

1 April, 2009 Vol. 11, No. 1

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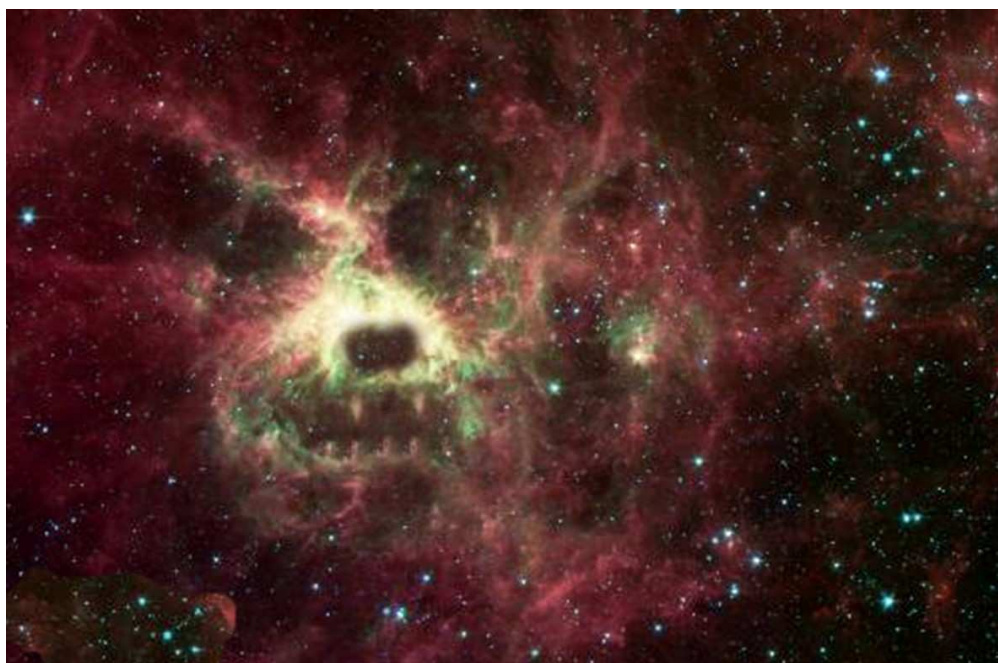
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Disclaimer

Previous issues of *Alternate Universe* have reported on the discovery of ancient telescopes, one in fact being a long focus Galilean refractor built into the Great Pyramid, while US Army engineers have also found evidence of ancient reflecting telescopes near Ancient Babylon.

It has long been known that both the Ancient Egyptians and the Romans produced very fine and often sophisticated glassware, however new evidence has recently surfaced which suggests that the glassmakers, in producing varieties of coloured glass, might have also stumbled across the properties of modern optical narrow-band filters.



The previously unknown Nebula, dubbed Canis Ravidus – Photographed by ASNSW Member Mike Bourbon-Jones using a unique Hydrogen Delta (H δ) filter

This new evidence comes in the form of an image recently produced by ASNSW Astro-imager extraordinaire, Mike Bourbon-Jones, whose image above clearly shows the faint and elusive *Canis Ravidus* Nebula in Canis Major. By using a newly developed Hydrogen Delta (H δ) narrow-band filter through his new 12.5" f/8 Corrected Dall-Kirkham (CDK) Carbon-Fibre PlaneWave telescope, Mike was able to capture this remarkable nebula, which was unknown to modern astronomers until very recently.

As can be seen in the image above, the core of the nebula indeed shows an image of what appears to be a rabid dog. From this, it now seems that the naming of the constellations Canis Major and Canis Minor were either a miraculous coincidence or is new proof that the ancients did in fact possess hitherto unknown technology.

This discovery could have enormous implications. Even if the Ancients were capable of producing a H δ filter, could they also have produced some form of imaging equipment?

Dr. Rube Goldberg of the Nevada Polytechnic Institute in Las Vegas has been contacted in connection with this discovery and proposes to visit the Near East along with a support team from the University of Bürgerweltdt to carry out some on-site research and re-evaluation of ancient artefacts stored by regional museums.

Recent Asteroid Impact Shifts Moon's Axial Tilt

An unusual object designated P3R-636 - originally thought by astronomers to be an ordinary asteroid-like object - is reported to have collided with the Dark Side of the Moon in early March 2009.

Such an event would not normally be considered newsworthy for publication in a high class publication such as *Alternate Universe*, however in a bizarre twist astronomers have been baffled by the fact that although P3R-636 was relatively small in size, being only 100 metres in diameter (*prior to impact, of course*), seismographs on the Moon's surface showed an impact of enormous proportions implying that the object was of extraordinary density.



The "Far Side of the Moon" showing the impact crater left by P3R-636 (NASA Image)

The continuous shock wave recorded by the seismographs lasted for several minutes, which is consistent with a massive surface explosion equivalent to a nine hundred billion megaton atomic bomb.

That such an explosion may have occurred is also evidenced by a distinct "wobble" now being detected in the Moon's rotation and orbit.

The extent of this new lunar libration is yet to be determined, however astronomers have made accurate measurements of the Moon's rotation relative to the Earth and have found that the tilt of the Moon's axis has been shifted by a significant 4.2°, as a direct result of the impact by P3R-636.

Scientists believe this shift may have the potential to cause tidal effects on Earth to vary by such an extent that oceans may rise above current high-water marks by an extent not yet known.

The shifted axial tilt could also have the potential to cause massive earthquakes and violent volcanic eruptions on Earth as the different gravitational pull of the Moon on the Earth's tectonic plates causes them to shift out of their current alignment.

Spectroscopic Hubble observations of the plume of dust ejected from the Moon's surface shortly after impact have revealed much about the asteroid's composition, and scientists have concluded that the asteroid is (or should we say was) composed primarily of a rare mineral known as Naquadah, an extremely dense, quartz-like mineral not found anywhere on Earth, or even within our own Solar System - until now.

When propelled at high velocity towards a solid object such as the Moon, a large mass of Naquadah is believed to hold enough potential energy to collide with as much force as an object 100,000,000 times its own mass would yield.

About 2 million years ago, a similar shift in the Moon's tilt brought the Lunar south pole to the edge of the Shackleton Crater, a 12-mile diameter crater thought to be about 3.6 billion years old.

Strangely, Shackleton Crater is believed to contain the only lunar source of water, in the form of captured ice.

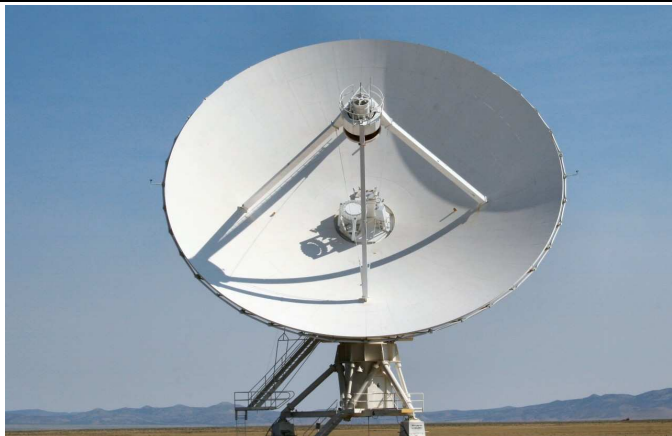
Due to the fact that the floor of Shackleton Crater is almost always in complete darkness as a result of being located at the South Pole, and is therefore never exposed to direct sunlight, it is believed that this reservoir of solidified water may be up to 3 billion years old.

