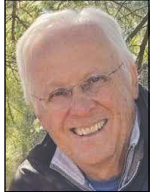


Cosmic ‘Hamburger’ galaxy steals show in Leo triplet

On clear spring nights, tucked within the constellation Leo, lies one of the most visually striking galaxies in the sky: the Hamburger Galaxy (NGC 3628). It is part of the famous Leo Triplet, as we discussed last month. Sharing its neighborhood with the elegant Messier 65 and Messier 66, NGC 3628 often steals the show for astrophotographers. It is located 35 million light-years away.



Carlos Rotellar

The nickname “Hamburger Galaxy” comes from its unmistakable appearance. Seen edge-on from Earth, a thick, dark band of interstellar dust slices through its glowing disk, making it resemble a cosmic sandwich. This dust lane is a dense region filled with gas and dust—the raw material for future star formation. Stretching roughly 100,000 light-years across, the Hamburger Galaxy is similar in size to our own Milky Way. Its edge-on orientation gives us a rare perspective. Instead of looking down onto spiral arms, we see the galaxy’s structure in profile. Its thin disk, central bulge, and dramatic dust features are all layered along a single line of sight.

What makes NGC 3628 especially fascinating is its interaction with its neighbors. Gravitational forces between the



The "Hamburger Galaxy" (NGC 3628). It is part of the famous Leo Triplet.

galaxies in the Leo Triplet have stretched the Hamburger Galaxy, pulling out an enormous tidal tail—over 300,000 light-years long. This faint stream of stars and gas is invisible to the eye but reveals itself in long-exposure astrophotography. These interactions actively reshape galaxies, triggering

bursts of star formation and redistributing mass. The Hamburger Galaxy is a snapshot of this slow-motion cosmic dance, reminding us that galaxies are anything but static. They stretch, twist, and interact, creating structures that, from our vantage point, can look surprisingly familiar—a cosmic

sandwich shaped by gravity, time and the grand mechanics of the Universe.

– Dr. Carlos Rotellar is a Bowling Green nephrologist who has had an interest in astrophotography and has been taking images of the universe from his driveway for several years. Website: Skyastrophotos.com.

At 91, Dale ‘Grey Beard’ Sanders reclaims record as oldest hiker to complete the Appalachian Trail

By **HOLLY RAMER** and **ROBERT F. BUKATY**
Associated Press

MILLINOCKET, Maine — More than 14 million older adults fall every year in the U.S., perhaps none so often as 91-year-old Dale Sanders.

By his count, Sanders fell 71 times while reclaiming his record as the oldest hiker to complete the Appalachian Trail. Six were what he calls hard falls, including one that led to a brief hospitalization and another just 200 yards from the finish. But none were enough to permanently divert him from the 2,193-mile (3,530-kilometer) trail that runs between Springer Mountain in Georgia and Mount Katahdin in Maine.



ROBERT F. BUKATY / AP

Appalachian Trail hiker Dale Sanders wades across Big Wilson Stream on the 100-Mile Wilderness north of Monson, Maine, Wednesday, July 29, 2026.

While Sanders’ first journey was easier than he expected, the latest was considerably harder. Despite six months of training, he said he wasn’t in the best condition when he returned to the trail.

“And even today, I feel that I should probably be in better shape than I am,” he said last month. “But I just have to always go back and say, ‘But I am 91, so I’m blazing new ground hiking long distances like this.’”

In June, Sanders was descending Killington Mountain in central Vermont when he fell forward in a boulder field, scraping his legs, arms and hands.

“Thank God nothing got broken, but I was banged up,” he said. “I didn’t rub the blood off, I just kept hiking.”

Weeks later, his left arm went

numb and he ended up at a Maine hospital. What doctors initially feared was a stroke turned out to be a pinched nerve, but though he was soon cleared to resume hiking, he considered giving up.

He returned home to Tennessee in early August to be with his wife, whose mother had just died, and she convinced him to press on.

His mission changed along the way

Some of Sanders’ best days were in Pennsylvania, where he enjoyed well-maintained trails and treats delivered by “trail angels.”

“When people are taking care of you and bringing you caramel frappes on the trail, the rocks don’t matter,” he said.

In fact, Sanders has become something of a star among

fellow hikers. Thousands more follow him on social media, which surprised Sanders and caused him to expand his mission beyond reclaiming his record.

“I wanna get it back, but right now, that’s secondary,” he said. “Right now, what’s the most important thing - and it’s one of the things that surprised me – is that people are motivated and given encouragement by my efforts.”

Meredith Ewenson, who met Sanders in June while leading a hike in New Hampshire for 10 other women, said he embodied not just the idea that anything is possible, but that the journey matters most.

“Seeing it in real life is something that I’ll definitely remember forever,” she said.

Ewenson said her group spotted Sanders early in the morning, but it wasn’t until he blazed by them hours later that they saw the Grey Beard logo on his T-shirt and realized who he was. They caught up with him that night at an Appalachian Mountain Club hut, arriving around 4 p.m.

“I got here at noon,” he told them.

The next morning, she and others cheered as Sanders performed a “victory dance” before setting off again.

“My first thought was ‘Wow, his mobility is insane,’” Ewenson said. “His face on that body just doesn’t make any sense. My brain couldn’t compute how he was so impossibly fit for being

See **HIKER**, 9B

The Gospel according to Megan

Over the years, I’ve written about Morgan many times, keeping notes on many of the conversations Morgan and I have had, so I’d never forget the things she told me.

They are the words of a young woman with a wisdom deeper than I am able to understand. She spoke these things in casual conversation, with no idea that her words are extraordinary. We call them “Morganisms.”

Some of the following paragraphs were spoken directly after she was placed under hospice care. Here are a few of my favorites:



Sean Dietrich

“I don’t think it’s fair that life is measured in years. There are some people who live many years and don’t do much with their lives. There are also people who live a short time and do a lot of stuff. I think life should be measured in the amount of love you collect. And the amount of love you give. If that’s how life was measured, I would be very, very old and very wealthy.”

“Life is too short to fight with people. I’m hard to fight with. I just stay silent. Let the other person win.”

“Every day is a chance to make a new best friend.”

“I’ve heard that in heaven there is no time. No clock, no future, no past. Only eternity. So, since the future and past are all happening at the same time, this means everyone is already there in heaven. I’m there. You’re there. My mom and dad are there. All my loved ones are there. We’re all in heaven. Right now. All the people who are alive right now on earth, they’re waiting for each other in eternity.”

“This means that as soon as I close my eyes in death, time won’t be holding you here. So the first thing I’m going to see is all my friends and all my loved ones. You’ll be there, too. I’ll see you instantly, on the other side; it will be like we were never apart. Then maybe you and I will laugh together and wonder why we ever took earthly life so seriously.”

“Up there, we’ll be perfect. No more chronic pain. I’ll be able to get a full breath. And I’ll finally be able to see.”

“Don’t live like you’re dying. Die like you really lived.”

“Whenever it’s my birthday, instead of my friends singing ‘Happy Birthday,’ I ask them to sing ‘Amazing Grace’ because after all, it’s not my birthday that allows me to stand here. It’s grace.”

“I hope they have Kraft mac and cheese in heaven. The blue box.”

“Of all the things I can’t do anymore, I think I miss seeing most of all. The beauty of this earth is something people take for granted. Seeing is so great. Trees, birds, skies, stars, colors. Is there anything better than sight? If I could see like sighted people can, I would never close my eyes.”

“I don’t want a funeral. I want a party.”

“I recently went skydiving with my friend Kylie. I was in the beginning stages of sepsis,

See **GOSPEL**, 9B