KU professor is to be featured

An energy burst that blankets Earth in chemical smog, collapses food chains and leads to death by starvation for six billion humans is the focus of a History Channel production that features the work of a University of Kansas paleontologist.

Today's episode of "Mega Disasters" explores gamma-ray bursts — powerful energy explosions from space that last seconds. Potentially caused by massive stars collapsing into black holes or by the merger of two neutron stars, their effects can be seen billions of light years away.

Bruce Lieberman, curator of invertebrate paleontology at the KU Natural History Museum, theorizes that such a burst could have caused the second-largest mass extinction known in the fossil record. The extinction in the Ordovician Period 450 million years ago eliminated more than 100 families of marine life.
FDIC chairwoman discusses foreclosures

By Michael Hooper
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

LAWRENCE — The subprime mortgage crisis that has led to thousands of home foreclosures is unprecedented in U.S. history and is far from over, a banking expert said Monday.

Sheila Bair, chairwoman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., said the adjustable rate mortgages that started selling in 2003 initially had affordable payment schedules but have reset to higher payment levels homeowners can’t afford.

She said another 2 million adjustable-rate mortgages are scheduled to reset by the end of 2008, meaning homeowners’ monthly payments will rise from low introductory rates.

She said the full cost of these ARM mortgages weren’t disclosed in the origination process. She said lenders also didn’t thoroughly document customers’ income to make sure they could afford the loans.

Bair has encouraged lenders to avoid foreclosure and work with customers to restructure the loans with fixed interest rates. Unfortunately, she said, a lot of loans are “under water,” meaning there isn’t enough equity in the home to refinance.

Bair said she wants Congress to create stricter laws to regulate state-licensed mortgage lenders who pushed the loans.

“If there was ever a time to act, it is now,” she said.

Bair spent Monday at The University of Kansas. She conducted a roundtable discussion with about 50 bankers and then had a news conference with reporters at the Adams Alumni Center. She spoke Monday night at the Lid Center as part of the Anderson Chandler Lecture Series.

Bair, an Independence, Kan., native, earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in 1975 and a law degree in 1978, both from KU. She worked for former Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., and was sworn in as FDIC chairwoman in June 2006.

The FDIC was formed in 1933 to restore confidence in the banking system.

Bair said she recently went to China, which is considering establishing something similar to the FDIC. Bair was impressed with the Chinese people’s savings rates, which is about 24 percent of their income. That rate was -05 percent in 2005 in the United States.

The Chinese save so much, in part, because they want to give their children a good education without incurring a lot of debt, Bair said.

“We need to restore a savings culture, saving for a rainy day,” Bair said.
Google Earth creator sees many potential benefits

Kansas towns anchor central points

By Julie K. Buzbee
SPECIAL TO THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Hundreds of years ago, explorers sailed around
the Earth to prove it was round.

Modern-day explorer Brian McClendon created
Google Earth, a virtual 3D globe for the rest of the
world to sail around by using their computers.

McClendon, a 1986 engineering graduate of the
University of Kansas, will be back on campus this
week when he joins Alexander Murphy, former
vice president of the American Geographical So-
ciety, and Jerry Dobson, professor of geography at
The University of Kansas, to examine conflict from
geographical perspectives. The program will spot-
light how technology and geography are changing
the way countries wage war and people make life-
and-death decisions.

Using Google Earth, anyone with Internet access
can explore their hometown, Rome or the pyra-
mids in Egypt with the click of a mouse. By simply
typing in an address or latitude and longitude, the
landmark zooms into focus, creating the feeling of
flying over the location. News organizations, such
as CNN, use a professional version of the program
to highlight locations in the news.

“Everyone from enthusiastic pupils to senior
students can benefit from this technology,” Mc-
Clendon, director of engineering for Google Earth
and Maps, said on the Google site. “Google Maps
and Google Earth bring the world straight to your
door.”

The folks at Google recommend that serious
users combine Windows Vista and an NVIDIA
graphics processing unit.

“Graphics processors aren’t just for tech-savvy
enthusiasts,” McClendon said. “They’re an essen-
tial purchase for every PC owner.”

Quickly after its development in 2005, Google
Earth’s satellite mapping program capabilities took
on life-and-death matters, catapulting its possible
usage and importance to a new plane.

