

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Real science versus Sound Off

Millions of Americans — and thousands of Pottstonians — experienced real science last week as they looked skyward to view the solar eclipse.

It's a rare time for us to get our noses out of our smart phones and remove our headphones to notice, and perhaps try to comprehend, that we are a tiny, almost infinitesimal part of a huge universe.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

It reminds me of a famous passage written by Harry Golden, the journalist and amateur philosopher, in his 1958 book, "Only in America":

"I have a rule against registering

complaints in a restaurant; because I know that there are at least four billion suns in the Milky Way — which is only one galaxy. Many of these suns are thousands of times larger than our own, and vast millions of them have whole planetary systems, including literally billions of satellites, and all of this revolves at the rate of about a million miles an hour, like a pinwheel.

Universe unbelievably vast

"Our own sun and its planets, which includes the earth, are on the edge of this wheel. This is only our own small corner of the universe, so why do not these billions of revolving and rotating suns collide? The answer is, the place is so unbelievably vast that if we reduced the suns and the planets in correct mathematical proportions with relation to the distances between them, each sun would be a speck of dust, two, three and four thousand miles away from its nearest neighbor. And, mind you, this is only the Milky Way — our own small corner

— of our own galaxy.

Billions of galaxies

"How many galaxies are there? Billions of galaxies spaced out at about one million light-years apart (one light-year is about six trillion miles). Within the ring of our largest telescopes there are at least one hundred million separate galaxies such as our own Milky Way, and that is not all, by any means. The scientists have found that the further you go out in space with the telescopes the thicker the galaxies become, and there are billions of billions as yet uncovered.

"When you think of all this, it's silly to worry whether the waitress brought you string beans instead of lima's."

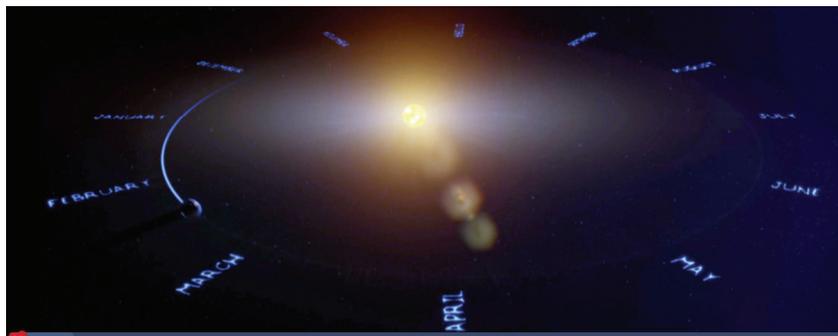
Sound Off

Which brings us to Sound Off, a Mercury feature that people are loathe to admit they read — but do. It's interesting to know what's on people's minds, and much of it seems negative, trivial and, as Harry Golden would say, just plain silly.

Could we take a few minutes each day to appreciate the beauty around us — the great expanses of blue sky, the verdant trees and grass and shrubs, the sounds of birds at daybreak — and marvel at our natural world?



Watching last week's solar eclipse



BASIC SCIENCE: Pottstown is a tiny dot on a huge globe, 25,000 miles in circumference, that is racing around the sun at 67,000 mph.