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NASA scientist and OU alumnus Kevin Grazier keeps busy in Hollywood

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Even the sky is not quite the limit for NASA scientist and Oakland University alumnus Kevin Grazier, Ph.D, CAS '87.

As a scientific advisor for several Hollywood productions, a planetary scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, author of three books and an instructor at both the University of California – Los Angeles and Santa Monica College, Dr. Grazier's ambition knows no earthly bounds.

While growing up in Sterling Heights, Dr. Grazier dreamed of stars and planets, aliens and space travel. His current role of scientist and Hollywood advisor enables him to blend fact and fiction in his everyday life.

"Ask any scientist, irrespective of discipline, why they chose to study the field they did and they will nearly always say 'space' or 'dinosaurs,'" Dr. Grazier explained.

With a plethora of academic degrees from top-notch schools like Purdue University and UCLA, Dr. Grazier was drawn to Oakland because of its highly ranked physics faculty, small class sizes and location.

"Some of the best instructors I ever had were at OU," Dr. Grazier said. "They said things and taught things that have stayed with me throughout my entire career."

Years later, Dr. Grazier recalls some of the research projects he worked on at Oakland – in particular, an experiment that failed and that he wishes he could try again. "Now I know why it didn't work out. Now I know how to fix it."

In his capacity as a NASA scientist, Dr. Grazier is an investigation scientist for the Cassini-Huygens mission. The Cassini spacecraft orbits Saturn, making an extensive survey of the ringed planet and its moons, while the Huygens probe explores Titan, Saturn's largest moon.

Dr. Grazier joined the Cassini Mission as science system engineer in early 1998. A short time later he took the additional role as the Investigation Scientist for the Cassini Imaging Science Subsystem, which is the main camera on the spacecraft.

Still, Dr. Grazier's imagination sought additional creative outlets. He began sending unsolicited manuscripts and later pitching story ideas for the shows "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" and "Star Trek: Voyager" before landing the coveted position of scientific advisor on "Battlestar Galactica."

The award winning TV show allowed Dr. Grazier to use his expertise from the Cassini Mission to influence some of the show's story and plot points. Oftentimes, the writers would have an idea for a dramatic scene and would ask Dr. Grazier to figure out how to get the characters into the situation, and then get them out again.

Since the show's conclusion, Dr. Grazier continues his work with NASA, and in Hollywood he works on the series "Eureka" as well as several other projects in various stages of development.

"I love whatever I'm working on at any given time," Dr. Grazier continued. "Although, when "Battlestar" ended, I went through about a month of withdrawal. But there is drama in the scientific environment, too."

His latest research involves a shift in thought regarding Jupiter and its gravitational pull. It was generally believed that Jupiter served as a guardian for Earth by throwing objects such as comets and asteroids away from the planet, but Dr. Grazier's research suggests that it is actually kicking these objects towards the inner solar system and Earth itself.

The Oakland University Alumni Association recognized Dr. Grazier's achievements with the 2009 Odyssey Award, which honors alumni who seek to exemplify OU's motto, "to seek virtue and knowledge."

For more information about Oakland's physics programs, visit the Web site at oakland.edu/physics.



NASA scientist and Hollywood advisor Kevin Grazier earned his first physics degree at Oakland University.

SUMMARY

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