

Logan Rex—Curator and Communications Director

Curator and Communications Director for Armstrong Air and Space Museum, Logan Rex talks about his personal experiences with solar eclipses during this interview, and what to expect with the upcoming 2024 eclipse. Rex describes his role at the Armstrong Air and Space Museum, and its major tie to the total eclipse in April. The museum has numerous events planned for leading up to and on the day of the eclipse. The interview concludes with Rex discussing his and the museum's excitement for this phenomenon.

Interviewee: Logan Rex (LR)

Interviewers: Ernest Okine (EO), Graham Burkhart (GB)

Date: September 29, 2023

Location: Zoom in Kuhlin Center, Bowling Green State University

[START OF INTERVIEW]

[Note: Some tangential discussion from the audio file has been omitted]

EO: [00:08:07] Hi Mr. Rex... My name is Ernest Okine. I'm a second-year master history student at Bowling Green State University, and I'm here with Dr. Challu, and also my colleague called Graham, and we are here to interview you for today.

LR: [00:08:38] Great, fantastic!

EO: [00:08:38] Yeah, can you please introduce yourself?

LR: [00:08:42] Yeah, I'm Logan Rex. I am the Curator and Communications director for the Armstrong Air and Space Museum here in Wapakoneta, Ohio.

EO: [00:08:52] Okay, thank you very much. So you said, is it located at Ohio?

LR: [00:08:57] Yeah. Yeah. So we're located in Wapakoneta, the hometown of Neil Armstrong. So, we do have a pretty rich connection between us and the moon. The moon landing and just Ohio aviation in general.

EO: [00:09:13] That's great, that's great. So, with this museum? What does this museum do for in Ohio? What what do they do? And what are your activities that you do?

LR: [00:09:26] Yeah, so we were founded in 1972. Pretty much to honor the Apollo 11 lunar landing and the efforts of everyone in that project, including Neil Armstrong. So actually, the

museum was announced on July 21, 1969, by Governor Rhodes. So Neil Armstrong was still on the moon when this museum was announced, so they really wanted to to make sure that accomplishment was honored, and here in Ohio! So ever since then we've been really just dedicated to all Ohio astronauts, and anyone dedicated to aviation. So we like to honor just that that noble of trying to to, you know, skip out on on earth's gravity and head towards just a different celestial body. It's you know, it's a spirit of discovery that we're really trying to inspire the next generation with.

EO: [00:10:30] Yeah, yeah, that's great. That's interesting to note. So let's narrow it down to the eclipse that is coming up. What are the museums plans for this eclipse for the upcoming solar eclipse?

LR: [00:10:42] Yeah, so this will this actually be the, the first total solar eclipse here in Ohio since 1806. So, the last one was June 16, 1806. It's actually called the Tecumseh's Eclipse, so that was the last time that it actually came through totally through Ohio. So we're, we're really excited for the one coming up. It's in April 8, as a Monday and here at the museum. We've been getting, you know, ready for actually years for this event, because we knew just from like the 2017 eclipse that you know there's gonna be, you know—recent estimates conclude that you know, there's anywhere from 2 to 7 million people that are going to travel into the path of totality. So people are going to be looking for areas and towns to view this eclipse, and will be a pretty ideal location actually, and that, especially the museum here. So here at the museum we'll have about 3 minutes and 56 seconds of totality, which is some of the longest in the State. So, that whole weekend we're planning events and activities. We'll have extended hours on that weekend as well. So we'll have guided tours for people to partake in and then, of course, on the the day of the Eclipse that Monday. We'll have, you know, mainly just trying to to make sure that people are in a good position to view the eclipse and overall, just safety. I think that's our number one concern is that eclipse—is that a lot of people aren't aware of because they're so rare and so few and far between that people do sometimes forget that you can't just watch an eclipse with your own eyes. You'd need to have special protection. When viewing and eclipse. So we wanna make sure that safety is also our, our number one priority for this event. Because, again, if people are not careful. They can have some lasting damage to their eyesight.

EO: [00:12:59] Well, that's a sight. And to hear. And you are talking about their watch party, does going to be at the Museum grounds who view the eclipse. I want to know. How would they be organized? How would they be like, and what kind of observation and devices will they be using? Would they museum to be providing for it, or would they bring it by themselves.

LR: [00:13:20] Yeah. So we will be providing some viewing eclipse glasses. These are special glasses that are made specifically for eclipse is that you can view the sun. So it makes it safe. So another thing to to point out is is that when viewing the eclipse, the only time that you can actually take off the protective glasses is during the actual totality. So for that 3 minutes and 56 seconds here in Wapakoneta, you are allowed to take off those glasses and and view that eclipse in

