



SearchLites

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The Quarterly Newsletter of The SETI League, Inc.

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Little Green Man

by H. Paul Shuch

Executive Director Emeritus

You've met Jocelyn, decades ago -- if not in the flesh, then at least in the lyrics of my song "Little Green Man." Here's the first verse, to refresh your memory:

At Cambridge, a grad student named Jocelyn Bell

Detected a signal. The tale I must tell.

All regular pulses, the spectrum they span,

To all indications a Little Green Man.

Yes, *that* Jocelyn, discoverer of the pulsar. A discovery a half century ago, which ultimately garnered a Nobel Prize -- not for Jocelyn, but rather for her research advisor, Prof. Antony Hewish. That's it was like for women in the physical sciences in the nineteen sixties.

For her own part, Jocelyn has always underplayed having been denied her due. She was just the graduate student, she insists, so Hewish deserved first author status in their paper in Nature. That's just the way things were back then, she says, with no hint of resentment, or any indication that she feels sexism played a role in the oversight. Besides, she's had a successful academic career, so why dwell on the past?

In September, Jocelyn finally received long-overdue recognition for what was probably her most significant scientific contribution, in the form of the \$3 million Special Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics. This award has only ever been granted three times (a fellow recipient is the late Prof. Stephen Hawking), and is just as prestigious as (and more lucrative than) the prize that bears Alfred Nobel's name.

"It's about f***ing time," I said to my wife when she told me the news, and Muriel agreed. So, I hope, does Jocelyn (though she would never express her thoughts so crudely, because she is a humble and modest Quaker). In fact, Jocelyn is donating all of her prize money to a scholarship fund for underrepresented minorities to study Physics. "I don't need a Porsche," insists Jocelyn (possibly a not-so-subtle jab at me, since that's what I drive). "I don't have an affluent lifestyle." Perhaps one of those scholarship recipients will be the woman who makes the next big astrophysics discovery. Hopefully, she won't have to wait a half-century to be recognized.

SETI League president Richard Factor, on hearing the news, suggested it was time to add to my song from long ago. So I did. Here, then, is its new penultimate verse:

A half of a century slowly would pass

'Ere Jocelyn would earn recognition at last.

'Twas not a Nobel, but much greater in size

At three million dollars: the new Breakthrough Prize.

At long last, Jocelyn's story gets the happy ending it deserves. It's about f***ing time.

Guest Editorial

Why Don't We Answer Your Emails?

by Muriel Hykes

A lesson about schizophrenia and why organizations and government agencies don't respond to your urgent letters detailing paranormal sightings:

Some of you may have heard of the "crazy rainbow lady." She made a YouTube video talking about how she saw a rainbow in a water sprinkler. She included video of it. She concluded that "**they**" (probably extraterrestrials) must be putting some (gay) toxins in the water to make it do that. No sane person would evaluate that statement as "true" or even "possible." To the schizophrenic mind, all things are possible. People who run observatories get worried queries every month from people who just now noticed that the moon is visible during the daytime! (GASP!) Combine poor observational skills, low educational level, and the inability to think critically, and even "mentally normal" people can come to bad conclusions.

Schizophrenia is a terrible disease. It robs you of frontal lobe activity. The frontal lobe is where the 'differentiator' (so to speak,) is located. This differentiator takes in a piece of information and weighs its characteristics. It then "decides" whether it makes sense or not. In schizophrenics and schizoid personalities, *all* incoming information makes equal sense.

Let's say a man and his wife 'see' a freaking huge UFO right outside the gates of a facility, with recordings and sensors. (This actually happened recently, and the observer emailed me.) Hundreds of cars and trucks pass by in the eight minutes the couple claims to have watched it. Now, upon learning that **nobody** else saw it, the person with a functioning frontal lobe would say, "Damn, I gotta' lay off that absinthe! (LSD, shrooms, Benadryl, etc.)"

A person with a malfunctioning frontal lobe would conclude a number of different possibilities, none of which make any sense to a sane person. (The aliens didn't want anyone else to see it. The government erased the tapes. People saw it but had their minds wiped.) Often, you can see the hallmark

of paranoid schizophrenic interpretation in the elevation of that person in their minds. (I'm special. The aliens were speaking directly to me.)

