



CHABOT ASTRONOMER PHOTOS ON DISPLAY IN SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION

—Explore the Universe Exhibition Features Astronomy Photos by Conrad Jung—

17 May 2006 -- (Oakland, CA) Normally shy and unassuming, Conrad Jung, astronomer at Chabot Space & Science Center, has been guiding people through the night skies since 1975. Jung is also a very fine astrophotographer, and the caliber of his work has recently been recognized by the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, where three of his photographs are currently on display in the "Explore the Universe" exhibition. Jung's photos include images of the Pleiades, the Trifid Nebula, and a total lunar eclipse sequence, and will be on display, both in the gallery and online, until the end of June. The ongoing feature, called "First Light," highlights some of the wonders of our universe as seen and captured by amateur astronomers, and recognizes the fact that new technologies and innovative uses of old technologies have made it possible for just about anyone to capture fascinating images of the sky.

"Conrad's photos were exceptionally striking to me," commented David DeVorkin, curator at the Space History Division of the National Air and Space Museum. "I was interested to read about his special telescope set-up, which is uniquely designed for astrophotography."

Jung uses a Canon 20D digital SLR camera mounted on a 7-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope, so that the telescope acts as a large lens for the camera. "Unlike most Schmidt-Cassegrains popular with amateur stargazers, this one is designed only with photography in mind, and has a focal ratio of f/4," Jung explains. "To help me get more magnified images of some of the objects that I photograph, I sometimes employ 1.4x and 2.0x teleconverters. I had been using film for almost all of my astrophotography, but just over a year ago I got my first digital SLR -- a Canon EOS 20D -- and began doing all my deep-sky astrophotography with that."

For guiding, he uses a SBIG STV autoguiding CCD camera attached to a short 80mm refractor. The camera, the guider, and telescope are mounted on a Losmandy G-11 model equatorial mount. It has been his workhorse mount for more than ten years.

"Conrad's dedication is as astronomical and awesome as the objects he helps viewers see in all their glory," remarked Alex Barnett, executive director at Chabot. "For more than 30 years, he's been the helping hand that guides people to their first glimpses of the heavens. It's truly fitting that the Smithsonian should recognize him in this way."

Jung's striking photos can be seen on the Smithsonian website at <http://www.nasm.si.edu/exploretheuniverse/firstlight/index.htm>. Images of Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, supernovas, galaxies and other celestial objects taken by Jung through Chabot's three telescopes can be seen in Chabot's online Astrophoto Gallery at <http://www.chabotspace.org/vsc/observatory/astrophotos.asp>. Visitors are invited to meet Jung in person on most Friday and Saturday evenings when Chabot's telescopes are open for free

public viewing (weather permitting). Currently, the telescopes are trained on Jupiter, the Ring Nebula and star clusters. Affable, low-key and patient, Jung is always happy to answer any questions about what's up in the sky.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum maintains the largest collection of historic air and spacecraft in the world. It is also a vital center for research into the history, science, and technology of aviation and space flight, as well as planetary science and terrestrial geology and geophysics. For more information, visit www.nasm.si.edu.

Chabot Space and Science Center, a Smithsonian affiliate, is a 501c3 nonprofit teaching and learning center focusing on astronomy and the inter-relationships of all the sciences. Its observatory, planetarium, exhibits, and natural park setting are a place where a diverse population of students, teachers, and the public can imagine, understand, and learn to shape their future through science.

For more information, call (510) 336-7300, or visit www.chabotspace.org

###