After Hurricane Katrina hit two years ago, teams
from Google Earth and Google Maps spent several
long nights creating satellite imagery overlays of
the devastation in the affected region, which more
accurately showed the scope of the disaster.

“Soon after, we were told that rescue workers
and the U.S. Air Force were using Google Earth
to find people who were stranded,” wrote John
Hanke, director of Google Earth and Maps, on a
Google Web page.

The importance of their achievement was rec-
ognized by the National Geo-Spatial-Intelligence
Agency. NGA presented the “Hurricane Katrina
Recognition Award” to the Google Earth team, as
well as the Google Enterprise and Global Support
groups, for their direct support during the Katrina
disaster. McClendon also was one of the individual
recipients.

After Katrina, many nonprofit organizations
started contacting Google Earth, asking how they
could integrate it into their work.

“Technical help, assistance and inspirational ex-
amples were clearly important,” wrote Phil Verney,
of Google Earth Outreach, the branch that was
developed to address these needs.

Google Earth was recognized further when Na-
ture, the international weekly science magazine,
published two Google Earth images on its cover and
devoted its Feb. 15 issue to “Mapping for the Masses.”

Google Earth, which remains a free download,
is one of the most popular 3-D desktop applica-
tions ever — it’s been downloaded more than 100
million times. It has more than 250,000,000 users,
according to Verney.

Users say Google Earth feels like an atlas, ency-
clopedia and flight simulator combined. When you
point and click, mountains and valleys are shown
in high-resolution 3D with related information. Or
you can fly among the stars to visit the planets.

For more practical applications, users can mark
places they’ve visited and share them with friends.
Google Earth lets users add their own information,
photos, notes, restaurant reviews and more.

For Kansans who think the universe should be
centered on their state, Google Earth may provide
a sense of satisfaction.

McClendon, Google Earth’s creative force,
showed his sense of humor and proof of how im-
portant Lawrence remains to him by locating the
town at the beginning of the program.

When you start the program, it shows a distant
view of the planet. Click the zoom feature, and
you’ll soon find yourself in Lawrence at the apart-
ment complex where McClendon grew up.

“It’s intentional,” Google spokesman Megan
Quinn has said in other media sources.

And the Kansas connections to Google Earth
don’t stop with McClendon.

Dan Webb, software engineer at Google Earth
for Mac OS X, was inspired by his fellow Kansan.
In a Web posting late last year, Webb explained the
reasoning behind the Mac version of Google Earth
zooming into Chautauqua.

“My co-worker Brian McClendon, who grew
up in Lawrence, Kansas, had already positioned
the Windows version of Google Earth at his home-
town,” Webb wrote. “I guess you could say that
Brian’s shenanigans inspired my own.”

Julie K. Buzbee is a freelance writer in Topeka.
She can be reached at jkbuzbee59@yahoo.com.
Google Earth creator Brian McClendon will speak Thursday at The University of Kansas as part of a panel addressing conflict from geographical perspectives.
KU investigating release of personal data

The Capital-Journal

LAWRENCE — The University of Kansas on Wednesday launched an investigation into the unauthorized release of personal information and records to area media and is pledging to take steps to protect the private information of students, faculty members and staff.

"We've been informed that personal documents and records were sent to the media, along with allegations of improper handling of private information," said Lynn Breetz, director of University Communications. "The protection of private data is critical, which is why we've started an investigation into where these records came from and what changes need to be made to ensure a similar breach doesn't occur again."

The unauthorized release reportedly came in the form of two separate manila envelopes located in the area media outlets by anonymous parties claiming to be current or former university employees.

According to an unsigned letter, only a portion of which the Lawrence Journal-World shared with the university, the records all originated in the mathematics department and were taken from trash and recycling receptacles in university offices and from other locations on campus.

The investigation will be led by a team of KU officials from the Provost's Office, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Human Resources and Equal Opportunity.

The university is seeking the immediate return of these records so they can be properly safeguarded and a full investigation can determine what steps need to be taken to ensure the protection of private data.
Editors Day 155.300

LAWRENCE — University of Kansas alumnus and NBC news correspondent Bob Dotson will be the featured speaker at this year’s Kansas Editors Day.

