

Angel Nebula a stellar Christmas reflection

This Christmas the sky greets us with the Angel Nebula, which is a reflection nebula located 2,700 light years away in the constellation Monoceros (The Unicorn). It was discovered by William Herschel on October 16, 1784.

The Monoceros constellation is one of the fainter northern constellations that is surrounded by three winter stars known as “The Winter Triangle” asterism. Those stars are Betelgeuse in the constellation Orion, Sirius in the constellation Canis Major and Procyon in the constellation Canis Minor.

Sirius is a binary star and is the brightest star in the winter sky. Its name comes from the Greek language meaning glowing or scorching. It is best seen between the months of December and February.

The Angel Nebula is the brightest part of the Monoceros R2 (Mon

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CARLOS ROTELLAR

R2) giant molecular cloud, which is one of the closest star forming regions to the Sun. This nebula resembles an angel spreading the wings.

In this photo we can also see several bluish reflection nebulae, a red emission nebula containing mostly hydrogen, and dark areas of dense gas and dust.

A constellation (set of stars in latin) is an official group of stars creating a pattern in the night sky. An asterism is a group of stars that form a pattern in the sky and has a popular name. There are 88 official constellations with well-defined boundaries, and many of them are very old. Ancient people looked at the stars and saw

mythical figures, beasts and other cultural forms and used them to name the constellations.

Asterisms are relatively new and are formed by stars either in the same constellation or from stars of different constellations. The asterism “The Winter Triangle” is formed by three stars from different constellations, as we discussed above. A well-known example of an asterism, formed by stars of the same constellation, is the Big Dipper. This asterism is formed by seven stars from the constellation Ursa Major (Great Bear), and is easily seen in the north sky all year long.

Merry Christmas!

– 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: www.Skyastrophotos.com.



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The Angel Nebula is a reflection nebula located 2,700 light years away in the constellation Monoceros



PHOTOS BY SIDDIQUILLAH ALIZAI / AP

A general view of a luxury house is seen in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Sept. 23.

LIVING LAVISHLY

Thanks to peace, two unexpected words are echoing across Afghanistan’s capital

By RIAZAT BUTT
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — In a town that has been through it all and is clawing its way back, a man named Omidullah is looking to hit paydirt.

The Kabul real estate agent is selling a nine-bedroom, nine-bath, white-and-gold villa in the Afghan capital. On the roof’s gable, glittering Arabic script tempts buyers and brokers with the word “mashallah” — “God has willed it.”

The villa is listed at \$450,000, a startling number in a country where more than half of the population relies on humanitarian aid to survive, most Afghans don’t have bank accounts, and mortgages are rare. Yet the offers are coming in.

“It’s a myth that Afghans don’t have money,” Omidullah said. “We have very big businessmen who have big businesses abroad. There are houses here worth millions of dollars.”

In Kabul, a curious thing is happening to fuel the high-end real estate market. Peace, it seems, is driving up property prices.

MANY ARE COMING HOME

People who spent years living and working abroad are returning home, keen to take advantage of the country’s much-improved security and



A man washes his hands inside a luxury house in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan.

stability after decades of war, destruction and infrastructure decay. They include Afghans escaping deportation campaigns in Iran and Pakistan who are taking their cash with them.

Mortgages are rare because banks don’t have the deposits to facilitate lending. Afghans buy in cash or use the “geerawi option” — when someone provides a fixed sum to a landlord in return for living on his property and staying there until the landlord returns the money.

People were afraid to invest in Kabul before the Taliban

takeover, according to another real estate agent, Ghulam Mohammed Haqdoost. But the country’s rulers have created better conditions for the property market in more ways than one.

The city is less violent since the Taliban transitioned from insurgency to authority and foreign forces withdrew, although armored vehicles, checkpoints and militarized compounds remain common sights.

The Taliban, sticklers for an intricate bureaucracy, have pledged to stamp out corruption and regulate legal

and commercial matters. That means no more dealing with warlords or bribing local officials for land purchases or construction projects.

Haqdoost is happy with how easily and quickly things are getting done under the new administration.

“House prices have risen by almost 40%,” he said. “In the last three years, we have sold almost 400 properties. It wasn’t like that before.”

For that reason, times are good. Business is good for Haqdoost, who employs 200

My final column

All I ever wanted to do someday was to write sports for a newspaper. Oh, I even dreamed about covering the Olympics. I knew who Red Smith was, and Earl Ruby, maybe the best ever, was a distant relative through marriage. I even went to his house in Louisville one Saturday morning and sat down to just ask a few questions. I was so starstruck I don’t remember one thing we talked about. For sure I don’t remember asking a question.

I knew this day would come. I dreaded it, but at the same time looked forward to it. In my head I wrote the story at least 10 times ... maybe more. It would be my last Out & About column.

For 22 years, I have written this column for several newspapers from Corbin to Paducah and points in between. Beginning in 2002, I crisscrossed Kentucky, personally visiting small town editors showing them sample columns of what I wanted to write about.

I had cut my teeth growing up writing sports on two papers in Elizabethtown, and later in life published an advertising paper in Russellville at a newspaper owned by journalism legend Al Smith. So, with this you could say I knew the language.

At one time over the years, there were two dozen papers carrying my monthly “Out & About” column. But sadly, things began to turn south for the print media. And over the last several years newspapers have suffered lost revenue and with it a decline in pages, and even closing papers themselves.

The newspaper for over 100 years is literally the backbone of a community. It’s the watchdog. It tells the readers everything. But, equally as important is an informer. I’ve heard it said and so have you: “Don’t do anything you would not want to read in the newspaper.”

Traveling across Kentucky writing about places to visit, things to do and most of all people, my columns have been well received. Phone calls, emails and even letters have come my way over the years. What a run I’ve had writing this column in an effort to capture your imagination. At the same time, I’ve written 22 books, of which 20 have been published. Add in a couple of statewide magazines and I count myself to be very blessed.

Over my writing career, which began in high school, into college at Western Kentucky University and the University of Kentucky, then the military, before a stint in the home office advertising department of one of the largest insurance companies in the world, I have met thousands. All of this before moving to Bowling Green in 1971.

The people ... it’s the people who make the difference in a story. Mostly connecting their past with the present is what makes a reader say, “I didn’t know that.”

I’ve been described as a storyteller. That’s the way I’ve always tried to write. Finding a good story has always been my goal ... writing about something I know people will want to read. It sounds simple. I guess my style could be described as my fingerprint.

My 13 years as the executive director of the Hilltopper Athletic Foundation at Western Kentucky University, while working with Wes Strader on the Hilltoppers Basketball Network, opened the door to friendships in the sports world across the nation. And broadcasting basketball in iconic places like Madison Square Garden, Assembly Hall, The Forum, Carrier Dome, the Capitol Center,

OUT & ABOUT



GARY WEST