Astronomers Observe Ripple in Space-Time Continuum

The University of Bürgerwelt has just reported an exciting discovery based on images captured using the Amateur Space Telescope Remote Observatory (ASTRO) - the first space telescope launched by amateur astronomers - which was first announced in *Alternate Universe* in 2008.

Appearing in the University's 2009 Annual Science Digest, the report covers research by Professor Audi Biemer who considers he may have discovered a wormhole in the space-time continuum using the University's new "Optio Telescope", which is a hybrid optical/radio telescope combining an optical imaging camera and a 22-metre radio dish which was recently completed by the University's Department of Particle Physics - *See photo, top right*.

Located in the zodiacal constellation of Ophiuchus, close to the magnitude 3.2 star Epsilon Ophiuchi (ϵ Oph. - *aka Yed Posterior*), the mysterious object known to astronomers as WTF16.3-04.7B has long been a source of interest to amateur Astro-Imagers.

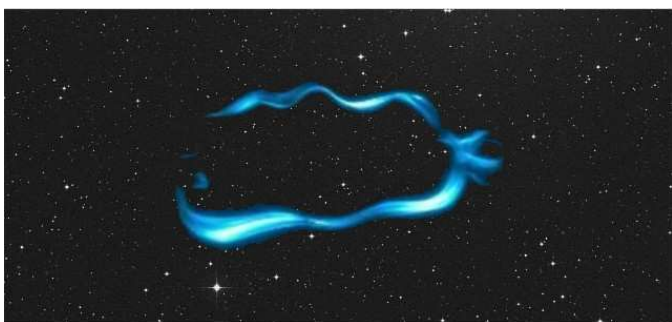


The “Optio Telescope” – a hybrid Optical/Radio Telescope designed by the University of Bürgerweildt

Following the recent publication of Professor Biemer's paper on the subject, a dedicated group of Astro-Imagers from the ASNSW who wish to remain unanimous conducted a vigorous symposium earlier in the year in which the nature, appearance and imaging quality of the object had been carefully examined.

Latent Astrophysicists within the ASNSW Astro-Imaging group, taking account of recent developments in cosmic superstring theories, speculated that the sudden snapping of a string whose event horizon had approached breaking point had caused a ripple in the space-time continuum with subsequent reverberations continuing for an indefinite period.

They have captured an initial series of images themselves and plan on an ongoing series of images to determine whether rapid changes can be visually detected.



True-colour composite image of the “ripple” captured using the “ASTRO” Space Telescope

To test one theory that time itself may have been compromised, a project has been inaugurated using the defunct Radio Telescope at Wiruna to precisely point at selected coordinates within the ripple and feed the signal to both an FM radio receiver and a high definition television set to ascertain if evidence of a “time anomaly” can be detected.

It is considered that picking up old episodes of “I Love Lucy” would prove nothing, as the show is undoubtedly showing on TV channels in some part of the world to this very day.

However, if the final episode of “Lost” should be reflected back from some future era or possibly something really remunerative like the 2012 Melbourne Cup results, or some glimmer of when the world stock markets bottom out, if ever, then science would have made a great leap forward and the potential of some sort of wormhole in time would have been established.

Professor Biemer is continuing his ongoing research in collaboration with the University's Patron, Baron Beavis von Büttkopf, using the 2-metre telescope at the Schloß Rattshärz Observatory to produce high quality optical images to supplement the original optical/radio hybrid images already captured by Professor Biemer.

Einstein's Second-Greatest Blunder

Albert Einstein was born in Ulm in 1879, his father Herman Einstein being a salesman and later manufacturer of electrical equipment operating on direct current (DC). However, he had backed the wrong current and the business went bust.

Young Albert had shown a talent for mathematics and by his early-teens had mastered Euclidean Geometry and Infinitesimal Calculus.

By the time he was 15 his family had moved to Pavia in Italy where young Albert spent two years at the local school.

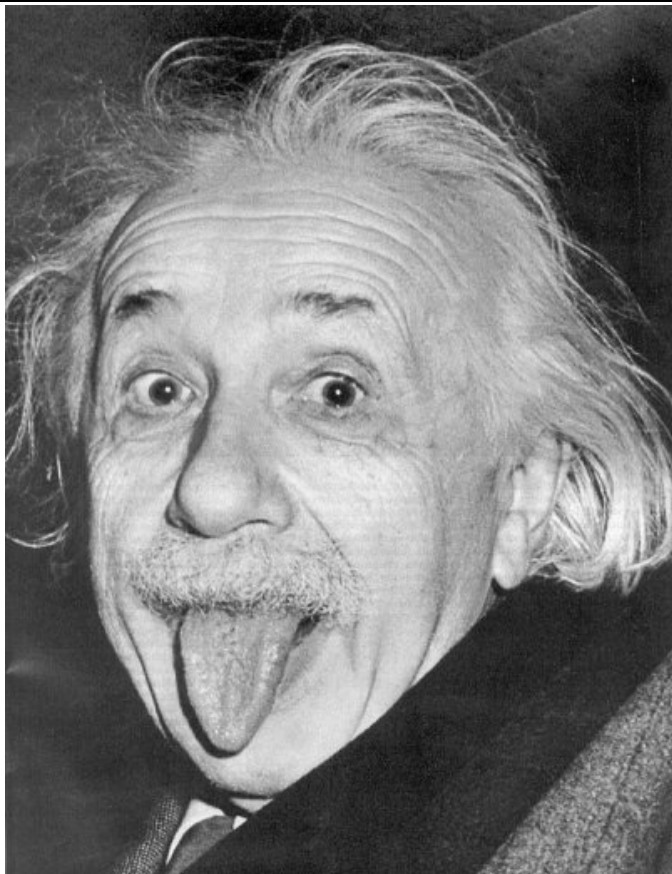
It was during this period that his “second-greatest blunder” took place. So embarrassed was he about this that it was only discovered in correspondence between his later wife, Mileva Maric, and her mother. He was particularly put out by being upstaged by Sir Isaac Newton.

Every schoolboy in Europe had heard the legend of Newton being inspired by a falling apple to develop his theory of gravity and young Albert was no exception and greatly regretted not following up on an inspiration which he had at age 16.

He had seen some of the early photos of nebulae produced at Mt Wilson, and at this early period it was believed that there was only one galaxy and that all nebulae, including spiral nebulae were artefacts within our own galaxy.

In fact, based on a lifetime of observation Herschel had made a very shrewd guess about the shape of our galaxy which Albert knew of, having read Herschel's papers.

Back in the 19th century, those students' friends - McDonald's and KFC - had not been invented, so to make a few lira after school Albert worked a few hours each Friday and Saturday night at the Marco Polo Pizza Parlour.



Young Albert Einstein shown here at age 16 in one of his more serious photographic poses

He observed Pizza bases being rolled, shaped, and decorated and was struck by the fact that the average Pizza not only resembled Herschel's concept of our galaxy but also resembled the edge-on, oblique and full frontal galaxy photos he had seen in the early work of Barnard.

