

Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday October 16 2022

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North Celestial Tree



Image Credit & Copyright: Jeff Dai (TWAN)

An ancient tree seems to reach out and touch Earth's North Celestial Pole in this well-planned night skyscape.

Consecutive exposures for the timelapse composition were recorded with a camera fixed to a tripod in the Yiwu Desert Poplar Forests in northwest Xinjiang, China.

The graceful star trail arcs reflect Earth's daily rotation around its axis. By extension, the axis of rotation leads to the center of the concentric arcs in the night sky.

Known as the North Star, bright star Polaris is a friend to northern hemisphere night sky photographers and celestial navigators alike. That's because Polaris lies very close to the North Celestial Pole on the sky. Of course it can be found at the tip of an outstretched barren branch in a postcard from a rotating planet.

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The parade armor of the king Erik XIV of Sweden



Made by Eliseus Libaerts in 1563-1564, now on display at the Dresden Armoury

Erik's major foreign policy objective was to free Sweden's Baltic Sea trade from Danish control. He first sought allies in western Europe, unsuccessfully bidding for the hand of Elizabeth I of England. Realizing the advantage of controlling ports on the eastern Baltic coast, he obtained sovereignty (1561) over Reval (now Tallinn, Est.) and its adjacent territories.

Erik's acquisitions in Estonia alarmed Frederick II, king of Denmark and Norway, who allied with Lübeck and Poland and declared war in 1563, initiating the Seven Years' War of the North. The Swedish king led his forces with moderate effectiveness and was able to gain a stalemate with Denmark in the first years of the war.

After regaining his mental composure, Erik restored the hated Persson; he then had his commoner mistress, Karin Månsdotter, crowned queen over the objections of the nobility. Duke John (later King John III), who was liberated in 1567, joined with his brother, the future Charles IX, and deposed Erik in 1568. Erik died in prison.

If I were John III I'd have tossed Erik in the clink just to get the suit of armor

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Robot Runs 100 Meters in 24.73 Seconds



<https://youtu.be/DdojWYOK0Nc>

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SpinLaunch Rocket-Flinging Launch System



SpinLaunch, a California-based start-up developing a rotating arm that can fling small satellites into near-Earth space has pulled off its 10th successful test launch in less than a year.

<https://www.space.com/spinlaunch-first-test-flight-success>

<https://www.spinlaunch.com/gallery>

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Frank Lloyd Wright, Dendriforms, and S.C. Johnson's Headquarters

From compression to expansion in a workplace 'as inspiring as any cathedral was to worship in.' Today's future built in 1939.



<https://youtu.be/yb-kYt1lpnI?t=2>

Want more Wright? <https://youtu.be/oPnDOxMXIUc>

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Nature Conservancy 2022 Photo Contest Winners



<https://bit.ly/3rRGdX3>

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September's Best Science Images

The month's sharpest science shots, selected by Nature's photo team



<https://go.nature.com/3CXuQTy>

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Would You Swim with a Robot Dolphin?



In San Jose, California, kindergarteners are sitting at the edge of an outdoor pool when a sleek two-meter-long mass breaches in front of them, water dripping off its smooth gray skin.

<https://bit.ly/3rW7cR3>

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A Veterinarian with the Proper Perspective



<https://youtu.be/UvwcIfJIyeI>

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Serpentine Elegance in Brilliant Hues



<https://bit.ly/3fXmxy4>

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Frank Lloyd Wright House Hits Market Near NYC

The home, which was completed after the architect's death, is on the market for \$1.525 million.



<https://bloom.bg/3rTVjem>

Or for the same price you could get a fetching 1500 sq. ft. fixer upper in West Hollywood if you act fast.

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2022 Weather Photographs of the Year Competition



<https://bit.ly/3EIGinA>

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Counting My Senior Blessings



Here are a few examples:

