

This has been a quiet month with growing cloudiness and health concerns.

Planets: Pluto Day was February 18. This was 90 years after the dwarf planet was discovered by Clyde Tombaugh using a 13" astrograph telescope at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona. Amazingly, both dates were Tuesdays.

Presentations: I spoke on "Medieval Astronomy: What Dante Knew in 1300 AD" at Sperry on February 28. I chose this date because when he wrote *The Divine Comedy* Dante was concerned that calendar reform was needed beyond the Julian Calendar's leap year scheme. The precession of the equinoxes had already let March 21 slide to March 13 and people were worried that January would "altogether unwinter itself." It wasn't until 1582 that the Gregorian calendar finally fixed the problem. By that time, they needed to drop 11 days to get the calendar back to matching the sun's seasonal path through the zodiac. Riots ensued.

The retrograde motion of the planets was modeled by epicycles powered by angels' wings.

Other: John Kozimbo reported that *Ramzi Saber*, a junior at Jose Marti STEM Academy high school in Union City has possibly discovered an *exoplanet* 113 light years away. He used thermal imaging software and data from MIT to show both the star's core and heat at the center of the planet. Last summer he attended an astronomy summer camp at Seton Hall.

These monthly research reports (September 2014 – present) can be found at asterism.org/committees/research.

Respectfully, Mary Lou West, Research Chair

