

TO THE MEMORY OF CLYDE TOMBAUGH, 1906-1997.

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Clyde discovered the planet Pluto in 1930 at the age of 24. He also established by means of his thorough exploration of the firmament that it is extremely unlikely that any other solar planets exist.

New Mexico State University had gathered in one building all of the Research Professors from various departments. These included Art Kruse, Mathematician, and Walter Lwowski, Chemist together with astronomers Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Reta Beebe and spouses, they constituted Clyde's lunch group. Clyde presided in a very democratic way over this highly scholarly group who all became comedians during lunch. The laughter was almost non-stop with everyone making puns whenever possible, the ringleader being Clyde himself. I was privileged to join this group when Walter brought me to lunch one day as his guest. For the next decade we lunched together every weekday. The louder the groans, the more a pun was enjoyed and appreciated. I enjoyed these lunches so much that I stayed at New Mexico State University in order to have lunch with the group each day.

Now I get to the point. We had many discussions about the possibility of extra-terrestrial life. Clyde always expressed total certainty that among the billions of stars in galaxies, super galaxies, and clusters, there must be many stars that have planets. He further frequently expressed his conviction that among all these planets that he was sure existed, there must be very many that could support life of one kind or another. He was also of the most confirmed opinion that some intelligent was included amongst these.

Clyde founded the astronomy and the geology departments at NMSU. He was most knowledgeable about geography. He was a great and humble man who thoroughly deserved all of the acclaim he received.

One day I was complaining to the "lunch bunch" that I had received twenty e-mail letters, six inches of mail in my university mail box, two letters among them being mathematical papers to referee for publication. Clyde blustered and proclaimed loudly, "do you think you get a lot of mail? I get so much mail that it's downright astronomical!" Everyone laughed heartily. This was one of the few times when Clyde made a wonderful play on words and did not realize it.

I composed a poem for his 89th birthday and here it is. What a great guy and we all miss him.

To our good friend Clyde Tombaugh

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(22 stanzas of 2 lines each, which rhyme but do not always scan)

On the Fourth of February 1906

A little bundle was sent who would do some great tricks

If it had been 1907

I'd say the bundle was sent from heaven

Clyde arrived into the Tombaugh family

But could not yet speak, so he did not deliver a homily

Nobody could know then that world-renowned he would become

And that to no evil temptation he would succumb

He likes to eat his bread with butter

He set the whole wide world a-flutter

When in 1930 the planet Pluto he discovered

This remarkable phenomenon was thus uncovered

By an almost infinite amount of hard work

From its arduous nature he did never shirk

Now we have the privilege and pleasure of lunching

With him, and hear his hilarious puns while munching

He often likes to eat baked fish

Which shows he has good taste in a dish

His mind is witty and so quick

He likes to spread his butter thick

He doesn't like to waste a thing

Uneaten bread homeward he will bring

He likes his coffee with some cream

When he makes a great pun he will beam

A great football analysis he can make
Showing up the coach's stupid mistake

He makes good jokes about a crow
And this list seems to grow and grow

He loves to make an outrageous pun
And give us all a lot of fun

When bad enough they make us groan
And that's the theme of this here poem

He always likes to grind his lens
To perfection with no amends

He built his own big telescope
And doesn't sit around and mope

His Patsy is his perfect wife
And with her he's enjoying life

When he was a lad of 88
We came here to celebrate

Now that he is 89
We're all glad we can say "he is a friend of mine"

**So here's a great big toast to Clyde
From whom Pluto could not hide!!!!!!!**