- I have everything that I wanted as a teenager, only 60 years later. I don't have to go to school or work. I get an allowance every month. I have my own pad. I don't have a curfew. I have a driver's license and my own car. The people I hang around with are not scared of getting pregnant and I don't have acne. Life is great. I changed my car horn to gunshot sounds. People get out of the way much faster now.
- Gone are the days when girls used to cook like their mothers. Now they drink like their fathers.
- I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes five years in a row. I decided to stop calling the bathroom "John" and renamed it the "Jim". I feel so much better saying I went to the Jim this morning.
- Old age is coming at a really bad time.
- When I was a child I thought "nap time" was a punishment. Now it feels like a small vacation.
- The biggest lie I tell myself is.. " I don't have to write that down, I'll remember it".
- I don't have gray hair... I have "wisdom highlights"! I'm just very wise.
- If God wanted me to touch my toes, He would've put them on my knees.
- Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.
- Why do I have to press one for English when you're just going to transfer me to someone I can't understand anyway?
- Of course, I talk to myself. Sometimes I need expert advice.
- At my age "Getting Lucky" means walking into a room and remembering what I came in there for.
- I have more friends I should send this to, but right now I can't remember their names.
- Now, I'm wondering... did I steal this meme from you, or did you steal it from me?i

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The Godwit's Long, Long Nonstop Journey

Researchers marvel at the bird's record-holding migratory flight of 7,000 or so miles from Alaska to New Zealand at this time of year. No eating or refueling along the way.



<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGqQcvdkcLGvmNGDPFtFBrZBcxD>

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The Colonoscopy Song



<https://youtu.be/nLH7xFy2EmY>

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Perseverance Surveys the Jezero Crater

NASA's Perseverance Mars Rover has arrived at an ancient delta in Jezero Crater, one of the best places on the Red Planet to search for potential signs of ancient life. The delta is an area where scientists surmise that a river once flowed billions of years ago into a

lake and deposited sediments in a fan shape.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCgwxizcpo0>

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What is School Swatting and What's Going On?

Sixteen states collectively suffered more than 90 false reports of school shooters during three weeks in September—and many appear to be connected.



<https://bit.ly/3yk2zUM>

Swatting—a prank call in which someone makes a false report to emergency services in order to get a SWAT team dispatched to a target location—has been around for more than a decade, but what we see here make the term far to gentle for what's going on and what is almost certain to happen at some point.

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All Restaurant Menus These Days

Are you allergic or actually just fussy?



<https://youtu.be/yGnoFE-zKY>

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Thangs

In last week's Ode, all of you got the photo of the Barn Owl Thang, but some of you were robbed of the poem because of a goof by your less than intrepid Ode Leader. So here it is...along with my apologies.

BARN OWL THANG

In Greece there was a goddess of wisdom, Athena,
Seen often in temples and sometimes arenas.
In Rome she was goddess of wisdom, Minerva,
Where she counseled the Romans on their habitual inertia.
On her shoulder there rode a pie-faced owl,
A better companion than all other fowl,
Because of superior keen eye sight and hearing
His advice to Athena kept her audiences cheering.
A monkey face and a sharp curved beak
And smaller than his cousins but no pipsqueak.
His home is in barns and attics everywhere
And there's much to be caught by his long steady stare.
His eyes and his ears are key to this small owl's success
And his place in history is Barn Owl Thang's noblesse.

Francie Troy

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"Top Gun: Maverick" Darkstar at Edwards AFB Airshow.



Darkstar parked next to an SR-71
Tom Demerly for The Aviationist

As already extensively reported, the Darkstar hypersonic test aircraft featured in the opening scenes of blockbuster "Top Gun: Maverick" movie was on static display at Edwards Air Force Base during today's Aerospace Valley Open House, Air Show and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Expo.

The first images of the movie prop have been released by the official 2022 Aerospace Valley Air Show social media account:

The Darkstar full-scale model design saw the involvement of the Skunk Works and its team of conceptual designers, engineers and aircraft model developers, who brought together their expertise to quickly have a realistic aircraft forebody model with a working cockpit, while also keeping it structurally sound throughout filming.

The Darkstar made famous by the movie has sleek aerodynamic shapes, with small wings and canted vertical twin tails. It is built around a turbine-based combined cycle propulsion system, with two turbojet/low-bypass turbofan afterburning engines and two scramjets. The cockpit, in fact, has no forward visibility and Maverick relies on a synthetic vision system to see what's in front of the aircraft. While it is said to have been inspired by the the SR-71 Blackbird, as explained by Top Gun: Maverick's director Joseph Kosinski, a close resemblance of the Darkstar with the concept images of the SR-72 hypersonic reconnaissance aircraft is quite clear.

So much so, the model built for the filming was so accurate that China was reportedly fooled in believing that it was a real experimental aircraft and even reoriented a spy satellite to take photos of it.

