



David G. Simpson

“So You Want to Learn Esperanto, Huh?”

As a physicist, Dr. David Simpson has worked on some really interesting things here at Goddard since he started in 1991. For about 10 years, he worked on the flight software of the Hubble Space Telescope’s DF-224 onboard computer. Nowadays, he does research in space physics in the Interplanetary Physics Branch with the IMAGE and Cassini spacecraft. Prior to working at GSFC, David worked at OAO Corporation and COMSAT Laboratories. He is also an adjunct professor of physics at Prince George’s Community College in Largo, Maryland where he teaches several general physics courses.

When he was asked what makes him unique, he replied, “I am a speaker of the international language of Esperanto.” Because not many people know about Esperanto, he continued:

“One day when I was 15 I got the idea that an international language that would allow people from different countries to talk to each other would be a step toward world peace. I suggested that to my parents, and they told me that they had heard of an international language that had already been invented. I did some research in the encyclopedia, and discovered that there was an international language called ‘Esperanto’ that many people were already using. I went to the local public library and found that they had a book on Esperanto: Teach Yourself Esperanto, by Cresswell and Hartley. I checked it out and worked my way through it—it was a terrific book. Esperanto turns out to be very easy to learn compared to other languages, so I was able to learn it pretty quickly.”

He soon joined both the national and international Esperanto organizations (the Esperanto League for North America and the Universala Esperanto-Asocio). Both organizations have pen-pal services, so before long, he was corresponding with Esperanto-speaking pen-pals who were his age in Iran, Norway, Brazil, Japan, Singapore, Hungary, and New Zealand. It was an interesting way to meet kids from different cultures and find out about what their countries were like.

Later this summer, he will be attending his first international Esperanto meeting, the annual meeting of the Universala Esperanto-Asocio. It is held in a different country each year and this year’s meeting is in Florence, Italy. There will be over 2000 people there from 61 different countries, all speaking Esperanto and all able to understand each other. The meeting will include lectures, poetry readings, concerts, plays, and guided tours of Florence and Tuscany—all in Esperanto.