

# And the fog rolled in...

Tonight/this morning I was ready to sit in my lawn chair and look for shooting stars. The Perseid meteor shower was to hit its maximum two days. The sky promised to be clear. The mosquitoes did not promise to stay away, but I have my bug suit. □ So, I drove the truck out into the field, had my chair sitting in the bed, and I watched the night sky.

I saw a couple of shooting stars, but no storm/shower. Kind of a sprinkle. I had a grand view of the summers stars. The sky was dark enough to see the Milky Way. For an hour I enjoyed kicking back and just watching the sky turn.

Then I noticed some of the horizon stars were not as bright as they had been. Passing clouds I thought, not a big deal. Then I noticed more and more of the stars were just that much harder to see. Dang too many clouds except I stood up and the sky was clear once again. The cloud had formed much lower as fog around my truck. I stood for a while in hopes to see one or two more meteors, but within 15 minutes the fog was at my head. No more star gazing.

I should have guessed with the heavy rain this afternoon, and the warm temperatures today that fog would form easily. I just wish it would have held out for an hour or two. I'm sure I could drive one way or another to get out of my little fog bank, but the bed and work are calling me. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

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# A time to watch the night

This weekend seems to be a big astronomy shindig. The event is called [Galilean Nights](#). This is in honor of Galileo. Sidewalk astronomers around the world will be out letting people look through their scopes to see the Moon, Jupiter or some other bright evening object.

The site above has a link to find some sidewalk astronomy locations. The closest places to this neck of the woods will be Bowling Green Ohio, Sylvania Ohio and Fort Wayne Indiana. If my youngest agrees, I may be in Fort Wayne.

In case you wondered, a sidewalk astronomer is somebody who sets his/her telescope out on the sidewalk. They hope people will stop and share the evening sky with them.

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## What telescope should I buy?

After quite some time, I'm getting back to this question. Since the holiday season is approaching and fall is one of my favorite times to get the scopes out... Here are my opinions on telescopes to buy.

If I'm on your list and money is no object here are the scopes I want. ☐

[The Questar 3.5 inch anniversary model](#). This has a lot of sentimental value for me, and if money were no object I would own one.

[Any really large reflector](#). This one is from Orion Telescopes.

[A good sized goto Scope](#) and an observatory to go with it.

[Or maybe a dedicated Solar Scope???](#)

OK, I understand you are not buying one for me, but if you are a first time telescope buyer, you may see those prices and just stop your shopping. Or you will go to Walmart and buy the telescopes they have during the Christmas shopping time with all the pretty pictures on them.

In shopping for a telescope, size matters. You want the biggest scope you can afford and move around. Magnification power however does not matter. I don't care if the telescope at your local super store is 150 power or they say it will magnify 200 times. You'll never use it. Most of the time, even with the best telescope, you can't use it. So are you going to be able to with the \$30 – \$40 scope from the super store?

Even though my first suggestion would be binoculars, I won't go there, you want a telescope... I know this, because I was there once. I still don't have my binoculars...

Second suggestion a 4 to 8 inch reflector on a Dobson mount. The mount is very simple. It moves Up and Down – Left and Right. Very stable and inexpensive. An 8 inch reflector would probably be more of an intermediate scope, but it may be the only telescope you ever need. (want is another matter). The 4 and 6 inch scopes are excellent for beginners.

3rd suggestion a 60 or 70 mm refractor on a good mount. These tend to be more expensive. The mount design makes the cheaper models almost unusable. But they do look like the telescope everybody expects to see. This may be important to you.

4th suggestion... Stay away from computer controlled models for your first scope. You really don't want to have to learn how to use the computer end of the telescope when you are just starting out. That just adds to the frustration.

So here are some actual telescopes that fit my suggestions. I'm using the Orion Telescope company site, because they have nice pictures, many different scopes, and a lot of other good information on their site. I don't own an Orion Scope, and I'm

not suggesting they are the only place to get telescopes. In fact, I will add links for other sites main pages.