KU’s William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications will host the program, which will begin at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Alderson Auditorium in the Kansas Union. Dotson will present “A Survival Kit for Professional Storytellers — How to compete with cell phones and Web sites.” The program is free and open to the public.

Dotson’s special reports, “American Story with Bob Dotson,” air on the “Today Show” and “NBC Nightly News” and have won more than 100 prestigious broadcast journalism honors.
Lawrence — Maj. Andrew Harvey, a graduate student in political science at the University of Kansas who spent 2006 in Iraq working in political and military intelligence, will present “Observations from Iraq: Implications for the Future” at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Simons Media Room in the Dole Institute of Politics. The program is free and open to the public.

“As an intelligence officer in Iraq, Major Harvey gained unique insight into the structure and workings of the Iraqi government,” said Jonathan Earle, interim director of the Dole Institute.

Harvey is working on a dissertation about the European Union’s development of a defense capability. He works in the Department of Joint and Multinational Operations at Fort Leavenworth and is scheduled to retire in February.
Pink pig flies tonight

LAWRENCE — Six musicians and more than $2.5 million in stage equipment, including a massive light show, forms the Pink Floyd Experience, which performs at 7:30 p.m. today at the Lied Center on the campus of The University of Kansas. All of the iconic rock band’s icons, including the blinking eye, marching hammers, cash registers, clocks and, of course, a 12-foot pink pig blimp, can be experienced for $40 ($1 off for seniors 62 and older and half-price for KU and Haskell Indian Nations University students and children and students to age 18). Go to www.lied.ku.edu or call (785) 864-ARTS for tickets.
KU enrollment dips slightly 155

LAWRENCE — Overall enrollment this fall at the University of Kansas remained generally stable at 29,280, which is 1.2 percent below last year, the university announced Thursday.

Overall enrollment at the KU Medical Center in Kansas City, Kan., set a record at 2,918.

Much of the decline in numbers at the Lawrence campus can be attributed to more rigorous application of academic standards in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, KU said. These standards led to the dismissal of 884 students last year, about 350 more than the year before.
U investigates mailing of students' records

TOPEKA — Records discarded

at the University of Kansas were mailed anonymously to three newspapers, prompting a campus investigation Wednesday. It was the second report in two months of such a breach of students' privacy.

The records included what appeared to be graded exams, job applications, change-of-grade forms, class rosters, seating charts and copies of health insurance cards and immigration forms, according to editors at the newspapers. Some of the documents contained credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and student identification numbers, they said.

The senders claimed to be former math teaching assistants or current employees of the recycling center, and they were critical of how the math department handled its records.

University spokeswoman Lynn Bretz issued a statement asking the University Daily Kansan, Lawrence Journal-World and Kansas City Star to return the documents.
Annual KU program for county seniors planned Monday

Students from 10 Sedgwick County high schools will be honored by the University of Kansas Alumni Association and KU Endowment at the annual Kansas Honor Scholars reception at 7 p.m. Monday at Maize High School.

The 235 seniors represent the top 10 percent of their high school classes academically, regardless of classes taken, occupational plans or higher-education goals. Each student will receive an American Heritage Dictionary in hardback and CD versions.

Following is a list of honorees, listed by high school. Students from Wichita schools will be honored in November.

Andale — Calvin Archer, Chelsea Eck, Rebecca Faber, Melanie Gorges, Kaylee Greenstein, Lucas Hein, Kaisha Konda, Heather Ranney, Kathrine Reichenberger and Mindy Schrader

Campus — Jennifer Bailey, Marshall Berube, Jessica Bland, Megan Brickman, Wrylie Finkle, Shana Flees, Danielle Gwinup, Caleb Hall, Carolyn Hemminger, Sarah Herbert, Megan Jones,

Emily Ledwich, Alexandria Losey, Tawnya Marr, Ariel Nixon, Lauren Peil, Philip Praseuth, Stephen Prenatt, Jacquelyn Ragan, Eric Regier, Joshua Roeder, Jeffrey Romine, Jennifer Schroeder, Mercedes Spears, Angela Swart, Emilee Whitesell and Dakota Zimmerman

Chesney — Sara Crandall, Gus Graham, Just Hickey, Amanda Lehner, Charlene Taft, Chase Williams, Brock Zerener and Molly Zerener

