

## Herman Heyn

### Baltimore's Street Corner Astronomer

December 16, 1930 – February 17, 2021

As [Howard Astronomical League](#) marks the passing Baltimore's Sidewalk Astronomer in February 2021, it is fitting for us to pause for a moment to [pay tribute to his legendary body of work](#). Toward this end, we have gathered photographs, news and magazine articles, his journal, and HAL members' remembrances related his exemplary record of public outreach in astronomy. Among this material is ample evidence of how he has inspired HAL members and countless others to become more interested in astronomy over three decades of sidewalk astronomy. We believe that his legacy will be continue to inspire the public for many years to come. As Maryland's premier astronomy public outreach organization, it is our sincere hope that we can help foster this legacy with this tribute.

Herman Heyn was a distinguished amateur astronomer known for his passion in sharing astronomy with the public. His interest in astronomy was inspired by his 8th grade Garrison Junior High School science teacher, Ms. Wicker, after completing an assignment to find the Big Dipper.

His first telescope, a 3" Mogeys refractor, was purchased by his father just after World War II. Later, other interests as a young adult postponed his return to astronomical pursuits. Herman returned to the hobby with the arrival of the Leonids Meteor Shower in 1966 and purchased another 3" Refractor which he upgraded to an 8" Schmidt-Cassegrain Reflector in 1981.

Herman became widely known as *Baltimore's Street Corner Astronomer* after he began setting up his telescope in Fells Point to bring views of the night sky to the public in 1987. Three decades and 2,858 sessions later, he set up his telescope for the last time on October 20, 2018.

Many amateur astronomers, including current and former Howard Astronomical League members Steve Rifkin and Teresa Palomar, have been inspired by Herman to engage in the hobby in a serious fashion, and to share it with the public.

During one of his sidewalk sessions, Herman noticed while aligning his telescope mount with true north that [Baltimore's street grid did not align exactly with true north](#). Following his curiosity, he discovered that the grid alignment was off by about three degrees, which was the difference between magnetic north and true north at the time that Baltimore's streets were laid out in 1730.

Herman was photographed with Halley's Comet in the background during its most recent visit to the inner solar system in 1986. Examining the photo more closely, he noticed a cross-like asterism in eastern Sagittarius near the ecliptic. He pointed this out

to the astronomy community, and several sources to this date carry the name of this asterism as "[Herman's Cross](#)."

Herman's sidewalk astronomy was covered many times in Baltimore area newspaper articles, and he has been published several times in Sky & Telescope magazine.

- Jim Johnson, former Howard Astronomical League President