Even some of the burnt edges on overdone Pizzas resembled the dark matter on the edge of "The Sombrero". Bits of Pepperoni looked like scattered globular clusters, and assorted bits of vegetable matter resembled H-II regions and other nebulae.

It was not until the 1920's when Hubble demonstrated red shift as evidence for spiral nebulae being external island Universes to our own that Einstein realised he could have beaten Hubble - not by demonstrable evidence, but at least in theoretical concepts to the existence of a whole Universe full of galaxies.

Of course, at age 16 he lacked the self confidence of later years and no doubt very rightly realised he would be laughed at as a teenager coming up with such a far-out notion. The moral of this story, reader, is to follow and test out your ideas.

Astro-Imagers Rejoice Over New Southern Polar Alignment Technique

Amateurs have long known that one of the few joys within that black pit known as Circumpolar North is Polaris, the popular northern alignment object.

Although Circumpolar South has many treasures, its nearest equivalent to Polaris is Sigma Octans (σ Oct), an obscure 5th magnitude star which is not even on the pole anyhow.

In consequence, polar alignment for southern observers is not as easy as it is for northerners who have it made in the polar alignment department, despite how much those in northern climes may feel deprived in other areas of astronomy.

Exciting news has just broken that the Hubble Space Telescope has confirmed the existence of "Murrell 2" - a 19th magnitude planetary nebula whose starry nucleus is located precisely on the South Celestial Pole (SCP) in Octans.

Murrell 2 was first suspected by ace observer Andrew Murrell when observing under 10/10 seeing and transparency conditions at Coonabarabran last January with a 25" Obsession telescope and a rare "OII" filter.

Imaged later by the 20" AAT Schmidt Telescope during a routine Near Earth Asteroid Patrol, the object showed up as a star surrounded by a diffuse cloud, but a Hubble image has confirmed its nature as a Type II Seyfert Planetary.



"Murrell 2" imaged from Wiruna using a rare "O-II" filter

This discovery has generated much excitement amongst Astro-Imagers seeking a more precise method of polar aligning their telescopes.

As a result, ASNSW Astro-Imagers Monte Willsin and Mike Sunsurfski plan to construct a prototype guide scope capable of reaching 19th magnitude with ease.

Preliminary tests suggest that applying cold camera techniques to conventional visual optics when used in conjunction with an OII filter may work well.

By filling Monte's surplus Takahashi FSQ-106 refractor tube with surgical alcohol cooled to precisely 3°C, point sources of light seemed to be tightly contained, with the central star in M57 (The Ring Nebula) easily seen when using inverted vision.



Monte Willsin's prototype 19th magnitude guide scope, showing the tubes which circulate the chilled surgical alcohol

It is considered that a similarly configured 150mm refractor should easily reach 20th magnitude, and as 3°C is close to the average evening temperature at the ASNSW site at Wiruna for much of the year it should therefore be relatively easy to maintain the system temperature at, or very close to, 3°C.

Mike Sunsurfski proposes, in the true spirit of research, to first conduct qualitative trials comparing the performance of surgical alcohol against other forms of alcohol including Vodka, Schnapps, and Pink Gin to detect any variations in the optical transmission quality of the various fluid mediums.

ASNSW members have long believed that the ingestion of such fluids during observing sessions (*strictly for medical conditions and anti-freeze purposes, of course*) can significantly affect visual perception and recall of observations.

Some readers may dimly remember a spirited discussion at Wiruna at midnight one New Moon weekend on whether the forthcoming total solar eclipse was due the following weekend at First Quarter or the subsequent weekend at Full Moon.

ASNSW Members Discover Near Earth Asteroid From Wiruna

On 27 February 2009 the Near-Earth Asteroid Research survey at Siding Spring discovered a small asteroid, about 50 metres in diameter, which proceeded to skim past the Earth at a distance of only 60,000 kilometres.

As this asteroid was about the same size as that which devastated the Tunguska region in Siberia in

1908, flattening around 5,000 square kilometres of forest the fact that it did not hit our planet was extremely fortuitous.

However, it has recently been revealed that a second discovery was made from the ASNSW's dark sky observing site at Wiruna a few hours later that night by an expert team of Astro-Imagers headed by Mike Bourbon-Jones, at a time when Siding Spring was clouded out.

This team had been field testing new image acquisition software and in one of the images being processed, they happened upon a second asteroid of similar size following on some hours behind that which was discovered at Siding Spring, perhaps part of a swarm, and which passed slightly closer to our planet than the first one.

Fortunately the image was being processed while the new asteroid was still overhead, so that the team's technical officer, Mike Sunsurfski was able to quickly reconfigure the adjacent society radio telescope into radar mode, fit the Speckle-Doppler Quad-Core Receiver, and collect valuable data on the velocity and orbit of the newly discovered object.

Computer analysis of the data revealed that rather than continuing past our planet and back into the outer solar system, the asteroid had arrived at a time when the alignment between the Earth and Moon had contributed to the asteroid being subjected to a continuous "slingshot effect" between the Earth and the Moon.

When passing by the Earth, it was flung into a curious "Figure-8" orbit which took it around the far side of the Moon and then back towards Earth where it passed behind our planet and then headed back out towards the Moon again.

As the precise stability of the orbit had not been determined the discovery was not immediately made public to avoid a panic, however following daytime adjustments to the Speckle-Doppler Quad-Core Receiver, refined calculations have largely dispelled early fears.



Daytime adjustments being made to the new Speckle-Doppler Quad-Core Receiver on the Radio Telescope at Wiruna

Estimates now suggest that although the orbit may not be entirely stable, the highest chance of an impact would be with the Moon rather than the Earth, and would not be until 2015 at the earliest.

There was a relatively small (< 10%) chance of an impact with planet Earth during April 2014 either in Australia's Simpson Desert region or in a region known as Canberra within the Australian Capital Territory - fortunately neither location represent a significant part of the planet worthy of concern.

ASNSW Astro-Imagers have managed to take a number of photos of the asteroid transiting the Moon, one of which is reproduced below.

Having been given naming rights by the International Astronomical Union the team consulted and named the new object "Apotheosis".



Photo of "Apotheosis" the newly discovered Near-Earth Asteroid, show here transiting the Moon

The discovery has inspired the Astro-Imagers to set up a routine Near-Earth Asteroid Search Program to search for asteroids each new moon weekend at Wiruna, with Monte Willsin nominated to act as Asteroid Team Leader.

Powerful Gamma Ray Burst Observed in Milky Way

In early January 2009, scientists monitored what may be the closest gamma ray burst ever detected - So close in fact that it seemed to be within our own galaxy, quite close to the galactic centre.

Preliminary studies suggest it may have been caused by the collision of two neutron stars, causing a massive nuclear explosion, and subsequently destroying both objects.

In a curious twist however, during early March radio astronomers at the University of Bürgerwelt detected significant radio noise emanating from a source very close to the coordinates of the gamma ray burster which were consistent with an object being ejected at high speed, and in the general direction of our Solar System.

In view of the extremely low density of atoms throughout interstellar space it was computed that any object capable of generating the semblance of an ionisation trail had to be moving at an extraordinarily high velocity, in fact approaching or even exceeding 98.5% of the speed of light in order to impact with a sufficient number of atoms.

