

we hear
that

Huchra is AAS president-elect

An astronomy professor at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) has taken office as president-elect of the American Astronomical Society.

John P. Huchra, the Robert O. and Holly Thomis Doyle Professor of Cosmology at Harvard University, where he is also senior adviser to the provost on research policy, assumed his role at the society's annual meeting in May. He will serve as president-elect until 2008, when he becomes president for a two-year

term, succeeding **J. Craig Wheeler** (see PHYSICS TODAY, July 2005, page 73).

"I hope to . . . successfully represent the excitement of astronomy and the importance of basic research in astronomy and astrophysics to the public and to our government," Huchra told PHYSICS TODAY. "I hope to strengthen relationships between and among the community, the agencies responsible for federal funding of astronomy, and the government."

Huchra's research focus is observational cosmology, particularly the study of the distribution and dynamics of matter and of the formation of structure in the universe. As part of his research, he has completed two important galactic surveys. One maps the distribution of nearby galaxies. The second uncovered evidence that almost all galaxies lie on thin, bubble-like surfaces and of what remains the largest single structure seen in any survey, the "Great Wall."

Huchra graduated from MIT in 1970 and received a PhD in astronomy from Caltech in 1976. He joined the CfA in 1976 as a postdoctoral fellow. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1993.

In other AAS election results, **Lee Hartmann** (University of Michigan), presently an AAS councilor, will serve a

three-year term as society vice president, and **John Graham** (Carnegie Institution of Washington) will serve a three-year term as secretary. **Richard Green** (Large Binocular Telescope Observatory) is the new publications board chair, and **Edward Churchwell** (University of Wisconsin) is the society's new member of the US National Committee for the International Astronomical Union.

Also, **Chryssa Kouveliotou** (NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center), **Felix Lockman** (National Radio Astronomy Observatory), and **Nicholas Suntzeff** (Texas A&M University) will serve three-year terms as AAS councilors.

AGU rewards work of six

A new international honor and two others that recognize excellence in science-related reporting are among several awards recently distributed to six recipients by the American Geophysical Union.

AGU chose **Uppugunduri Aswathanarayana** as the recipient of its newest decoration, the Award for International Research Cooperation. Aswathanarayana, the honorary director of the Mahadevan International Centre for Water Resources Management in Hyderabad, India, was selected "for serving science and society in less developed countries by training geoscience personnel and developing geoscience infrastructure to promote self-reliance in these countries."

Kenneth R. Weiss, **Usha Lee McFarling**, and **Betsy Mason** won AGU's 2007 journalism awards, whose focus this year was on reporting about natural hazards and human impact on the environment. Weiss and McFarling received the Walter Sullivan Award for Excellence in Science Journalism—Features for their series "Altered Oceans," published in the *Los Angeles Times*. The award selection committee said the series "is ambitious in scope, global in significance, and powerful in rendering judgment." The winning articles were published on 30 July and 1 and 3 August 2006. Weiss is a staff writer at the *LA Times* and McFarling is a freelance science writer.

Mason, the science and national laboratories reporter at the *Contra Costa Times* in Walnut Creek, California, received the David Perlman Award for Excellence in Science Journalism—News for her series on the centennial of the San Francisco earthquake, based on a conference commemorating the event. In choosing Mason's articles, the selection committee said, "Mason . . . pro-

vide[d] scientists with new insights [and] alerted readers . . . that a strong earthquake in northern California could devastate . . . the city of Sacramento and a significant portion of the state's water supply." The winning articles, part of a longer series, were published on 17, 18, and 20 April 2006.

The Edward A. Flinn III Award was handed to **Diane Wickland** "in recognition of her lifelong contributions to the international geophysical science community." Wickland is manager of NASA's terrestrial ecology program in Washington, DC.

Michael Mayhew received the Excellence in Geophysical Education Award "for significant and long lasting cultural changes in the community such that geophysical education is embraced across the discipline and the development of a community dedicated to advancing the understanding of how we teach and learn about Earth." Mayhew is principal of Synoptic LLC in Ocean City, Maryland.

L'Oréal and UNESCO honor women in science

Five leading scientists from different continents have been honored as part of an effort to recognize the contributions of outstanding women researchers to scientific progress and to encourage their participation in research.

The ninth annual L'Oréal-UNESCO Awards for Women in Science were distributed in February during a ceremony in Paris. Three of the laureates are involved in physics-related work.

Mildred Dresselhaus was selected as the North American laureate "for her research on solid state materials, including conceptualizing the creation of carbon nanotubes." Dresselhaus is Institute Professor of Electrical Engineering and Physics at MIT and chair of the Governing Board of the American Institute of Physics.

This year's laureate for Latin America is **Ligia Gargallo**. Chosen "for her contributions to understanding solution properties of polymers," Gargallo is a professor of physical chemistry at Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in Santiago. The awards jury noted that Gargallo's work "helps drug designers visualize how new compounds will interact with enzymes in the body and opens the door to the rational design of synthetic enzymes."

Tatiana Birshtein was named the 2007 laureate for Europe "for her con-

D. FABRICANT



tribution to the understanding of the shapes, sizes and motions of large molecules." The jury wrote that Birshtein has helped to "shed new light on the self-organizing properties of many remarkable polymeric systems essential to plastics used in soft-drink bottles, plastic bags and other familiar materials such as nylon, rayon, Styrofoam, Plexiglas and Teflon." Birshtein is a professor at the Institute of Macromolecular Compounds in the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg.

The awards alternate each year between the life sciences and materials science (including physics and chemistry) and are accompanied by a cash prize of \$100 000.

Recently posted death notices at <http://www.physicstoday.org/obits>:

Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker

28 June 1912 – 28 April 2007

Bohdan Paczynski

8 February 1902 – 19 April 2007

Chauncey Starr

14 April 1912 – 17 April 2007

Kevin P. Granata

1961 – 16 April 2007

James Basil Gerhart

15 December 1928 – 27 February 2007

James Paul Wesley

21 July 1921 – 20 January 2007

obituaries

To notify the community about a colleague's death, subscribers can visit <http://www.physicstoday.org/obits>, where they can submit obituaries (up to 750 words), comments, and reminiscences. Each month recently posted material will be summarized here, in print. Select online obituaries will later appear in print.

Herbert Gursky

The death of Herbert Gursky on 1 December 2006 from gastric cancer has deprived his family of a husband and father, the scientific community of an esteemed colleague and friend, and the nation of a dedicated public servant.

"Herb," as his friends called him, was born in the Bronx, New York, on 27 May 1930. After earning a BS in physics from the University of Florida in 1951, he received an MS in physics from Vanderbilt University in 1953. Under George T. Reynolds, he obtained his PhD from Princeton University in 1959 with a thesis on cosmic rays. He then became an instructor in the physics department of Columbia University, where he worked until 1961.

I first met Herb during my stay at Princeton in 1958, where we joined forces to search for a nonexistent parti-

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Herbert Gursky

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