

PHYSICS AT SOUTHERN

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Published once in awhile
For former students and friends of the Department

(SAU logo here)

(Physics Dept logo here)

A LOOK BACK

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"What do Physics graduates do?"

The graduates since 1958 have not [all] had time to settle down into their final area of work, so the following numbers may not be [conclusive]:

15.4% are now in graduate school [studying Physics]
15.4% are in graduate school in some area related to Physics
15.4% are research technicians
15.4% are now teaching in college
30.8% are now teaching in secondary school
7.[6]% are working in pure research"

[You can probably figure out how many graduates are included in this list. Ed.]

Vol. 11, No. 1

"Christmas Season 1969

Equipment

The [IBM] 1130 [computer] and many accessory devices are now here and in use. They have been transferred to the new Computer Sciences Department, with Mr. Bob McCurdy as chairman. The Physics Department has a Heathkit analog computer in use and will get some more. A rapidly growing library of software (some 200 programs) for both exists."

FALL/WINTER 1999 ISSUE OF "COLUMNS"

This SAU periodical has a superb cover article on pp. 4 to 6. Several of you are mentioned. If you don't receive Columns and wish to, let the editor know and he will arrange for you to be on the list.

The article was written by Debra Hicks. Her assignment was to include as much human interest as possible, consistent with a linear narrative. The limited amount of "space" resulted in the choices of just a few. It is hoped that those of you who participated in the research described, and who are not included, will not feel that your contributions are unappreciated.

PERSONALS

~Ted Ashton has been back at Southern, programming for the Information Systems department for nearly five years now, after a brief time in the "far country" (Walla Walla). He and his wife, Heidi, and daughter, Jo, have just been blessed with the arrival of James Wellington "Jim" Ashton, born January 6.

~Janene and Jack Burdick have a new baby boy. Janene is the daughter of Al and Doris Burdick. John Alfred was born Tuesday, February 8, in Atlanta at 6:21 p.m. and weighed 8 lb. 7oz.

~Steve Burger writes: "I am now into my fourth year as the principal of a large elementary school in Charleston, SC. We have 718 students this year with about 75 staff members. I was an assistant principal for 12 years before. And before that, I taught in different school, ranging from 4th grade to 11th.

"The job is definitely a challenge. It is usually 50-60 hours per week including night meetings (PTA, School Improvement Council, etc.). My school is a K-5th grade school. It has a large special education population, three self contained learning disabilities classes, a profound mentally disabled class, an autistic class, and two teachers for learning disabilities -- resource model, plus speech, hearing, vision, etc..

"Kathy and the kids are doing fine. She is the office manager for a dentist. Josh is now 21 and is working in a hub cap store. Breanne is 18 and out of high school. She is trying to get into some kind of nursing program (nurses' assistant) at the local tech."

~Chris and Heather Carlson write: "Just a quick note to let you know that Heather and I are new parents. Our daughter, Abigail Jane, arrived at 3:55pm on Jan. 3. She was 7 lbs., 6 oz. and was 20 inches long. She is perfectly healthy and has totally stolen our hearts!

"We send our best to everyone there at Southern!"

[Chris Hansen, now on the SAU Physics staff, also went to graduate school in Colorado. He and Gaylene Hansen are new parents too. Their daughter is named Abigail also.]

~James Davis writes: "Things are going well here at Sunnysdale Academy. James III is now ten months old and is extremely smart. He has two teeth with more on the way and crawls all over the house. Before long he should be walking."

~Ken Gano has left the classroom to become computer manager for a magnet school in the Chattanooga area. He recently presented a seminar that was very well received.

~Ric Howard is working at Philips Semiconductors.

~Pat Jacobson writes: "At our company [Silicon Spice] we interview candidates by requiring them to solve mathematical puzzles and computer problems. We are looking for people who enjoy a significant challenge. Consequently, my particular team has some people who occasionally solve problems in quantum physics just for the fun of it. Lunch conversations might be on anything mathematical, physics related, or possibly chemistry related.

"I love working in this environment and hope we can make a go of this company so that it continues. Of course, there are sacrifices, such as the fact that I have worked the last 6 weekends and finally went home at 2:15 this morning. But the fun of working with such great people (meaning that they enjoy the things I do) is worth the extra work."

[Hint: Pat, give your interviewees a ring of keys where all the keys have the flat edge one way and the toothed edge the other way. Give them one more key and have them install in so that it is in the same orientation. It's surprising how difficult it is to succeed the first time, especially if you devote time to planning your move.]