This object was tracked and shown to be passing so close to the Sun that any asteroid of similar apparent size should have been drawn in by the Sun's gravity and destroyed.

Instead however it performed a "sling-shot" manoeuvre and passed around the Sun at such a high velocity that it is computed that it will totally escape the solar system and head off in the direction of Regulus.

This could happen only to an object of such a high density that the kinetic energy it had could only be explained by the object being of truly enormous density, consistent with it being a detached remnant of a neutron star.

This finding has disturbing implications, as it seems that at least some gamma ray bursters may routinely eject such "cosmic bullets" at random into the surrounding interstellar medium.

The bad news is that being of such high mass and density, their capacity to cause great damage is enormous.

The good news is that at the estimated velocity of such an object, the chances of them being perturbed sufficiently by the gravitational attraction of the Earth and Sun so as to impact on our planet are small.

It is however conceivable that over billions of years a few have come in at a trajectory sufficient to have been captured by the Sun's gravity and become unusual members of the asteroid belt - unusual in the sense that they would have highly elliptical orbits taking them far from the Sun and subsequently taking scores of thousands of years to complete one revolution.

Surveys of Near Earth Asteroids have now become a routine event.

The catch however is that such highly dense objects, when moving close to the Sun, would have such a high velocity as to leave little lead time for computation of orbits or consideration of preventative or mitigation measures.

The evidence is being examined to determine if the object recently impacting the Moon and reported earlier in this journal was in fact a neutron star remnant. (See "Asteroid Impact Shifts Moon's Axial Tilt" on page 2 for further information)

Meantime, asteroids of unusually high velocities will be given special attention to determine whether their orbits are consistent with them being of higher than normal density.

April's Horrorscopes

♈ Aries

Your sign is the black pit of the zodiac this month with nothing much happening and plenty of space for micro-meteors to do their thing. Now is a good time to take a month off and try for a state of Nirvana – or if out of luck, contemplate your navel. Not much joy for most, I admit, but exciting stuff for the average Aries.

♉ Taurus

Mercury, the speedy winged messenger, zips into your sign this month to shake you out of your usual torpor. Get into gear and tackle those put-aside projects – house cleaning, gardening, building a better mouse trap, finishing building that 32" Dobsonian and so on... Going at it like a typical bull on Red Bull, you will of course wear yourself out but can go back into your normal state of semi-hibernation during May.

♊ Gemini

Lots of trivia in your sign this month. On the 4th, Comet 144P/Kushida nears Lambda Geminorum while on the 20th, Minor Planet 40 Harmonia nears Kappa Geminorum, while Comet C/2007 N3 (Lulin) is in Gemini the whole month. All this would confuse other astrologers but not me – at least no more than usual.

Spend an evening in a Japanese restaurant listening to harmonious music (unlikely to be Japanese music) and you will have a tale to tell next morning, most likely about a hangover from too much Sake.

♋ Cancer

Nothing would be happening in your sign this month except that a choice conglomeration of space junk from the recent collision between US and Russian satellites moves through on the 10th.

You will get much junk mail from the US offering cheap Viagra, physical enhancement and doctorates from Universities no one has ever heard of, while the Russians will offer you lusty mail-order brides with a severe case of the hots for your bank account.

Try to introduce them to each other, but not to your bank account.

♌ Leo

Owing to precession, the Puppis meteor shower will radiate from Regulus mid-month - a rare event this is indeed.

The noble King of the Beasts will rain golden showers on those born under his sign, so look for a lottery win this month, and if you REALLY want to win, try actually buying a ticket for a change – it will actually improve your chances.

♍ Virgo

Minor Planets Flora and Irene are in Virgo, with Minor Planet Doris near the border with Libra.

If you are a male, three ex-girlfriends will be hanging about all month trying to get your undivided attention and a second chance, while if you are a female, you will likely be one of those three ex-girlfriends who had already received their redundancy notices - Tough luck!

♎ Libra

Well balanced Librans love their well balanced lives so will welcome the fact that nothing much happens this month except for the Moon staggering through, and bits of the Oort Cloud moving into the descending node.

Confine yourselves to howling at the Full Moon on the 10th but be careful to shave off any surplus body hair that may have sprouted overnight before appearing in public the next day.

♏ Scorpio

Antares gets occulted by the Moon on the unlucky 13th so any under this sign who value their image should stay home that day and watch old movies on TV, or do a few dozen crossword puzzles so their adoring fans do not see them in public looking less than their best.

Shine forth again with your usual brilliance, charisma etc. on the 14th and the world is yours again.

♐ Ophiuchus

Nothing much happening in your sign this month except for the Moon swanning through, which is fine for those lesser astrologers who either have not heard of the sign or who don't give you oppressed Ophiuchans a fair go.

Make your own stuff happen this month - go on a moonlight cruise, learn to play Clare de Lune on the harpsichord, but do NOT moon any passing police cars this month.

♑ Sagittarius

Stuff all happening for you lot. Pluto is in your sign this month - and next month, and damn near the rest of your boring lives as he does not move about much, and although the IAU has given him the flick, we still love the gloomy old sod.

To top it off Comet 22/P (Kopff) moves through en-route to Capricorn. This tells me that anybody named Gary, whatever his star sign, will move through the month at his usual stately pace and always arrive precisely on schedule at his appointed destinations.

♄ Capricorn

Jupiter, King of the Gods and playboy to the Olympians is in your sign this month along with Neptune, God of the Sea and Earthquakes, while Comet 22/P (Kopff) moves in during the latter part of the month.

A heady mix. If you go on that cruise your ship will likely experience an earthquake or two, while the good news is that if it passes through the tail of Comet 22/P (Kopff) its navigation systems will likely get a significant upgrade.

♈ Aquarius

After Mars moves out early in the month your dim collection of stars are enhanced only by Minor Planets 20 Massalia and 18 Melpomene. However, getting shot of the God of War is worth it as you can now safely fight the desperate housewives through the succession of Easter sales, except of course in Middle East bazaars, as Mars has only moved to the adjacent star sign so don't push your luck too far.

♊ Pisces

You dull fish have it all happening for a change. Mid-month, Mars and Venus hang about the asterism known as the circlet of Pisces and get joined there on the 23rd by a slender crescent moon, with Uranus getting close to Mars on the 16th. Any of you Pisces crowd who fall in love in a war zone this month could get it in the end, so find a deep bunker and stay there with a pile of Barbara Cartland novels until May Day.

Aliens in Las Vegas

In the previous issue of *Alternate Universe*, reports were presented on exciting research by Dr Rube Goldberg of the Nevada Polytechnic Institute in Las Vegas concerning evidence for that city being used as an entry point for alien visitations to planet Earth.

Dr Goldberg now says he has amassed evidence that entry is always effected after dark and in the close vicinity of "The Strip". He says that most visitors to the city expect to be confronted by weird sights in and around the city, and would be disappointed if they were not, and that in consequence even the most imperfectly disguised alien could expect to be totally disregarded by all but the most perceptive observer.

The fact that so many Americans are considerably overweight helps greatly as this allows for the use of masses of padding to cover tentacles or other

spare limbs and any mechanical prosthetics required to assist the locomotion of entities from low gravity planets, while for aliens who look almost human, Elvis look-alike costumes and hair pieces are an effective means of getting one's self ignored.