Refractors (lenses)

[80mm table top model](#) Nice looking little scope with what looks like a very nice mount. A good solid table will be needed to use this. A used end table from a garage sale would work nicely. A solid picnic table (that nobody is sitting on) would work well too.

[70mm refractor](#) The mount looks nice, but the tripod looks a bit on the flimsy side. This may make an shaky mount. Weight can be hung from the center support to help stabilize it.

Reflectors(mirrors)

[100mm tabletop scope](#) This mount is the same as the first refractor I mentioned. Nice size, looks easy to move around.

[4.5 inch tabletop scope](#) Slightly larger mirror than the one above. I've actually used this scope once. It is an excellent first scope.

[4.5 inch equatorial](#) Same scope as above, but a different mount. Adds to the cost, but you don't need the table.

Some Telescope web pages

[Orion](#)

[Meade Telescopes](#)

[Celestron Telescopes](#)

[Optics Planet](#)

[Anacortes](#)

[Discovery Telescopes](#)

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## Something I need to do

It has been quite a long time since I took any of my telescopes out to gaze at the night sky. I've had many

excuses, but they were just that, excuses. I think I'm really beginning to miss that hobby of mine.

The first thing I need to do is have a talk with my boss. Some of the best nights of the year are going to be happening in the near future. I need to be able to plan some time off on a quick basis if I know the sky will be clear.

I love early spring, because some of the wonderful winter constellations are visible just after sunset, and if you are up long enough, some of the summer constellations are there in the morning. On top of that, the spring time just starts to have some warmer nights. Not summery warm, but you don't end up fighting the frost bite you do in the winter.

Right now, it doesn't look like clear skies, but [my favorite place to check](#) this sort of thing, is forecasting favorable viewing tonight.

I hope it is clear when I get home tonight, I may take my little scope out to view the heavens above me.

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## Could you send in a plumber?

They are having more [toilet problems on the International Space Station](#). Seems that the Russian made space toilet is not working. I realize that the water hunger, gravity fed toilets that work on earth would not work very well on the Space Station, but to break down twice in a short period of time is not good at all. I would really reconsider working on the space station if the main toilet is going to break every 4 to 6 months. Seems like that would be a vital function. Especially when some of the water used on the Space Station comes from recycling the waste collected in those high-tech

privies.

Oh well, that massive water recycling program in use on the space station would also give me pause to send in my resume for Space Station Tech.

Where are the days when the astronauts would just play with their food in the micro-gravity situations. I miss the Jello floating in the air.

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## **Black holes and the end of the world...**

Anybody else see a theme forming... And this topics color is black..

Has anyone seen some of the headlines about the new Super Collider? Bunch of doom and gloom coming from somewhere.

Things like "Fear Looms", "Doomsday machine to start", "Collider triggers end-of-world fears", "Black Holes may devour the Earth", "Will Collider destroy the Earth", "Giant wild goat kills thousands".. Ok, I made that last one up. I understand that this is cutting edge science that very few people understand, but does the media have to make the stories so out there. The chance of something like this happening is very small, almost non-existent. The only reason it isn't non-existent is that nobody really "knows" what will happen when they finally get a collision. There are some very good ideas, but nobody "knows" yet. They haven't done the experiment yet.

Tomorrow there is a chance that the collider will create mini-black holes that will swallow the Earth. Tomorrow the Sun

could explode and fry the Earth. Tomorrow a big rock could hit the Earth and send us flying out of orbit. Tomorrow a space ship (that's no moon, it's a space station) could blow us to bits. Tomorrow the Sun could rise, and then set and the day will be normal. I have an idea of which of these things will happen, but I don't "KNOW" which one will happen. I'll check tomorrow just to be sure.

May the Force be with you when that space station decides to blow the Earth to bits. We aren't even part of the Imperial Senate...

