

Health & SCIENCE

ROBOT MISSION TAKES CLOSE LOOK AT MARS

NASA engineers were taking steps to preserve good communications with the Mars Pathfinder after losing contact with the plucky spacecraft over the weekend.

Controllers were back in touch Monday with the spacecraft after communication problems held up weather data and pictures from the red planet.

"What a difference a day makes," said project manager Brian Muirhead at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Engineers used the renewed contact to radio up new software

to avert the computer resets that plagued the mission on July 10, 11 and 14. Then they spent hours deciding which rocks the Sojourner rover would visit after moving away from a whitish rock called Scooby Doo.

Plans for the martian day that began Monday night and ended this morning included retrieving a chemical analysis of Scooby Doo, more of a 12-color panoramic view of the Mars landscape, and new images of Mars' moon Phobos.

Some of those images and scientific data were to be released at a news conference today.

Muirhead said the weekend's problems, unrelated to the computer resets, were caused by "a bunch of subtle things" on the ground, most involving the Deep Space Network of radio antennas in California, Spain and Australia.

Muirhead said controllers decided that from now on, after turning on the spacecraft transmitter, they will wait a bit longer to turn on the antennas. That should improve their chance of catching the spacecraft's radio signals.

Muirhead noted the network is using a new, state-of-the-art digital receiver that can bring down

twice as much data, but it has to be "very precisely tuned, like a high-performance automobile."

Scientists got no science data Saturday because of a problem with the way they were using the antennas. On Sunday, they got only a weak Pathfinder signal and then, hours later, only silence.

Controllers regained communications with the Pathfinder's low-power antenna Sunday night and the high-power antenna on Monday morning. Scientists didn't actually lose any data; they just need to retrieve it.

A lighter side of the dark side

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

That special time has come again for my "Good Summer Reading" act. Lets begin with an extremely interesting article in 'Harpers Magazine' for July: "Black Letters On A White Page," Vince Passaro, contributing editor.

This peripatetic critic, using what is described as a new compendium of African American Ziteratur, a world of Politics", attempts a tour de force in the genre but is limited by space to an occasionally perceptive commentary on his favorite black authors. Several are 'bigger than life' and we agree with him - too big; and too prolific to be taken as seriously as their insight might properly warrant.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. is said to sit atop "the world of Afro-American studies which over the last twenty years had become enormously influential within American universities and, more recently in the culture at large."

I'll reserve an opinion on that but will agree with this contributing editor of Harper's Magazine that Gate's-edited, "The Norton Anthology of African American Literature" has had "an enormous success; at least among the reviewers (W.W. Norton. 2,665 pages \$49.95).

Gates, Chair of the Afro-American Studies Department at Harvard University had a co-editor on this anthology, Cornel West ("Race Matters"), but that connection is the only attribution provided in the entire six page article. I beg your pardon, West is credited as the co-author of, "another book", Period!

The litany of Gates' productions goes on for paragraphs: "The dictionary of Global Culture, ed., Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man; Reading Black, ed; Reading Feminist, ed; the Complete Works of Zora Neale Hurston, ed., Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers, ed; African American Women Writers 1910-1940."

In an unusual inversion of the critics role, Mr Passaro would seem to damn Gates not with the conventional "faint praise", but with a paroxysm of super-praise; "Gates ranks as the most able writer and critic in his field, and one of the best in literary academia. He is a smooth prose

stylist and a reliably intelligent if rarely skeptical critic..."

I certainly agree with the last commentary. Gates puts it out there with the smooth, commanding advocacy one would expect of a Harvard department head at the zenith of his literary career, but being a "rarely skeptical critic" is the price one pays in the eyes of a demanding public, "maintaining the position of chief spokesman for such a heavily institutional movement as multicultural literary studies also demands a continual quick-footed dance with political orthodoxy..." Passaro wraps up Gates with the comment that, "the black artist, writer, politician cannot define himself freely...works within a role established for him."

Harper's resident critic turns to Albert Murray, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin: "they forced themselves beyond the constraints of white culture; they understood in a deeper sense their true relation to it (thus can Albert Murray admire Thomas Mann and Ellison can praise William Faulkner).

They came to value their own worth and to recognize the highly individual and essential nonracial difficulty of knowing their own souls. (Gates and West do not?)

Readers may remember that on June 26 and July 3 of last year I wrote a two-part article for The Portland Observer, "The Blue Devils of Nada." This was a review of the book by that name published by Albert Murray (pantheon).

Here is a black man whose lifetime meditation on the blues is both intellectual or earthy as required. Washington Post Book World had the following to say about Murray who has been O'Connor Professor of Literature at Colgate University and Writer In Residence at Emory.

"Albert Murray is one of the best kept secrets in contemporary American literature. He is our premier writer about jazz and the blues, and incisive literary critic, a social commentator of wide-ranging vision."