Robotic or android type beings, he concludes, have the ability to rearrange their external appearances to look like poker machines or any other mechanical device.

Dr Goldberg has inspected all the casinos to see if any stand out as being the focal point of entry and has concluded that no individual building stands out in this regard.

He thinks instead that there are multiple entry points in hotel rooms, and that alien engineers have been covertly working at turning walk-in wardrobes and closets into walk out-ones as well, when some wormhole or gate in the space-time continuum is activated at the rear of the structure.

He has had numerous reliable reports of certain former Wall Street bankers and investment advisors being last seen in Vegas walking into closets and pushing wheelbarrows full of money ahead of them and then vanishing.

He is still trying to work out both the scale of, and purpose for, mass incoming visitations, however he has several theories including the following:

- Planet Earth could possibly be marketed throughout the galaxy as some sort of theme park or freak show; or
- Alternately, students could be brought through to Earth on field trips to study primitive life-forms.

He wonders if some of these have wreaked havoc on Wall Street as part of some half-baked economics experiment, while the present state of the Religious Right – the Bananas Republicans faction – strongly hints at possible alien infiltration.



Suspected alien spacecraft commencing landing procedures near Area 51 in Nevada during a recent Blue Moon.

The late Bernard Shaw had always considered that planet Earth was a lunatic asylum used by the other planets and that UFO sightings were really spacecraft carrying loads of newly arriving inmates.

The present state of both US politics and financial institutions could be powerful evidence of this.

However, Dr Goldberg admits that he is still baffled by the apparent ability of aliens to fly between the stars in spacecraft which appear to be partly made of aluminium foil, balsa and duct tape.

He has spoken about this to several prominent UFO experts when they have been out on day release from their respective institutions and has found that although they could offer no scientific rationale for such construction standards they were unworried by the potential contradictory implications.

He concludes that to be a genuine UFO guru the ability to totally disregard the bleeding obvious any time it proves to have become inconvenient is as much a necessary character trait as it is for merchant bankers, Wall Street tycoons and Senators.

Side trips were made by Dr Goldberg both to Area 51 and to West Texas, armed with his trusty Schmidt Cassegrain telescope, where in Texas he says he observed the usual licence plates under most of the Marfa Lights, while Area 51 was unfortunately always so brightly lit at night by the headlights of would-be abductees or those who had fixations about anal probing (usually the same people) that he was not able to see anything at all in the sky.

He now believes that he will need to charter a private aircraft to fly over both Area 51 and the Marfa Lights.

First, however, he plans to visit both Wall Street and Washington DC to look for evidence of alien machinations.

The Running of The Mirrors

Siding Spring Observatory, like all Australian scientific, research or educational institutions, has been benevolently starved for funds over many years by a succession of both Liberal and Labor Governments.

Accordingly, some years ago when the Observatory performed a minor miracle in getting the New Generation Telescope (NGT) constructed and operational they could not stretch the limited funds far enough to provide for an aluminising tank for the 2.3 metre mirror.

In consequence the annual aluminising has to be done with the existing aluminising tank in the base of the 3.9 metre telescope's dome.

Fortunately, staff ingenuity has devised a simple and effective way of accomplishing this feat, though of course with great care as the 2.3 metre

mirror has to be transported about 200 metres downhill to the big dome.

The core of the operation is the assistance of the Siding Spring jogging club, members of which are always in a superb state of fitness from training for the annual Siding Spring to Australia Telescope fun run.

Once the 2.3 metre mirror has been lowered by block and tackle from its cell to the observatory floor, under the supervision of senior maintenance engineer Donner Blitzen, cut out segments of worn 4-Wheel Drive tyres are fitted around the edge and linked together with stainless steel shackles.

The joggers then lift the mirror vertically and, while wearing surgical gloves, roll it out the door on its side and down the road to the 3.9 metre dome and master aluminiser Lee Stevens.

The downhill run is theoretically easy but care must be taken to ensure that the mirror does not roll too fast and get out of control.

Moral support is provided by members of the Coonabarabran Astronomical Society, who run alongside and roll mirrors or blanks of their own, fitted of course with suitable segments of bicycle or motor bike tyres, such that the whole downhill progress becomes a stirring spectacle reminiscent of the "Running of the Bulls" at Pamplona, in Spain.

The added advantage of having Society members assisting the process is that additional person-power is on hand for the more arduous uphill return roll, which by necessity does not involve the smaller mirrors. For the return leg, the newly aluminised surface is carefully wrapped in glad wrap.

Titan Rover Reveals Possible Solution for Global Warming on Earth

Titan Rover, the remotely operated robotic ambient machine which landed on Saturn's largest moon, Titan from the orbiting Cassini-Huygens research spacecraft, has sent back a steady stream of information since coming on line in early 2007.

Some of this data may well have a practical application to planet Earth in relation to mitigation of global warming and has been the subject of intensive testing at the Polytechnic Institute of Nevada in Las Vegas, under the direction of Senior Chemo-physicist, Dr Hu.

As readers will be aware, the atmosphere of Titan consists of 65% methane (CH₄) and 30% carbon dioxide (CO₂), making a potent mix of greenhouse gases and keeping the Saturnian moon at a higher temperature than might otherwise be the case for an orbiting body at that distance from the Sun.

Galveston to the mainland, as di-methyl carbargonate is not water soluble.



Cattle... More than just Good Beef!

In fact, in as little as 75 years, enough fill could be produced from US cattle alone to completely reclaim the Gulf of Mexico, or link England to Holland, thus doing away with all those costly dikes, while an entire city such as New Orleans could be raised to an altitude of 50 metres above sea level in as little as 5 years.

A pilot study is currently underway at a redundant former Las Vegas casino serving as an out-gassing station, using complex machinery to extract and compress atmospheric carbon dioxide and combine it with the collected methane and catalytic argon stored under pressure in external gas tanks.



Dr Hu making fine adjustments to the Pressure Valve

Titan's Potent Greenhouse Gas Atmosphere

Although there is a continual seeping of both methane and carbon dioxide from the Saturnian moon's interior, the levels of both gases in the atmosphere remain constant in both volume and density, and it seems that this balance is maintained by a steady level of precipitation.

Under precise climatic conditions of both temperature and pressure, tiny amounts of argon in the atmosphere act as a catalyst to bind the molecules of methane and carbon dioxide together to form an extremely stable compound known as di-methyl carbargonate.

This compound is subsequently precipitated onto the moon's surface in a solid form similar in appearance to fine terrestrial hail, where it forms a thick, solid layer reaching several hundred metres in depth. As these levels rise, the atmospheric balance remains constant.

Dr Hu reasons that as more greenhouse gases are produced on Earth by out-gassing ruminants (e.g. cattle, wildebeest etc.) than from the combined effects of all human industrial activity, addressing greenhouse gas production from the former source may well offer a huge return on investment.

The Polytechnic Institute has isolated a gene from the Mexican Jumping Bean which, when spliced into cattle DNA, can result in cattle out-gassing at uniform and precisely determined intervals.