The saddest part is that the victims of malfunctioning frontal lobes really believe they *saw* or *heard* what they claim. They butt their heads against anyone who tries to tell them they were hallucinating. They cannot believe their explanation doesn't **make sense** to other people.

Everyone, from actresses to Prime Ministers, has heard from schizophrenics who see or hear things all the time. My own aunt, a paranoid schizophrenic attributed her smoker's cough to "demons choking her." She frequently wrote to and tried to visit J. Edgar Hoover. Many famous murderers have been schizophrenic. If you look at their justifications, they're always what neurotypical people call "crazy."

And so it is with SETI science. We who try to develop observational techniques for studying measurable, repeatable phenomena are constantly confronted by people who embrace their personal versions of reality. Which is not to say that *all* who observe unusual phenomena are mentally ill. Rather, it is those who insist that there is only *one* correct interpretation of the unknown whose claims are unlikely to merit a response. Their minds are made up, and nothing we say, do, measure, or test will dissuade them.

So, if you're reading this and have an incredible story to tell, I hope this helps you understand why your frenzied attempts to interest someone "high up" in your story may have been ignored. Sorry. We just don't have the time to chase after fiction, because after all, that's what it is. I KNOW it seems really real to you. Unfortunately, we can't help that.

(The intended audience for this will probably assume I'm part of a massive government cover-up, instead of just an old sick woman in the middle of nowhere.)

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in editorials are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily reflect the position of The SETI League, Inc., its Trustees, officers, Advisory Board, members, donors, or commercial sponsors.

Press Release:

SETI League Director Joins International Astronomical Union

Little Ferry, NJ., 20 October 2018 -- Dr. H. Paul Shuch, founding Executive Director of the nonprofit, membership supported SETI League, was recently elected to membership in the prestigious International Astronomical Union (IAU). Though he doesn't consider himself an astronomer, the retired Professor of Physics and Engineering has made significant contributions to the fields of radio astronomy and the scientific Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), through his leadership in instrumentation design and observational research.

Headquartered in Paris, the IAU was founded in 1919. Its mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation. Its individual Members in 107 countries worldwide — structured into Divisions, Commissions, and Working Groups — are professional astronomers from all over the world, at the Ph.D. level and beyond, who are active in professional research and education in astronomy.

Long a full member of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA), Prof. Shuch felt that the IAU's emphasis on observational astronomy would allow him to continue making technical contributions to the art and science of radio astronomy in his retirement. Though remaining an IAA member, he has stepped down from his various leadership roles within the IAA SETI Permanent Committee, in order to afford himself more time to participate in IAU activities. Shuch also continues as Executive Director of the SETI League, on an Emeritus basis.

The key activity of the IAU is the organization of scientific meetings. Every year the IAU sponsors nine international IAU Symposia. The IAU Symposium Proceedings series is the flagship of the IAU publications. Every three years the IAU holds a General Assembly, which offers six IAU Symposia, some 15 Focus Meetings, and individual business

and scientific meetings of Divisions, Commissions, and Working Groups. The proceedings of Focus meetings are published in the Astronomy in Focus series. The triennial reports of the Divisions and Commissions are published in the Transactions of the IAU - A series. The reports of the GA business meetings are published in the Transactions of the IAU - B series.

Among the other tasks of the IAU are the definition of fundamental astronomical and physical constants; unambiguous astronomical nomenclature; promotion of educational activities in astronomy; and informal discussions on the possibilities for future international large-scale facilities. Furthermore, the IAU serves as the internationally recognized authority for assigning designations to celestial bodies and surface features on them.

"I consider it an honor to have been elected by my colleagues to IAU membership," says Shuch. "My only regret is that I did not join this august body a dozen years ago. If I had, I might have been able to use my voice and energies to help prevent Pluto's demotion from planetary status."

Largely using radio telescopes and optical telescopes, SETI scientists seek to determine whether humankind is alone in the universe. Since Congress terminated NASA's SETI funding in 1993, The SETI League and other scientific groups have privatized the research. Amateur and professional scientists interested in participating in the search for intelligent alien life, and citizens wishing to help support it, should email our Secretary/Treasurer at [heather at setileague dot org](mailto:heather@setileague.org), check the SETI League Web site at <http://www.setileague.org/>, or contact The SETI League, Inc. membership hotline at +1 (800) TAU-SETI. Be sure to provide us with a postal address to which we will mail further information. The SETI League, Inc. is a membership-supported, non-profit [501(c)(3)], educational and scientific corporation dedicated to the scientific Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence.