~Cliff Keller, back from some years in at West Indies College, writes: "One by one my old computers take on new life. I still have an 8088 desktop and an 8088 laptop that have programs and data files I do not have the heart to destroy. I have two 486 computers that I use mainly for internet use. These workhorses periodically have problems but I zero out their hard drive and start from scratch. I also use them to try new things like LINUX. Oh yes there is a 386 and an Amiga. If I bring home another computer, my wife threatens a divorce.

"I have a pentium (the 486 from Jamaica upgraded). I reserve it for Visual Basic programming and biological projects. One program is a multiple entry key to plant families. Once a family has been selected it is easy to view samples representing that family. There are nearly 5000 pictures available. I continue with the birds of Jamaica project. I have developed several programs to display pictures of all endemic birds along with samples of their songs including sonographs. I hope to one day to go into the field, record the sounds, and have the computer identify the birds for me. The sonographs are neat for it is possible to recognize visually the difference between a particular bird species song and a mocking bird copying it. I am unable to differentiate between the songs by listening. In the mean time, I am learning the songs so the computer is no longer necessary :-). Now to get a chance to go back to Jamaica.

"Dot is well and seems happy. She also serves a taxi for several older members in our church family, helps in our local church school by grading papers, and supervises/tutors students. To round out her day she studies to prepare herself to lead out in our churches youth division.

"I continue to work at the University of Louisville doing statistical analysis related to Kentucky's Welfare Reform Program. We have done such an outstanding job (doing things contractors said couldn't be done) that the state is awarding us a million dollar project to start data warehousing. Its a bit frightening, but at least I can see light at the end of the tunnel."

~Kevin Shaw writes: "I wish you greetings from the snowy and COLD state of Ohio. Tomorrow morning we'll be heading out to church in sub-zero temperatures.

"My new email system is with a cable modem - reported speeds at 1,500,000 bps to 2,000,000 compared to the previously blazing speed of 14,400 to 56,000 bps. So.... I'm looking into setting up a

web-cam so we can do video-conferencing. If any of you have that capability now, I'd be very interested in how you've done it, and what your experience has been.

"Terry's baking an apple pie, and I'm about to spend a little time with my classical guitar."

~Mary Ann Swayze and Don "belong to a small club with a beautiful and challenging golf course that we hope to play a lot this summer. Right now I'd like to be going up to the ski area and getting in a little skiing."

[They describe their area as a winter wonderland, a niche of paradise.]

~Jonathan Vigh writes: "I recently attended the American Meteorological Society's annual conference in Long Beach. ... I think it's pretty certain that I'll be accepted to [Colorado State University], my first choice -- I'll let you know when I hear more."

A LOOK FORWARD

Fall, 2008: The Physics Department achieves an "even-front" laboratory for Introduction to Physics and for General Physics. That means that all students in a laboratory session are now measuring the same thing. Stress on assistants is reduced; grading the papers no longer has to wait for all students to cycle through a given experiment.

A former student did well (very well) in the futures market for manganese mined on the asteroid Hermes. She provided funding to purchase the equipment.

THE LAST LAUGH

HOW TO WRITE YOUR THESIS PAPER

Scene: It's a fine beautiful day in the forest; and a rabbit is sitting outside his burrow, typing away on his lap top.

Along comes a fox, out for a walk.

Fox: "What are you working on?"

Rabbit: "My Thesis paper to graduate from University."

Fox: "HmMMM. What is it about?"

Rabbit: "Oh, I'm writing about how rabbits eat foxes."

(There is an incredulous pause)

Fox: "That's ridiculous!"

Any fool knows that rabbits don't eat foxes!"

Rabbit: "Come with me and I'll show you!"

They both disappear into the rabbit's burrow. After a few minutes, gnawing on a fox bone, the rabbit returns to his lap top and resumes typing. Soon a wolf comes along and stops to watch the hard working rabbit.

Wolf: "What's that you are writing?"

Rabbit: "I'm doing a thesis on how rabbits eat wolves."

(loud guffaws).

Wolf: "You don't expect to get such garbage published, do you?"

Rabbit: "No problem. Do you want to see why?"

The rabbit and the wolf go into the burrow,
and again the rabbit returns by himself.
This time he is patting his stomach.
He goes back to his typing.

Finally a bear comes along and asks,

Bear: "What are you doing?"

Rabbit: "I'm doing a thesis on how rabbits eat bears."

Bear: "Well that's absurd!"

Rabbit: "Come into my home and I'll show you."

Inside the rabbit's burrow. In one corner,
there is a pile of fox bones. In another corner is a
pile of wolf bones. On the other side of the room a
huge lion is belching and picking his teeth.

The moral is:

It doesn't matter what you choose for a thesis topic.

It doesn't matter what you use for your data.

It doesn't even matter if your topic makes sense.

What matters is who you have for a thesis advisor.

(Ray Hefferlin is solely responsible for the contents of this issue)