This means that if cattle are herded together in specially designed out-gassing stations in the same way they come in for milking, powerful suction fans could collect and compress the resultant gases into retorts where specific levels of pressure, temperature and catalytic argon could convert the gases into a solid form of di-methyl carbargonate suitable for land fill, road base, building blocks or possibly even a causeway linking the island of

The internal components of the complex compressor can be seen in this photo (*opposite page, bottom right*), where the Doctor is making delicate adjustments to one of the turbines to ensure the correct pressure is achieved for the mixture of Carbon Dioxide and Methane before the catalytic Argon is introduced into the system.

The European Union has offered its full support, while the Russians wish to explore further gene manipulation so as to have the methane expelled only in winter time so that it can be transported as blocks of naturally quick-frozen methane ice.

Russian animal rights groups have expressed concern that over-inflated cattle awaiting treatment could potentially be blown across the steppes by strong winds, causing distress amongst the cattle, but this will be averted by hanging war surplus artillery shells around their necks as ballast.

Whether the African wildebeest can ever get factored into the equation is a moot point as they are found in wild, constantly migrating herds, however the Buffalo in places like Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma are likely candidates for inclusion. Britain proposes to hold its own trials on a farm in West Yorkshire.

Local Astronomer Seeks Doctorate Over Universe Theory

It was recently revealed that Dunedoo's most famous son, Emmanuel Snodgrass, has submitted his thesis for evaluation by the Dunedoo Campus of the University of Milparinka.

The aspiring Dr. Snodgrass had taken a revolutionary view of the Universe and his thesis was directed at overthrowing many years of adherence to the views of Einstein, Hubble, Hale, Hawking and virtually every tenured astronomer.

Emmanuel noted that, prior to Hubble, it had been assumed that the Universe consisted of only one galaxy - our own - and that all those other galaxies photographed by early Astro-photographers were actually nebulae contained within our parent galaxy.

Emmanuel has turned back the clock. He argues that there IS in fact only one galaxy - our own - and that all other galaxies are actually images of it "reflected" back towards the Earth.

Einstein, he says, showed that space is curved, such that images of our galaxy "projected" in all directions eventually curl back and return to their point of origin, sometimes making several passes in doing so. Thus, he says, what we see when we photograph other galaxies is a series of views of our own galaxy at different times in its development, from the early beginnings to its more recent structure.

In this way, he says, our galaxy can appear irregular, elliptical, spiral, or even as a pair of colliding galaxies, in which latter case he says the "colliding" galaxies are mere gravitationally-lensed images of the same galaxy at different points in time.

The exciting aspect of this is that we get a complete picture of the development of our galaxy from its earliest origins. Red shift, he says, is an artefact of receding images of our galaxy, whereas blue shift is exhibited by returning images of our galaxy.

He contends that his theory explains the so called "missing mass" conundrum, as the numerous galaxies imaged have no mass to be missing in the first place and consist merely of photons zipping around.

Emmanuel says that, following on the successful evaluation of his thesis, he hopes to be appointed as the first Professor of Astronomy at the University of Milparinka, and although this would mean lengthy absences from his beloved hometown of Dunedoo, he is prepared to make this sacrifice in the greater interests of science.

He has already started planning a state of the art observatory for the University. He concedes that this would have to be located some distance from the bright lights of the Milparinka Central Business District and has surveyed a promising site at the summit of Billy Goat Hill on Mt Browne station.

A state of the art optical telescope of about one metre aperture would work in tandem with a recently acquired radio telescope which had formerly been part of the CSIRO array at Fleurs, near Sydney and he considers that some serious research work could commence within two years.

New Mirror Re-coating Technique for Amateurs

Harry Janos, owner of the biggest telescope in the South Australian opal mining town of Coober Pedy, has just perfected a "do it yourself" mirror coating technique for astronomers.

Whilst on an opal selling trip to Taiwan, Harry visited a number of factories producing jewellery and was introduced to a new metal coating technique used by the local trade.

It had been found that ultra thin silver or gold foil could be perfectly coated onto copper, brass or other conductive surfaces by carefully spreading the foil over the surface to be coated and applying a positively charged current to the foil and a negatively charged current to the metallic or conductive surface to be coated.

The two surfaces were then brought into contact while a soft stream of air from a portable air compressor held them in place.

At this point, the foil was then zapped with 240 volts AC and then with 12 volts DC, resulting in a hyperbaric charge bonding the two surfaces together at a molecular level.

Depending on the desired effect and durability of the surface intended, multiple layers could be applied in the same manner.

This technique would not work with a non-conductive straight glass surface, however experimentation with a 10" mirror which had a badly faded coating showed that the surface conductivity remaining on the mirror was sufficient for the system to work, resulting in a perfect silver coating.

When returned to its Dobsonian mount, the mirror worked well, producing flawless images.

However, appreciating potential durability problems with silver coatings in amateur use, Harry got the manufacturer of the foil to produce an experimental batch of aluminium foil, and when this was applied to another mirror the same result was achieved.

It was not possible to produce a silicon over-coated surface in this same manner - just straight aluminium at this stage. However, so thin is the coating that up to twenty coatings can be applied before any significant degradation of the optical figure becomes apparent. Accordingly, annual re-coating of a mirror for twenty years becomes a feasible option.

At this stage, it is only planned to produce micro-thin aluminium foil in twenty-inch width, as the small number of larger scopes out there would not make a worthwhile market.

Initially, the foil will be available in 10m rolls, and Harry estimates that mirrors up to twenty inches in diameter could be re-coated for as little as five dollars each.

Sir Fred Hoyle Vindicated At Last

Genius though he was, Fred Hoyle has long been considered to have fouled up big time with his "Steady State" theory.

Fred never accepted the "Big Bang" concept. In fact he actually coined the term "Big Bang" as a term of derision to damn what he regarded as an unlikely scenario for the origins of the known Universe.

He himself preferred the "Steady State" as the order of things, asserting that the Universe was always much as we see it now, and that it is kept simmering as it were by the continuous creation of matter - atoms and then molecules, appearing out of nothing.



Sir Fred Hoyle - Vindicated At Long Last

Now some years after Hoyle's death, recent research by astronomers at the University of Hamsterdamn has uncovered evidence which could support Hoyle's concept.

The Hamsterdamn researchers had fitted radio dishes to every windmill in Holland during 2008 and had electronically linked them to a central database at the University, operating the equivalent of a radio dish 200km in diameter so as to research the mysterious "dark energy".

As all astronomers know, the observed Universe only accounts for 5% of the estimated matter therein, with the remaining mass being around 20% "dark matter" and 75% "dark energy".

In tracking the background microwave radiation of the Universe, the researchers found evidence that the microwave radiation is expanding at the same velocity as, and in most cases ahead of, nearby galaxies.

This expansion, like a shock wave expanding from a supernova, is radiating out through the Universe, but more importantly through an interstellar medium full of dark energy in the form of a sea of hitherto undetectable sub-atomic particles, shocking such particles to combine to form atoms.

Consequently, matter is not only being created out of an apparently empty void but by a shock wave sufficiently ahead of the expanding galaxies that the gravitational effects exerted by these new masses of matter is actually attracting the galaxies following behind.

This phenomenon serves to explain the newly puzzling new discovery that the expansion of the Universe is accelerating.

As the shock wave expands, the apparent diameter of the Universe becomes greater and the mass of newly created matter becomes incrementally more massive, causing the galaxies' velocity to accelerate.