And Vince Passaro paints Murray as "suspicious of the reaction to such lovable black figures as the poet Maya Angelow - and the award of a Nobel Prize to Toni Morrison". This man is worth reading, Murray.

Medical lawsuit follows sex change operation

A transsexual has sued her former employer in a bid to have a hormone condition resulting from her sex change declared a federally protected disability.

The condition is hypogonadism, which means there is diminished estrogen in the bloodstream. It is com-

mon in women, but Margaret O'Hartigan, a 44-year-old transsexual, said she became afflicted because of her 1979 sex change operation.

O'Hartigan and the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries believe she was discriminated against when

her employer provided insurance that covered hormone treatments for other women, but wouldn't purchase insurance that covered the therapy for transsexuals.

The former secretary filed a federal lawsuit last week against the Portland law firm VavRosky, MacColl, Olson, Doherty & Miller. She wants the court to declare her condition a disability protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The ADA specifically excludes transsexualism as a disability, but O'Hartigan said Tuesday that the law doesn't refer to physical impairments resulting from sex changes.

"I'm legally female... my Oregon driver's license says I'm female, and I'm denied health coverage for females," she said. "What happens if I develop breast cancer? Am I going to be denied surgery to save my life because I'm a transsexual?"

A favorable ruling could mean other medical conditions stemming from voluntary acts would be covered under disability law, said Ken Lehrman, an attorney and the director of the University of Oregon's equal opportunity office.

Courts already have interpreted

the Americans with Disabilities Act to protect some voluntary conditions. Lehrman said a 1993 ruling in Rhode Island said morbid obesity is a protected disability.

What O'Hartigan must prove is that her disability substantially impaired a major life activity, such as working, Lehrman said. The law firm has denied discriminating against O'Hartigan.

Without twice-a-month injections of Depo-Estradiol, O'Hartigan said she becomes emotional and easily upset. She said she paid \$25 per month for hormone treatments during the 19 months at the law firm.

Now unemployed, she receives the treatment through the Oregon health plan for the poor.

This spring, the state labor and industries bureau found substantial evidence that the law firm discriminated against O'Hartigan because of her disability and fired her in May 1996 in retaliation for complaining to the state.

The agency also found that the firm hadn't tried very hard to find an insurance company that would cover her needs.

Handy Food stays with liquor battle

Continued from front

renewed. The commission agreed, but ordered restrictions imposed. The Dewalds appealed.

Even Glenn Dewald doesn't know how much the family has spent on legal fees ("a lot"), but he says it was worth it even though he wound up back where he started.

"It's important that OLCC abide by the guidelines given to them, and not abuse their power. It's important that guidelines be applied with an even hand, rather than singling out operators and applying restrictions for no apparent reason."

During the appeals process OLCC adopted a new Alcohol Impact Area Rule, allowing them to oppose restrictions on all liquor license holders in a given problem area. The restaurant, liquor and convenience store industry opposed the rule. Dewald saw it as vindication.

"It was an acknowledgement by OLCC that imposing restrictions on individual licensees isn't fair," he says. "OLCC has never imposed these rules against large chain

stores." Miller disputes this, although he can cite no examples. "Many large stores have cooperatively removed problem products from their shelves," he says. "We never received such an offer from Handy Food Mart."

The Dewalds' relationship with the Piedmont Association, never cordial, is also heating up. Glenn Dewald says the group has refused to allow him to speak at their meetings, but did allow Miller and other officials to discuss the matter at their June Meeting.

Piedmont president Nancy Lea says the group asked Dewald to defer discussion until the August board meeting. The matter was not on the June agenda, but Miller did answer questions at the meeting, which Lea did not attend.

Lea says Piedmont has taken no position on Dewald's latest request, but that the group is glad that the restrictions have been imposed.

She doesn't know if conditions near Peninsula Park have improved, as Dewald contends.

Toxicity talk

The battle to warn local residents about the polluted Columbia River Slough is being waged in a unique way this summer.

Youth from north and northeast Portland will visit beauty salons, barbers shops and nail parlors in the neighborhoods to spread the word about the dangers of eating fish from the slough.

Friday and Saturday, 45 middle and high school-aged kids will gather at the Northeast Community School to participate in interactive training with the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services and other experts in the fields of community health and environmental quality. The Urban League of Portland is sponsoring the effort as part of the upcoming Community Outreach Days.

Fish consumption from the slough persists despite findings that toxic chemicals in the fish pose a serious human health hazard. While getting information out to those who fish continues, new strategies call for reaching out to those who prepare the fish at home.

The waterway contains sewage, pesticide runoff and industrial chemicals that pose a threat to human health as well as the natural environment. The Urban League's Summer on the Columbia Slough Program empowers north and northeast Portland residents to become effective advocates for this polluted waterway and other environmental justice issues in the community.

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Larry Gibson
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