pioneer retires after 37 years in astronomy

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contributing writer



Ted Pedas, who was a first-year student at YSU in 1957 when the Soviet Union was launching its Sputnik rockets into space, has retired after 25 years of service to the Ward Beecher planetarium.

Pedas graduated from YSU in 1962 with a bachelor's degree in planetarium science. In 1968 he founded the International Planetarium Society and began working as a lecturer on a part-time basis at Ward Beecher planetarium.

"Some of the first programs at YSU's planetarium were about the famous moon landing of 1969. Interest in the space program increased the excitement of people everywhere," said Pedas about the great space race back in the late 1960s.

"With the abundance of information, none of the shows were repetitious and all were filled to capacity. It was a very big boost for YSU's planetarium program," he remembers.

The physics and astronomy department presented Pedas with a painting that highlights some of the major events in his long career. Some of the events earned him wide recognition as a professional educator.

Pedas, who once organized a trip to South America for 5,000 people from various parts of the world to view the last passing of Halley's comet, has been organizing trips since 1970 to land-based and sea-based platforms to experience solar eclipses.

He pioneered the practice of

taking unique cruise tours to destinations of astronomical and natural significance. He enriched the cruises with guest lecturers of the highest caliber.

Among the notable guest lecturers was Dr. Daniel K. Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress Emeritus, who is also a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian.

In 1983 Pedas was selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to write and co-produce a planetarium show that documents America's first quarter of a century in space.

The show, which also marked NASA's 25th anniversary, premiered in Youngstown and ran at more than 200 planetariums nationwide.

Pedas' many honors include the U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development Award for "exemplary service in education" and the Pennsylvania Educator of the Year Award.

He has written a weekly column for the Sunday edition of *The Vindicator* for the past 30 years. He uses the column to disseminate factual comprehensible information about science.

Pedas, who is a single and resides in nearby Farrell, Pa., has lived and worked in this area most of his life.

He will continue writing the column, spending time exploring educational themes at sea and working on his travel projects.

"We are living in the most interesting of times right now, everything is changing," Pedas says about the life. "These great changes bring great opportunities. It is important to keep your eyes open."