Consequently, it seems that although Hoyle was wrong about there being no such event as the Big Bang, he was right about the Steady State theory. Essentially then, a marriage of the Big Bang theory and the Steady State theory elegantly explains the state of the Universe as we see it today. Nice one Fred. You get vindicated, at least partly, at long last!

Space Junk Clean Up

The collision earlier this year between the defunct US and Russian satellites which produced a major amount of debris to add to the space junk orbiting planet Earth has at last concentrated attention on a long standing problem.

So much junk is in secure orbit that there are many altitudes in which it is unsafe to park research or communications satellites for fear of impact.

At the potential closing velocity of up to tens of kilometres per second, even small pieces - nuts, bolts, bits of wire, flecks of paint etc. can cause enormous damage.

Known to be in orbit are hundreds of defunct communications, research and spy satellites, as well as intact upper-stages of booster rockets, thousands of fragments of booster rockets formed when unexpended fuel exploded, two Hasselblad cameras, sundry tools lost by space shuttle crews, a few freeze dried Russian dogs (Heroes of the Soviet Union), two American (by nationality) monkeys and some rumoured bags of garbage.

The problem caused by the existence of this junk has long been recognised, but how to deal with it has been a hitherto unsolved challenge. However, a recent proposal by Dr Rube Goldberg, Professor of Astronautical Dipsomania at the Nevada Polytechnic Institute in Las Vegas has caused great excitement in Astronomical circles.

Dr Goldberg's plan is visionary: He proposes the construction of a large armoured satellite, orbiting at a safe altitude, and on completion boosting it to a pre-determined altitude which contains the greatest measurable collection of space junk.

The satellite will be at least 10 metres in diameter and enclosed in state of the art compound ceramic armour of the type currently used in main battle tanks and at least two metres in thickness.

Inside the satellite, a plutonium reactor will power the strongest possible electromagnet which can be carried aloft and capable of attracting that kind of junk attracted by a magnet, which would of course include the regular magnetic materials such as iron, stainless steel etc. but would also be capable of attracting other materials such as ionised aluminium, electrolytic copper and anhydrous silica which in their native form would not normally be considered magnetic.

Once a sufficient mass of material has been attracted, mostly over a long term by the magnetic field of the magnet gradually altering the orbits of the material, the new "artificial moon" should have attained sufficient mass to gravitationally attract those particles not attracted magnetically and the new "moon" should grow by accretion much in the same way that many asteroids are believed to have grown by the accumulation of boulders and interstellar dust and particles into rubble piles held together gravitationally.

In view of the current world recession, funding such a venture would be a major issue.

However, in the interim, a feasibility study will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Astronautical Dipsomania to be held in Las Vegas this coming July.

One problem could be securing international agreement on an appropriate name for the new "moon", which would probably be at least as bright as Venus and easily seen without optical aid.

Country Member Makes Bigger Mirror

Most telescope users contract and never recover from the dreaded scourge known as Aperture Fever, compounded by the fact that most observers have a champagne taste on a beer income.

However, a report has come in from the Shoalhaven Astronomical Society that the Society Laird of telescope design and construction, Eugene McConnor, has made a significant technological breakthrough.

Having noted the increasing use of multiple mirror telescopes by the great observatories of the world as a means of achieving hitherto unattainable light-gathering power, Eugene explored ways and means by which amateurs could get a piece of this type of action.

Recognising the technical difficulties in choreographing a whole nest of mirrors in a backyard telescope, he reasoned that something simpler like "extending" your main mirror might somehow be possible. Long days and nights of experimentation in his garage and backyard later, Eugene was finally ready to trial the new "Extendoscope".

He had taken a 15" diameter sheet of aluminium foil and baked it at 350°C in a pottery oven along with a small bowl of commemorative polymer for one hour, after which the foil's exposed upper surface had been impregnated by the polymer.

Using regular oven mits, he then removed the foil from the oven and carefully centred and laid the disc of foil on the surface of a 10" f/6 mirror and found that, when the foil had cooled to below 100°C, the outer fringe adopted the memory of the same curvature as the inner 10 inches, making it in effect a rather thin 15" f/4 mirror.

Fortunately, when the central 10 inches was supported by the underlying mirror, the outer fringe retained amazing stiffness, while electrostatic attraction kept the two aluminised surfaces in close and permanent contact, thus producing a very usable 15" mirror.

Society members have nominated Eugene for the Society's Bronze Medallion, and plan to display the finished telescope at the 2009 South Pacific Star Party, while the society has received an approach from Coprolite Optics Ltd for marketing rights of a modified version of Eugene's invention.

Early in March 2009, the Eugene's 15" f/4 Extendascope had revealed 6 tails in Comet Lulin and 12 stars in the Trapezium.

Who knows what lies ahead?

Innovative New Mirror Cell

Coprolite Optics Ltd has just released an innovative new mirror cell, which has a unique dual function.

Not only does it provide a computer controlled 9-point suspension system which varies the amount of pressure exerted on the back of the mirror by the suspension points depending on the angle of tilt, but for amateurs with aperture fever, and that about covers just about everybody, the cell actually enables you to increase the aperture of your telescope.

The cell is fitted with a ring, or donut-type outer fringe made of lightweight, low-expansion glass filled during the cooling process with helium bubbles and designed so as to be racked up level with the edge of your mirror and parabolised to a tenth of a wave.

Initially this cell will be available in two sizes and designed to mate with 10" f/5 mirrors, and 12.5" f/5 mirrors.

Your 10 inch mirror will then convert to a 12.5" f/4 mirror, while the 12.5" mirror becomes a 15" f/4.2 mirror.

Larger sized mirror cells are under consideration but certain problems present themselves - the increased tube diameter could pose insuperable upgrade challenges while the whole telescope could need total rebuilding, with of course a larger sized diagonal and spider.

The company intends to proceed in careful steps then with just the two cell sizes so as to preserve its responsible reputation for optical excellence.

For those with really big ambitions the company will be offering 24" and 32" mirrors made with its revolutionary new helium bubble filled lightweight low expansion glass mirrors which offer the prospect of light weight mounts and high portability.

The 24" blank will be three inches thick but weigh only thirty pounds, while the 32" mirror at 4 inches in thickness will weigh in at only 45lbs.

Handcrafted by Central Africa's finest opticians, the big mirrors will be a genuine one tenth of a wave, and in accordance with company tradition customers have the final choice as to whether that is radio wave or Malibu wave.

Benjamin Franklin the Astronomer

Although the private diary of Benjamin Franklin had been kept secret for two hundred years by The American Philosophical Society in accordance with directions in the great man's will, its quiet release in 1990 attracted little interest except amongst scholars of American History.