Clearwater — Felita Boentarathen, Zachary Castor, Leanna Childs, James McMurphy, Kelsey Mills, Matthew Pogue, Kayla Rausch, Codee Widler and David Williams

Derby — Phethmany Bounsan, Emily Britton, Jennifer Chakron, Audra Chambers, Maxx Coleman, Claire Compton, Ronnie Coone, Sarajoe Danis, Lindsey Davis, Tyler Davison, Michelle Dillard, Todd Drake,

Lindsay Dunham, Samantha Engle, Robin Flaharty, Garrett Fooshee, Amanda Harrison, Jaime Havran, Melissa Hill, Alexandra Holloway, Jordan Hoyer, Stephen Janzen, Scott Jones, Ryan Jones, Lanie Kilian, Katrina Klein, Rachel Kleman, Evin Lickteig, Lisa Lunkenheimer, Mario Maldonado, Alyssa Matousek, Savanna McHenry, Phillip Morris, Caleb Nielson, Jacob Norby, Allison Olive, Amy Reed, Austin Sacket, Courtney Slo, Natalie Smith, Korbyn Steadman, Danielle Stuhlsatz, Nicole Thompson, Jessica Tormey, Daniel Vogelsang, Dustin Welden and Nathan Whitman

Garden Plain — Sarah Bergkamp, Bridget Bugner, Shane Hahn, Jamie Kerschen, Kim Kerschen, Miranda Meyer and Jessica Zogrman

Goddard — Arielle Alan, Kerry Anne Box, Kimberly Box, John Bradbury, Victoria Brenneis, Naomi Clark, Amber Dunn, Kelsey Frey, Brandon Gardiner, Laura Greenwood, Alexandria Hammock, Alycia Hart, Jennifer Heerey, Brandi Holt, Jordan Jennings, Laura Kellison, Emily Lauer, Alaina McWhorter, Anna Miller, Kavindu Ndeti, Ramon Nola, Michelle Oakley, Carly Pierce, Amanda Premer, Ashton Rorebeck, Kathryn Scanlan, Sarah Seals, breanne Selves, Nicholas Simon, Emily Sippel, Shalae Snyder, Kayla Vosburg, Anna Voth, David Waterman and Whitney Wood

Maize — Trent Baalman, Chelsea Barber, Jacob Bayless, Kari Bosch, Kari Christensen, Ashley Cleveland, Christina Devaney, Taylor Drake, Christina Farid, Sarah Franks, Melissa Hamilton, Samantha Hart, Alec Hernandez, Hannah Herrington, Nicholas Hoffmann, Lacey Hudson, Danielle Huntley, Sarah Johnston, Kyla Krisek, Jennifer Krone, Lindsey Larson, Jenae Latimer, Diana Learned, Rebekah Lewis, Jacob Marasco, Chelsea Mayta, Meagan Miller, Jody Oberthalia, Evan Ohlman, Matthew Onstott, Matej Penciak, Matthew Phillip, Benjamin Post, Elizabeth Quinn, Allison Ritter, Kelsey Scheer, Anna Scheufele, Evan Snyder, Megan Sormon, Michael Squires, Lauren Stephens, Tiffany Taylor, Kaleb Todd, Kevin Tomasi, Kim-Ngan Vu, Kyle Wheeler, Sarah Willev
| Mulvane — Amber Bilby, Stephanie Boal, Brent Cline, Kellie Hampton, Jessica Harms, Caleb Hatfield, Michael Humbolt, Andrea Johnson, Kristen Lervik, Noelle Lewis, Alexis Linnebur, Kayla Loper, John Pine, Aerica Van Dorn, Tamara Vasko and Logan Young Valley Center — Aaron Babbidge, Ashlee Bade, Kelli Barnes, Stephanie Capps, Donovan Carson, Ryan Clark, Joshua Collins, Megan Courtois, Jennifer Decker, Christopher Dolezal, Cori Durham, John Goering, Daniel Herman, Derek Hoetmer, Jeni Kuchar, Tyler Lohman, Courtney Oliphant, Deanna Patterson, Cory Pugh, Tamera Ridenour, Rachel Safarik, Adrienne Samia, Braden Schoenthaler, Brad Schuessler, Brandon Smith, Alexandra Springer, Amie Stuke and Alec Toews |