

Dialogue

Dell Rapids
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Prairie Publications

Over 10,000 visit EROS for 25th

ERO Data Center officials were hoping for a big crowd for their 25th anniversary celebration and they got it. Dell Rapids resident and veteran EROS employee Dennis Hood said that 10,285

sightseers passed through the doors during the Open House on Saturday.

The EROS party was blessed with excellent weekend weather which, no doubt, helped boost the attendance figures. The only drawback for the occasion was the extreme southwest winds that halted any thoughts of the highly anticipated balloon rides.

Sioux Falls skydivers first postponed, then backed away from a scheduled appearance because of the strong breeze.

Otherwise, the EROS tours and programs went off without a hitch. Children and adults were allowed to check out the multitude of satellite images and learn about EROS programs of the future.

Brian Davis, who has worked in the EROS software engineering department for 14 years, said that four youth educational booths were set up in his area.

But, they soon became information centers for the entire complex. "It was interesting that not just youngsters were asking questions," Davis said. "Everybody wanted to know everything about EROS."

A volunteer crew of 350 employees was on hand to help with tours and answer questions.

Another longtime Dells resident and EROS official, Terry Pfannenstien, was proud of the effort of the 560 employees in producing the show. "There was a tremendous amount of work that went into this open house," Pfannenstien said, "setting up the booths, making sure of security, displaying information.

It was great that we allowed the public to become more aware of what we're doing. EROS is a federal facility and this is an example of our tax dollar at work.

"I ran a booth showing some of the old field equipment that was in use. The kids loved it. It was a truly memorable event."

Pfannenstien has been a member of the

Jim Wilber

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EROS staff for 21 years. "I started in September of '77," Pfannenstien said. "Ron Meyer beat me by a week." Meyer, who is involved with customer services (quality assurance photo lab), began his EROS career in August of 1977.

He was very pleased with the big turnout, but also remembers the 10th anniversary program.

"We had about 350 people working back then," Meyer recalled. "Of course, many changes have been made since then. We have just completed a new addition a year ago which was basically funded by NASA for satellite data acquisition."

Dennis Hood began his EROS employment on March 3, 1974, just after the building dedication in August of 1973. "I was kind of in charge of the oldtimers in this celebration," said Hood who

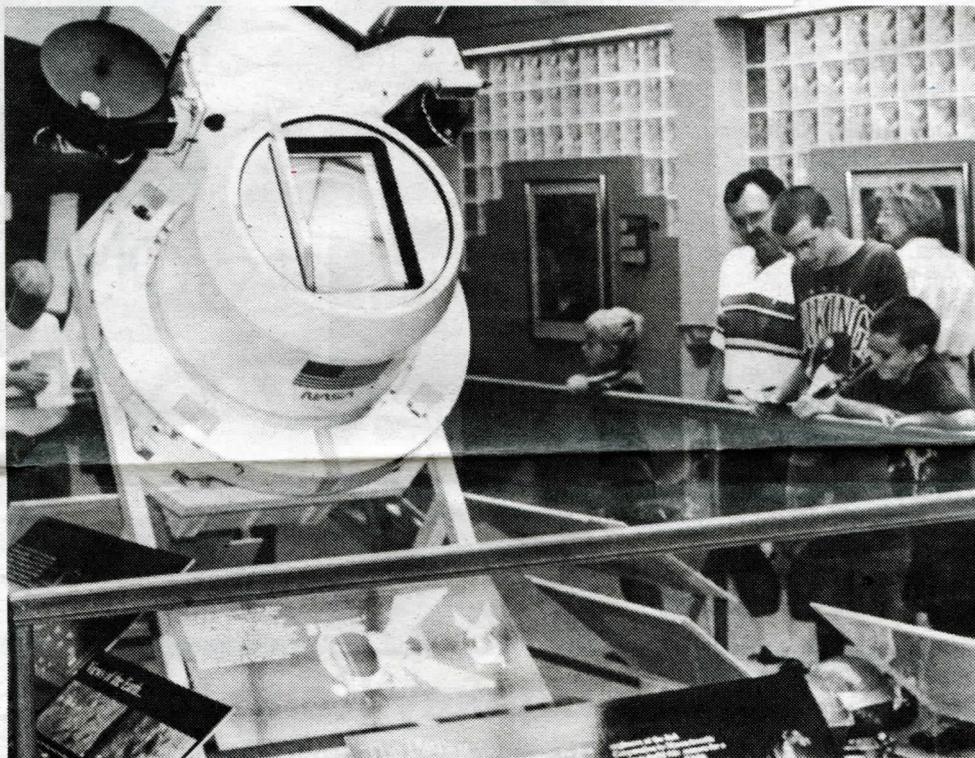
works in the satellite systems branch responsible for data gathering from Landsat 7 and AM-1 satellites.

The open house offered question and answer sessions from officials on a stage area near the entrance as well as a variety of musical entertainment.

Former space shuttle astronaut Mary Cleave was one of the dignitaries seen answering numerous questions.

Also several food vendors and tents were set up on the expansive lawn area.

The EROS program began bright and early at 8 a.m., and it concluded at 3 p.m. on Saturday.



Dell Rapids residents Clair Hines, left and sons Matt, center, and Danny were among the thousands who attended the EROS 25th anniversary celebration Saturday. The Hines are viewing the large format camera that is displayed in the EROS lobby. Photo by Jim Wilber