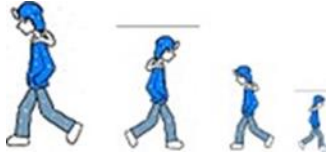
In the page Lockheed Martin added to their official website, the company added a quite enigmatic final sentence, that fueled speculations the Darkstar could be more than just a movie prop:

When the Top Gun: Maverick team was looking to push the envelope and stand true to Maverick's Need for Speed, Skunk Works was their first call. With the Skunk Works expertise in developing the fastest known aircraft combined with a passion and energy for defining the future of aerospace, Darkstar's capabilities could be more than mere fiction. They could be reality..."

Just fictional or not, Edwards AFB airshow marks the first public appearance of the Darkstar and a good opportunity for many people (including The Aviationist's correspondents already there) to have a closer look at the mysterious test article...

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My Walking Thoughts



A Dire Warning

The Marine Corps Is Dangerously Close to Losing Its Customs, Traditions, and Warfighting Ethos

By James E. Livingston, Jay Vargas, Harvey Barnum, & Robert Modrzejewski

As Marines and Medal of Honor recipients, we believe the intangibles that make the Marine Corps exceptional are under attack and at risk of being overrun.

There is nothing particularly glorious about sweaty fellows, laden with killing tools, going along to fight. And yet — such a column represents a great deal more than 28,000 individuals mustered into a division. All that is behind those men is in that column, too: the old battles, long forgotten, that secured our nation . . . traditions of things endured and things accomplished, such as regiments hand down forever.

— Colonel John W. Thomason, Fix Bayonets (1926)

Colonel Thomason knew that Marines are not defined solely by their weapons and equipment, but more broadly by their history, culture, traditions, and warrior ethos. These intangibles make United States Marines unique. These almost mystical attributes are fragile, only ever one generation away from extinction. Traditions of things endured and things accomplished are the foundation of Marine Corps combat effectiveness. Without close attention to and nurturing of these qualities, the Corps will lose its identity.

Sadly, we believe the Marine Corps is on that path. Why? The current senior leadership did away with many weapons in order to procure anti-ship missiles. This new warfighting concept consisted of small packets of Marines landing on atolls in the South China Sea with the mission of sinking Chinese warships. This defensive strategy was sold as innovative and necessary to transform the Marine Corps for 21st-century warfighting. It is more likely to relegate the Marine Corps to irrelevance. The history, traditions, culture, and ethos of the Marine Corps are being dangerously and needlessly

eroded. Unless this trend is reversed, the Marine Corps we knew and loved will cease to exist

Many, arguably most, former Marines, ourselves included, find it increasingly difficult to recognize our Marine Corps. The organization in which we served is being radically altered with little or no apparent appreciation for unforeseen consequences. The unnecessary cutting of force structure, coupled with the ill-advised jettisoning of combat multipliers such as tanks, cannon artillery, assault amphibious vehicles, heavy engineers, aviation, and logistics before replacement capabilities have been procured, will perilously weaken the flexibility and lethality of forward-deployed Marine Air Ground Task Forces and the ability of the Marine Expeditionary Forces to task organize for combat across the spectrum of conflict. We fear that soon Marines will no longer be able to pride themselves on being "most ready when the nation is least ready."

The Marine Corps is being undermined by a corporate approach to personnel management where civilian "best practices" are replacing our traditional values of the "needs of the service" and by a narrowly defined focus on long-range rockets and missiles to win future battles. Some of the changes have been directed by elected and appointed officials. However, most of the injuries to our glorious Corps have been self-inflicted, such as the unnecessary discarding of tanks and the deep and harmful cuts in cannon artillery.

We're not opposed to change. The Marine Corps has always changed to remain relevant in a changing world. But so many of the changes planned or already made have been poorly thought out. In some cases, the manner of implementation has done almost as much damage as the changes themselves. In our opinion, the rush to radically transform the institution has altered the very fabric of the Corps by shredding combat capabilities and trampling history, tradition, culture, and ethos.

Marine Corps history is embodied in its regiments. Marines have always taken immense pride in their regimental histories, at times even defining themselves by the regiments in which they served. With a cavalier disregard for this special bond, Marine Corps leadership recently discarded the name of one of the Corps's most storied regiments, the Third Marines. The Third Marines we knew no longer exists. Its name has been indifferently changed to the Third Marine Littoral Regiment; this experimental, one-dimensional unit lacks the flexibility, lethality, and supporting arms required to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver. The same humiliation awaits the Fourth Marines (an infantry regiment) and Twelfth Marines (an artillery regiment), legendary regiments whose names have been immortalized defending our nation and are etched in blood. Regimental designations are Marine Corps history, sources of pride for all Marines. And casing the colors of the Eighth Marines (an infantry regiment in the Second Marine Division) for the sole purpose of offsetting the costs of current and

future force developments was as poorly thought out as the naming protocols and restructuring of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Third Marine Division.