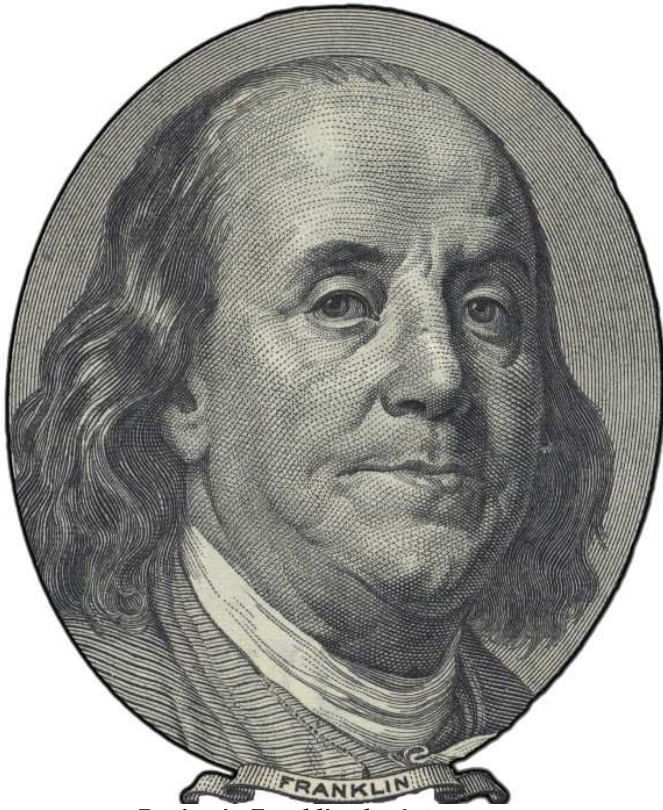
Amongst its contents, however, is a revelation of how astrology played a significant part in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the commencement of the War of Independence.

Franklin was born under the sign of Capricorn, in 1706. He became a printer, author, publisher, poet, gentleman scientist, and was early in the field of understanding and experimenting with the newly discovered phenomenon known as electricity.

He later secured an alliance with France which assured the success of the War of Independence and subsequently became the US ambassador to France.

Although as a scientist he did not believe in astrology, he nevertheless "embraced" it as a device to sway wavering members of the Continental Congress into supporting independence.

His introduction to astronomy began when he visited France during 1767 and was for some time a house guest of French Comet hunter Charles Messier.



Benjamin Franklin the Astronomer

He and Charles had become known to each other as two of the few foreigners admitted as members of the British Royal Society, and Franklin was introduced by Messier to the technique of Comet hunting during his stay.

However, 1767 was a year in which Messier did not discover any Comets and this was Franklin's fault, as he had brought with him on his travels a few barrels of overproof Bourbon, which he had told Messier was an American wine named in honour of the French Monarchy.

Messier took to this new "wine" with gusto but unfortunately, for both his Comet hunting evenings and his mornings after, started drinking the stuff in "wine quantities" with results familiar to so many Americans – and Australians for that matter!

Franklin's reputation as a scientist had preceded his arrival and he was granted an audience with King Louis XV, who expressed a desire to see a replay of Franklin's famous experiment with a kite, a key, and lightning.

Older and wiser, since the sudden demise in mid experiment of a few scientific emulators, Franklin proceeded with caution and made preparations in the gardens of Fontainebleau.

When the appropriate storm turned up, so did the king, under the shelter of a transportable pavilion, and all went well - more or less. Having received a few mild jolts from his home-made batteries, Franklin wisely tethered his kite to a bronze statue of Mercury, and after a relatively short time the lightning struck at the highest point - the kite, and the key glowed red for a minute or so.

The only real hitch was caused by the fact that Franklin had fabricated the box kite out of a redundant pair of pantaloons formerly belonging to Madame Du Barry, Courtesan extraordinaire and contract mistress to the rich and fatuous, while the key happened to be one of the many spare keys to her chastity belt.

How Franklin had come by these items has never been satisfactorily explained, and certainly not in his secret diary.

An inadvertent consequence however was that the King clearly appeared to have recognised both items, to the great consternation of the Queen, but fortunately Franklin, the diplomat by nature, explained that they had been purchased by him from the Paris branch of Vinnies and that as the King, a talented amateur clockmaker and tinkerer, had given valuable advice on the design and construction of the kite, he had certainly seen both items during the construction phase.

Certainly the most important consequence was that Franklin presented the key to Messier as a memento of the great occasion, and the delighted astronomer presented him with a spare 90 x 120 refractor in return, which Franklin brought back to America where he searched for Comets without success and totally missed an eclipse of the Moon.

The telescope came in handy some years later, when, during the first meetings of the Continental Congress, Franklin the Astronomer conveniently became Franklin the astrologer after cobbling together a scheme with compatriot and fellow intellectual Thomas Jefferson.

It seems that contrary to patriotic myth-making by generations of historians, a significant number of the delegates were superstitious country bumpkin types and needed powerful persuasion to literally stick their necks out and start a War of Independence.

Now King George III was a Gemini, and using his telescope as a stage prop, Franklin creatively explained to the delegates that he had been informed by Messier that his Comet C/1773 TI Messier had appeared in Gemini and proceeded to eclipse both Castor and Pollux.

Clearly, he said, the Comet represented the new – America - which eclipsed the old - the King and his government - so that heaven had declared itself on the side of the Colonists.

The fact that Franklin got himself a job as Ambassador in Paris for the duration of the war suggests that his faith in his astrology was a little lukewarm, even with the supporting evidence that he, a Capricorn, and Jefferson, an Aries were both intellectual and zodiacal soul mates. Thus was the USA borne of astrology, where for many, it still rules.

Wiruna News

Inspired by the success of ASNSW Astro-Imagers in discovering a significant new asteroid, visual observers amongst the ASNSW regulars have decided to fight back against technology by launching a novel new Comet search program.

Recognising that satellites such as Linear have effectively pre-empted amateur discovery of Comets by their automated sky coverage, the decision was made to search those few parts of the sky that the satellites are not covering.

Accordingly, society conservationist Col McMickle has been allocated the Cometary search area covered by the LMC, having already memorised all deep sky objects in that area, while master chef Don Whitelight has been given Sagittarius and the Coal Sack.

Scott Muesli will search the SMC, while Les Ara will cruise through Carina on a regular basis.

The additional advantage of searching these areas is that they are too far south to be effectively reached by the industrious Japanese Comet searchers, so competition from that direction is low.

Although no discovery has yet been reported, the group is satisfied that success will reward their efforts well before their target date - the return of Comet Halley - and strike a blow for observational astronomy against technology.

The recent mouse plague at Wiruna has been effectively brought under control without recourse to poisons or other noxious chemicals by a vigorous Eastern Brown snake breeding campaign headed by conservationist McMickle, who had developed an early affection for the reptiles since his first encounter with one as a teenager when jumping into a river, and nests have been located in suitable parts of the humpy, known affectionately as Mos Eisley.

In consequence, fat and contented snakes are often seen sleeping happily around the site, but all are expected to have retired into winter quarters well before the 17th Annual South Pacific Star Party in May 2009.

Meanwhile, Christmas in July celebrations are being planned for 2009, with a traditional Christmas dinner in the hall and, in celebration of the Bondi Icebergs, a bracing winter swim across the famous Wiruna Dam will be inaugurated.

SOCIETY DIARY

3 April	Meeting	Dr Con Huckstar will speak on "Astrology and the World Financial Crisis - How Wall Street Got It Wrong"
17-18 April	Last Quarter Moon Observing	Crago Observatory Demonstration by Eugene McConnor of his new 10-15" "Extendoscope"
24-25 April	New Moon Observing	Wiruna: Society Astro-imagers Mike Bourbon-Jones, Mike Sunsurfski and Monte Willsin will attempt to image the Canis Ravidus Nebula and anything else they can find with their new H-Delta Filter.

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