

## **Dream Big and the World Will Dream With You**

Robert Beauford [from: *Meteorite* magazine, May 2011, Volume 17, No. 2, pp. 4-5]

Two of the most significant annual events in the world of meteorites occurred during preparation of this issue. First, the undisputed central annual event of the collector and dealer world, the Tucson Gem Show, occurred in Tucson, Arizona, in early February. For anyone who has never been to the Tucson Show, this event presents, for about 10 to 12 days each year, one of the finest gatherings of meteorites on earth, and almost certainly represents the largest global annual gathering of meteorite collectors and dealers. We are grateful to 'the Big Kahuna,' Gary Fujihara, for providing photographs of some of the years Tucson events.

Secondly, the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Lunar and Planetary Science Conference (LPSC 2011) occurred at the Woodlands, near Houston Texas, in March. The LPSC is an annual event at which the world of planetary, impact, and meteorite science comes together for almost a week of sessions and workshops to share their most recent research in what a friend of mine describes as 'really big nerdy words'. I think it is heaven on earth, and wish it lasted a month.

The Lunar and Planetary Science Conference is, to the scientific world of meteorites, what the Tucson Gem Show is to dealers and collectors. Alongside the annual meeting of the Meteoritical Society (74<sup>th</sup> annual will be held in London in August), the LPSC is one of the biggest events of its type in the world. Researchers from around the planet present at this conference on subjects ranging from planetary science to impact craters and cratering processes to meteorites, space dust, CAI's, chondrule formation, achondrite differentiation, and pretty much anything else meteorite related that you can think of. This is a highly technical conference defined by absolutely leading edge work. It is also, like the Tucson show, a wonderful gathering of enthusiastic people who are excited about meteorites. Between technical sessions, people who go for most of the year seeing each other's names only in print are able to dine, drink, visit, and catch up in person. Alan Rubin shares highlights of the LPSC in his quarterly scientific report in this issue.

The Planetary Decadal Survey is the guiding document of the US space science program. It is released every 10 years, and is the culmination of work by hundreds of people over several years. The document, which was released at the LPSC conference, will serve as the guiding principles behind the program for a decade, from 2013 to 2023. The uniform theme of the decadal survey was program cutbacks, trimming, limitations, decreases, and flat lines. The US space program's budget is not large to start with, and for many, the Decadal Survey was disappointing. I overheard several young researchers comment that they had picked the wrong decade in which to begin their careers. A European scientist stood up and iterated that the European community is facing similar cutbacks and limits, and researchers from other parts of the world voiced similar concerns later in the conference.

As an eternal optimist, I think that this survey, and the budget constrictions that it represents, are only a beginning. The interested scientific community as a whole, and the groups that benefit from and support that science, such as meteorite dealers and collectors, should remember that this budget reflects the dreams of America and of the world. The space program budget reflect the population's desire, both conscious and unconscious, to reach

farther, to dream bigger, and to do more. In short, our budget for exploratory science is an index of the world's willingness to dare to dream, and to reach for the stars.

I felt a strong desire, after listening to the unveiling of the Planetary Decadal Survey, to remind the community, both the 1000 or so people who were immediately present in the room and the rest of the community, scattered around the world, that we can make a difference. Limited goals and budgets reflect only current thoughts and priorities. As we communicate to the world why meteorites, impact studies, planetary science, and stretching the boundaries of human exploration and knowledge are important, and as we build in others the willingness to dream, to reach higher, and to be and do more, they will not only ask, but demand, that the scientists of the world be better supported and better funded. Each of us has lived vicariously through the previous exploration of this solar system, and as we shared that experience with the scientific community, we were part of a team. Space and planetary science is now, and has always been, a team effort. The heart, soul, and support of that team is the public at large, with its curiosity, hopes, and vision for a greater future than past. The hands and voice of the team are the scientists, students, researchers, and writers of the scientific community.

So what does this mean? It means that if we dream big, and if we encourage others to do the same, the world will expand. Horizons will be pushed back, and new discoveries will be made. The 1000 or so people who were sitting in the room when the Planetary Decadal Survey was announced walked out of the room with looks of resignation, acceptance, and the quiet determination of scientists and scholars who will never stop working towards their dreams, but are tired of dreaming alone. I wanted to tell them "Write! Write as if the future depended on it. Write as if it makes a difference! Write as if you can lift up the world and remind people what it is to wonder and to explore! Share your curiosity with others and they will ask you to be the hands through which they reach out to the future. Dream big, and share your dreams with the world, and the world will ask you to help them explore, to seek, and to hope for the future."

And so here it is... my small part... and I want to encourage others to do the same. To the thousand scholars who were in that room, and to the million scientists, collectors, dealers, educators and explores around the world, I want to say that the scaling back of the space and planetary science program is changeable, but it depends upon us and upon our voices. For every article we write in 'big nerdy words,' we have to say the same thing to school children, to taxpaying factory workers, to middle and high school educators, and to legislators. We have to ask them to dare to dream with us, to hope for the future with us, and to expand their curiosity with us, and in return, we have to share the excitement of our discoveries with them. On that note, I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed their love of meteorites and meteoritical science to and through this publication in the past, to thank our current authors, and to wish you all the best as you enjoy this new issue!

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