Mon Nov 15, 2010  WILLIAM HERSHEY BORN
William Herschel was born on November 15th, 1738. Herschel was a church organist in Bath, England. He also had a great interest in astronomy, and in telescopes. But most musicians don’t make much money. And telescopes were amazingly expensive. So he built his own. It was with just such a telescope that in March of 1781, William Herschel saw what he first thought to be a comet far out in space. After its orbital positions were checked, it was clear that the object was a planet. Herschel named it George, after the King of England. Many astronomers suggested the planet simply be called, Herschel. Eventually Uranus, who in mythology was the father of Saturn, was chosen. Herschel also found four moons: Oberon and Titania, which orbit Uranus, and Mimas and Enceladus, which orbit Saturn. And Herschel also mapped the stars of the Milky Way, and concluded from their distribution that the galaxy in which we live was shaped like a giant millstone or disc.

Tue Nov 16, 2010  MOON AND JUPITER/LEONID METEOR SHOWER
Last night the new gibbous moon and the planet Jupiter were together in the southeastern sky after sunset. If you missed seeing them, that’s okay, because they’ll be fairly close together again tonight. When you see the moon this evening, look off to the right, and you’ll find Jupiter, a very bright, star-like object. Now there’s also a meteor shower going on tonight: the Leonid shower is usually pretty good, but unfortunately, the bright light from that fat gibbous moon I’d mentioned a moment ago is going to make it really hard to see the meteors. At least until the moon sets a couple of hours after midnight. From 2 AM until sunrise, the skies should be fairly dark, and that will be the best time for viewing. If the skies are clear, that is. Protect yourself against mosquitoes, dress warmly, take along a lounge chair for comfort, find a clear, dark sky and face east, looking up toward the top of the sky. With luck and patience, you might see a dozen or more meteors each hour.

Wed Nov 17, 2010  HERCULES’ AUTUMN ZODIAC
The adventures of Hercules were immortalized in the night sky. Look to the southwest this evening and you’ll find the stars of Sagittarius the Archer. This centaur is a depiction of Hercules’ teacher, Chiron. High in the southwest are a scattering of stars which mark Aquarius, the Water Carrier. This is symbolic of Hercules’ releasing the flood of river waters that cleaned the Augean Stables, represented by four stars above the moon tonight – the Great Square of Pegasus. In the southeast, and off to the left of the moon, is Aries the Ram, a representation of the golden fleece, which Hercules pursued with his good friend Jason while he was between labors. Then low in the east is Taurus; this was a wild bull which Hercules subdued in a capture and release program. There are more zodiacal constellation connected with Hercules, but they won’t show up in our evening sky until the end of the year.

Thu Nov 18, 2010  PLANETARIUM SHOW: THE PLANETS
This weekend, Indian River State College’s Hallstrom Planetarium will present, “The Planets.” This is a show I wrote which received funding from the Southeastern Planetarium Association; it was distributed to over a hundred planetariums through the Southeast and other parts of the United States. “The Planets,” is narrated by Kate Mulgrew, who portrayed Captain Kathryn Janeway in the TV series, “Star Trek: Voyager.” You would need a starship to cover the distances we travel in this 40 minute program – all the way from the earth, beyond Saturn, beyond Pluto to the region of comets in the Kuiper Belt and Oort Cloud, as much as five trillion miles from home. And then of course we go to the stars, pointing out familiar star patterns like Pegasus and Orion, but also identifying faint stars like Epsilon Eridani, around which the fictional planet Vulcan orbits. This is the last weekend for this show; get your tickets at the IRSC box office – call 462-4750.

Fri Nov 19, 2010  FULL MOON/THE PLANETS
The moon is full this weekend. The Creek Indians called this full moon the Moon When the Water is Black with Leaves, as in northern lands when leaves would drop from the trees and darken ponds and rivers. The Mandan Hidatsa people must have lived farther north, as this was their Moon When Rivers Freeze. To the Tewa Pueblo this was the Moon When All is Gathered In, the late harvesting moon. And to the Winnebago tribes, this was the Little Bear’s Moon, which they named in honor of their star pattern of the little bear in the sky. You can get guided views of the moon if you come out to the Hallstrom Planetarium tonight; members of the Treasure Coast Astronomical Society will be on hand to let you look at it, and the planet Jupiter, through their telescopes, weather permitting. And there will also be planetarium shows at 7 and 8 PM: the program is called, The Planets, and it’s narrated by Star Trek’s Kate Mulgrew.