



## The Night I Saw the Moon by Noreen Grice

What makes a person decide to pursue a particular career? Let me share with you who and what persuaded me to be an astronomer. I was 15 years old and a freshman in high school. Each morning I arrived at my homeroom 20 minutes early; by 8 a.m., the organized chaos would begin. Bells chimed every 45 minutes, and it was a mad dash to get to the next class. My mind became a criss-cross of knowledge, from English to Spanish, history to math, and science to band rehearsal.

One day my science teacher told us about a special open house at a local observatory. He offered to drive any students who might be interested in attending the program. I was definitely interested!

You see, I had started reading about astronomy the day my third grade teacher announced that our class would have a "special lending library." On her desk sat a shoebox, and inside that box was a collection of paperback books on various topics. We could borrow one book each week. I chose the *Golden Guide to Stars*. I borrowed it many times!

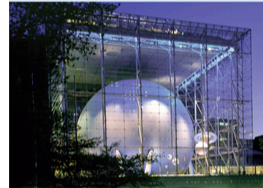
I remember opening that book and being awestruck over the paintings of the Moon and planets. According to the book, there were nine planets and the smallest planet was Mercury. Years later that designation would shift to tiny Pluto. Many years after that, astronomers at a conference in Prague would decide that Pluto might not be a planet after all.

I asked my mother if I could go on the evening field trip to the university observatory. I wasn't sure exactly what I would see there but if it had to do with outer space, I wanted to find out!

A few nights later, we walked into the science building at Boston University and took the elevator to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Everyone was ushered into an auditorium. A professor showed us slides of the planets and the moon; these were actual photographs, not the paintings I remembered from the book in third grade.

## Everyone's Universe

### A Guide to Accessible Astronomy Places



**Noreen Grice**

After the slide show, it was time to explore the Astronomy Department. I wandered down the hall and read all the signs over the doors: Professor Papagiannis, Professor Janes, Professor Brecher and others. I didn't know any of these people but figured they must be very important. Then I found the sign I was really looking for; it read "Observatory Upstairs."

I walked up the two flights of stairs and opened the door to the observatory. One of the astronomy students brought me over to the telescope. "Want to take a look at the Moon?" he asked. I had never looked into the eyepiece of a telescope before. Then, there it was: the Moon. It looked like a lonely gray place, with mountains and craters. I was amazed. I felt like I was actually standing on the Moon.

When it was time to leave, I made a promise to myself that I would someday become an astronomy student. And a few years later, I was: an astronomy student at Boston University.

My future had changed because a third grade teacher lent me a little book about stars and high school science teacher showed me a distant world through a telescope. How has a teacher changed your life?

For those interested in partaking in an astronomical experience, here are two local options:

**The Mendel Observatory at Merrimack College, in North Andover**, is located on the top floor of the Mendel Science Center at Merrimack College. Weather permitting, the observatory is open to the public each Wednesday. Check the Merrimack College web site (<http://www.merrimack.edu/community/Observatory>) or call 978-837-5011 for upcoming schedule and weather conditions.

**The Clay Center Observatory**, featured in the book *Everyone's Universe*, is located at the Dexter and Southfield School in **Brookline, Mass.** The observatory is wheelchair accessible and views through the telescope are offered during the year. Check the Clay Center website ([www.clayobservatory.org](http://www.clayobservatory.org)) in advance for the current schedule of public open nights.

#### **About the author:**

Noreen Grice, who grew up in Malden, MA, is author of five previously published accessible astronomy books, all with text in print and Braille and images that are touchable. Her latest education/travel book is *Everyone's Universe: A Guide to Accessible Astronomy Places*. Noreen's mission is to make astronomy and space science accessible to everyone regardless of any disability. She is a pioneer in accessible astronomy methods and is recipient of several awards including the 2007 Klumpke-Roberts Award (Astronomical Society of the Pacific), the 2008 Jacob Bolotin Award (National Federation of the Blind), the 2009 YWCA Tribute to Women Award, and the 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award from Boston University. You can read more about her work at [www.youcandoastronomy.com](http://www.youcandoastronomy.com).