the corona. But once that 3, you know on that 3 minutes 57 seconds you have to put the glasses back on, because that UV light is then hitting into your retina and can cause damage. So you again, not I can't stress that enough the importance of making sure that that people have proper eye protection, but in in terms of of what we're doing for people outside. So parking is another area that we're that we're trying to focus on. So the museum has pretty limited parking. We have, you know, roughly, about 80, 90 spots. Some of them are v spots. So we're trying to make sure that there's you know, coordination between us other local businesses. The town to make sure that people can park and then, you know, on the grounds, we'll have areas set up. We have a hospitality area for guests. We're having some local vendors come out for you know, things such as food, drink and then we're inviting other museums that might not be in the path of totality to come out here and have some activities for the kids. We'll have telescopes that will be out. We also encourage people to bring their own telescopes. And there is a special addition that you can add to—it's a solar lens that you can actually put on your telescope so you can view the the phone carefully. So and again, we'll also have special extended hours. Going from 9 to 7 that day. And again I just oh—a lot of people were underestimating this event. So I know that my the executive director, my boss when he went to Jefferson City for the 2017 eclipse he had to drive 2 hours to the location that he wanted to be the eclipse. So 2 hours there, but on the way back to his hotel it took him 7 hours so that tells you how much traffic there actually was in that in that path to totality. So people need to really understand that that day, especially around 3 pm, it's gonna be at 3:09 here in Wapakoneta. That, you know, there's gonna be a lot of crazy things going on. People will be stopping, you know, getting out of their cars, you know. Traffic will be backed up. So I know a lot of schools are actually closing. Because, you know, a lot of schools let out around 3 Pm. Or 2 pm. And you know they don't want kids on these buses, you know, at that time, when you know there's gonna be a lot of traffic. So there, there's a lot of coordination logistics that local cities that they should make sure that they're thinking about ahead of time.

EO: [00:16:49] Well, that's great. Speaking about the public about what is about to happen? Is there any hope that you you, you envisage the public to learn from your programming?

LR: [00:17:01] Yeah. So we we do have a public program that we have now that we go to local groups, organizations. We just go and you know, into a community really to you know, talk about the eclipse. What's happening? You know. What is an eclipse? You know. Why does it occur? Why is it so rare? So we have—yeah, several of us that go out and have a presentation that that we go to these groups and sort of explain that process and explain why. Why, this is a rare opportunity, and why you should think that it's a big deal. And again, so I mean the next one, you know, after 2024 and Ohio is 2099. It's gonna be in September 2099. So you know, people who don't travel around the world to watch these eclipses, you know, this is probably the last eclipse that you'll see so we really wanna make sure people understand that this is a rare phenomenon, and that they should really, you know, start thinking about it at least.

EO: [00:18:06] Okay, you. You also talking about people travelling around the world to watch the eclipse? So these are tourists. And so with speaking about them, do you anticipate any challenges that these stories might be handling whilst coming to your venue to watch the eclipse?

LR: [00:18:21] Yeah, so I mean, like I said, I mean, once I've talked to numerous people that actually, you know..they've either been retired, or you know, this is what they do in their spare time as a hobby for them. They just would go around the world and try to find eclipses and watch these eclipses. And you know they all say the same thing. Once you watch one, you were hooked. You know. I think I've met a couple, and they said that they've seen the aurora borealis, the Northern lights, and an eclipse, and they say that this eclipse, is probably the most beautiful natural phenomenon that they have ever seen. And you know that's one reason why they continue to go around and and and try to view these eclipse, even, for you know, even if it's, you know, just seconds. So challenges here, for the eclipse I think, would be hoping that the weather per, you know, you know, cooperates with us. So it is April. We have about, you know, a 50/50 chance of having some type of overcast that day. So as not just Ohio. Most of the country in in early April has about a 50% chance of cloud cover. So you know it's really a coin flip as to whether the whether we're participate or not with us. But last April at that same time through 9 Pm. We we all went outside to check what it was, and it was a beautiful day, you know. There wasn't, you know too much too many clouds, and we saw the sun. So we were pretty hopeful that that we have that same type of weather, you know. Knock on wood hopefully, that that's what we get for next year. But yeah, I think that would be one of the main challenges is, if you know the weather does not participate, but even if it does not participate, and you know there is cloud cover, you know, at 3:09 pm. You know that the sky will still get dark, and you know it'll almost look like twilight regardless of if there are clouds or not. So you you will still participate and see that eclipse in some form, whether you actually get to see the actual clips in the corona or not, but regardless. There you, you will feel like there is an eclipse going on.

EO: [00:20:40] That's great. You also talking about feelings. And this is the last question we have for you. What is the excitement going around the museum and personally for you? What's the excitement looking at? How, like the past eclipse you've watched, and the one you anticipate in what is the excitement around the museum, and for you yourself, as someone who works at a museum. It's also talking about your past experience in watching eclipse.

LR: [00:21:09] Yeah, I mean, like you said, there, there really is a good air of excitement, because, you know this is the thing that we've been preparing for, for, you know, several years now. Anddike, I said, I mean, this is, you know one of the most beautiful natural phenomenon that you can ever experience, and the fact that it goes directly over an errand space museum is kind of remarkable. So we're very—we're very excited to have that, you know, just working. you know, very closely to astronomy and everything. Yeah, being able to experience. An eclipse for myself is, is always a fantastic experience. And I really think that that people will. You know this this is gonna be a memory that's gonna be forever in their minds. Because this is such a such a beautiful experience for everyone. It it brings communities together. And it's a great reason to travel to new locations, you know? A lot of people would never travel to Northwest Ohio for a

vacation but because we have this eclipse, you know, they're gonna discover what really Northwest Ohio has to offer, and all the beautiful things here. So it's, it's very exciting to see for myself, the museum, the local community, the region. It's, it's gonna be a great great time.

EO: [00:22:32] Thank you very much...Thank you for your time and for being here.

[Note: Some tangential discussion from the audio file has been omitted]

[END OF INTERVIEW]