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## Space tourism

The private sector has been in the space race for a few years now. The prize for the first commercial, non-governmental vehicle that made it to space was awarded. And now they are getting ready to unveil the start of the next phase, paid passengers. Virgin Galactic will be unveiling the first half of their attempt for commercial traffic in space. The well named [Mothership](#) will be displayed by the company that developed it.

Right now the price for a 5 minute space ride is well out of my budget, but this is hopefully the first step to more and less expensive rides into space. My wife's great grandmother lived to be 104 years old. She was around (and remembered) when automobiles started to take over the roads, she was around for the first airplanes. She couldn't afford to ride a plane when passenger travel was first introduced, but when she was in her nineties, she was able to buy a ticket and enter a plane, travel to California to see her sister. Maybe when I am in my nineties, I'll be able to do something like that and

travel in space. I hope it is sooner.

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## A little controversy...

I'm writing this blog specifically for a friend of mine. He will know I'm writing about him shortly. ☐

I decided to write a little about the NASA Apollo missions and those few people who don't believe they really happened. Why I'm writing this is simple. While doing some reading on other things I ran across the 'theories' of the Lunar hoax.

Now just because this would be the biggest hoax ever played on mankind is no reason not to believe those who say we didn't land on the moon. I'm sure there could be instances when vast sums of money could be used to convince people to think something happened, when in fact nothing happened at all.

That of course would be in a perfect world when there is no reason not to believe the agency in question. The late 1960's and early 1970's were not that perfect world. Even at that time people were saying we didn't land on the moon, there were not that many, but always a few.

The biggest problems I have with any hoax on the lunar landings are these. During the height of the Cold War, when the USSR was just as intent on the space race as the USA, how did we fool them. They landed an unmanned probe in 1959, 10 years before Apollo 11. They must have been able to track space ships to and from the moon. If they didn't track one, and could not track the radio communications between the earth and the moon, why haven't they said so yet. I'm sure at the time they would have loved any excuse to throw this in the face of the USA. And the other thing, why fake so many



missions. Faking it once is hard enough. Faking it 9 times is a bit of overkill, and then why fake the failed Apollo 13 mission?

There are many other Web sites that will take on this lunar landing hoax, I just brought it up for a good friend with one wacky idea. Of course, he thinks that my belief in the lunar landings is a wacky idea, so I guess that makes us even. ☐

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## Pass the pepper please...

The title of this article just got to me. For some reason it just tickled my sense of humor.

...[NASA Sticks a Fork in Mars](#), I hope they remembered the knife and spoon.

Anyway, I do like the work the landers and orbiters are doing on Mars. In the past few years, we've learned a lot about the next planet out. I'll keep on looking for updates on what exactly this probe finds, so I can make a comment or two on that.

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## Astronomy Book Review...

I have a book for people with little or no background in Astronomy. It is called quite simply "The Stars – A New Way to See Them" by H. A. Rey.

I learned my constellations by the having start charts with lines connecting the various stars in a group (constellations

and asterisms) and except for a very few, they looked nothing like what the name given. Then there were other books that put drawn pictures around the stars, but they did nothing to connect the stars in any reasonable fashion. Enter H. A. Rey with his book. He made simple stick figures with the stars that look surprisingly like the names of the constellations. He also uses English names for the constellations so you don't have to know Latin to figure it out. Neat stuff for the beginner.

This book is designed for naked eye viewing. You don't need a telescope or binoculars to use it. As you get comfortable with the stars, he does point out things to look at with either binoculars or a small telescope, but this book is designed more as a major road map, not something that gives you all the little tourist stops.

I will admit that even though I've been into Astronomy for over 30 years, I never really took the time to discover or remember the constellations. I know the major ones, and can use my star chart to find others, but this book will help me to remember ones I don't know at the present time. It will be nice to know my way in the sky without having to consult a map every time I look at something I don't know.

If you struggle with what star is what, I give this book a very strong recommendation.