Marine Corps tradition is “we take care of our own.” Leaders have always looked out for their Marines and their families. The harried rush to toss aside tanks took priority over the well-being of many Marines and their families. The tankers, mechanics, and their families were simply sidelined and forced to make the best they could of what was left of their careers. To a lesser degree, others similarly affected had the rug pulled from underneath them. With few options available, many tankers and other comparably unfortunate Marines joined the Army or another service.

Marine Corps culture is built on the primacy of infantry. Marines have always taken pride in the motto “Every Marine a rifleman.” Force Design 2030, Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, Stand-in Forces, and Talent Management 2030 — the planning documents that have laid the foundation for the corps’s new doctrine — deemphasize infantry skills. Specialists are the new coin of the realm. The deactivation of three infantry battalions and reductions in the number of Marines in the remaining infantry battalions are the best indicators that Marine infantry is no longer seen as the point of the warfighting spear. Long-range precision rockets and missiles and new organizations in which Marines watch computer screens and push buttons to engage the enemy have replaced the rifle and the infantryman as the ultimate arbiters of future battles. To support these new warfighting concepts, Marine infantry has been stripped of the support needed to close with and destroy the enemy. You have to experience, as we have, a life and death struggle against overwhelming numbers of a determined enemy to know the compelling impact of a wall of close and continuous artillery fire, immediately available close air support, and, at times, tanks. We know first-hand that combined arms win battles that would otherwise be lost. We also believe that close combat, where winners and losers are ultimately decided, is being virtually, but mistakenly, ignored as a relic of the Industrial Age.

Marine Corps warfighting ethos is exemplified by “First to Fight” and “In Every Clime and Place,” rallying calls rapidly becoming empty words. The Marines will soon be little more than a regionally focused afterthought. The misguided divestiture of proven and necessary warfighting capacity has seriously (and, unless corrected, fatally) emasculated the Marine Corps’s capabilities to fight and win across the spectrum of conflict. The narrow tailoring of forces for a backwater role (Stand-in Forces) in the Western Pacific, a concept devoid of rigorous experimentation and validation, comes at great cost. Simply stated, the Marine Corps is no longer the nation’s premier 911 force, ingloriously ceding that distinction to the Army’s XVIII Airborne Corps.

In closing, we want to be perfectly clear. We believe the warfighting dominance and those intangibles that make Marines unique are under attack and at risk of being overrun. The unwise jettisoning of too many tools in the Marine Corps’s toolbox of

capabilities and the wholesale gutting of others have virtually destroyed its utility for major combat operations. Operating forces have been hollowed out under the illusion of returning the Marine Corps to its naval roots. While reductions in force structure and equipment can be added back at the cost of great time and expense, culture and ethos, once lost, are gone forever. Force Design 2030 and Talent Management 2030, no matter how well intended, are blueprints for disaster.

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Jay Vargas is a Colonel, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company G, Second Battalion, Fourth Marines during the Battle of Dai Do

Harvey "Barney" Barnum is a Colonel, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company H, Second Battalion, Ninth Marines during the Battle of Ky Phu on Operation Harvest Moon

Robert "Bob" Modrzejewski is a Colonel, USMC (Retired). He was awarded the Medal of Honor while serving as the Commanding Officer, Company K, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines during Operation Hastings.

We Must Not Let it Happen

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If you wish a primer on why you don't want to see the Marine Corps—its traditions and ethos--pass into ignominy, read Jeff Shaara's The Frozen Hours about the all but forgotten Korean War.

The attributes that made the Corps what it is in meeting the nation's challenges in 'foreign climes' for two-and-a-half centuries are today in the process of having them stripped bit-by-bit .

Well since I'm just talking to friends, right, I'll say what I think...

The Corps is under siege by self-serving, politically motivated, sycophantic bootlickers willing to propel not just the Corps but our entire armed forces down ruinous avenues with no regard to what it takes to fight and win wars.

It's as if they feel war is a thing of the past and today all that's required is a few nifty weapons and 'enlightened' strategy to take care of business.

I will be pleased to discuss this vision with anyone dim enough to share it.

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