Event Horizon

SearchLites readers are apprised of the following conferences and meetings at which SETI-related information will be presented. League members are invited to check our World Wide Web site (www.setileague.org) under *Event Horizon*, or email to us at info@setileague.org, to obtain further details. Members are also encouraged to send in information about upcoming events of which we may be unaware.

February 15 - 17, 2019: *Boskone 56* Science Fiction Convention, Boston MA.

March 22 - 24, 2019: *Zenkaikon 2019*, Lancaster PA.

April 14, 2019, 1300 EDT: Twenty-Fifth SETI League Annual Membership Meeting, Little Ferry, NJ.

May 24 - 27, 2019: *Balticon 53* Baltimore Science Fiction society Annual Convention, Baltimore MD.

July 11 - 14, 2019: *Readercon 30*, Quincy MA.

July 12 - 14, 2019: *Shore Leave 41*, Baltimore MD.

August 15 - 19, 2019: *77th World Science Fiction Convention*, Dublin, Ireland

September 13 - 15, 2019: *Albicon 2019*, Albany NY.

October 18 - 20, 2019: *Capclave 2019*, Rockville MD.

October 21 - 25, 2019: *70th International Astronautical Congress*, Washington DC.

November 8 - 10, 2019: *Philcon 2019*, Cherry Hill NJ.

August 15 - 23, 2020: *43rd COSPAR Scientific Assembly*, Sydney Australia. ❖



SETI League members are encouraged to nominate SETI-relevant websites for our monthly SETI SuperStar Award. Nominating emails to our Awards Committee may be sent to: Awards_at_setileague_dot_org. Please be sure to indicate the URL of the candidate website you are nominating, and a brief explanation as to why you consider the site worthy of recognition.



Want a painless way to support The SETI League? Browse to www.smile.amazon.com. In the "Pick your own charitable organization" box, just type in "SETI League." Now, every time you shop Amazon, they will donate a half percent of your purchase price to SETI research!



We are pleased to congratulate SETI League members Tony Agnello (left) and Richard Factor, who recently received a Technical GRAMMY award from the Recording Academy, for their invention of pitch-shifting and pitch-correction technology (now generically known as Auto-tune).

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Patricia Margaret Sterns, a longtime leader in space law. For decades she provided guidance to the international community of scientists engaged in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), as it contemplated the legal issues related to the detection of life beyond Earth. Ms. Sterns is remembered by friends and colleagues for her keen intellect and generous spirit as she grappled with challenging issues at the intersection of space exploration and law. For nearly forty years, she was a practicing attorney in Phoenix, Arizona. For two decades during this period, Ms. Sterns also served as judge pro tempore for the Superior Court of Arizona, County of Maricopa. She was a member of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA), as well as the IAA SETI Committee. She served on the Board of Directors of the International Institute of Space Law, and her many honors included the IAA's Social Science Book Award. She was born on January 30, 1952 and passed away on May 6, 2018. She is survived by her husband and law partner, Leslie I. Tennen.



We are saddened to learn of the death in early October, 2018 of physicist and Nobel laureate Leon Lederman, former director of Fermi Lab and co-discoverer of the neutrino. He was 96, and in recent years had suffered from dementia. >>



Bruno Vincent via Getty Images

The SETI League mourns the passing on March 14 (International Pi Day) of Prof. Stephen Hawking, at the age of 76. Hawking remained arguably the world's most productive and best known theoretical physicist, despite living for an unprecedented 56 years with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).





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SETI League memberships are issued for the *Calendar Year*. Please check the expiration date indicated on your mailing label. If it reads December 2018 or earlier, you have already expired, and *must* renew your SETI League membership **now!** Please fill out and return this page along with your payment.

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Annual memberships are issued for the calendar year. Those processed in January through April expire on 31 December of that year. Those processed in September through December expire on 31 December of the *following* year. Those members joining in May through August should remit half the annual dues indicated, and will expire on 31 December of the same year.

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2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (specify)	\$20	\$27
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T-shirts, specify M, L, or XL	\$15	\$22
SETI Nerd Gift Set (one each Mouse Pad, Pocket Protector, <i>Project Cyclops</i> and <i>Tech Manual</i>) at 20% Savings to <u>Members Only</u> :	\$30	\$45

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