

Re: Prerequisite for 1st telescope

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On Oct 31, 5:19 pm, "Dennis Woos" <dpw...@xxxxxxxx> wrote:

I like Unca Rollo's suggestion that one should have to earn or make their first telescope rather than receiving it as a gift.

Often folks cite the fact that commercial scopes of decent quality can now be purchased at very reasonable cost as a reason not to build one's own. This misses the mark, as saving money is not one of the best reasons to build.

Starting out at age 10, and on my own as a "budding scientist," I had no choice but to buy commercially made scopes. Sure, I could have bought some lenses someplace and gotten a couple of paper towel tubes... So as it turned out, my first two scopes were little sliding cardboard tube jobs.. Then my parents bought me an Edmund 4-1/4". That really got me going. I started learning the sky with the supplied planisphere, and the Sam Brown guidebooks taught me how the world turns.

Fast forward to 1980, and I was sitting with a friend, who is a master telescope maker, discussing who to buy a 6" mirror from for my new proposed telescope. I finally concluded, "Duane, if I'm going to learn anything, why don't I make my own?" Duane's reply was, "That's what I've been trying to tell you all along!" He just happened to have a set of blanks, had his barrel all set up, and I got started making my new mirror right then and there.

Wouldn't it be great if kids in school could be given this opportunity? I

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wonder if, in the quest for breadth and doing well on standardized tests, we have sacrificed doing any one thing well and exploring anything in depth. Consider how much math and science could be taught just making a mirror and a telescope, as well as practical skills. I and other members of our club have spent many, many hours working with kids and adults, and I think that is great. However, I do believe that we can and should do more. Oh well, maybe I am just getting carried away by "irrational exuberance" – after all, I just got back from casting an early ballot for Obama!

Dennis

What you teach kids is nothing other than astrology supported by a magnification exercise, they would be better off looking through a microscope and putting observations to good use by putting what they can magnify into context of life processes and so on .

I lost my temper once when a participant glowed about teaching kids the 'sidereal time' justification for the Earth's daily rotation and orbital motion, a silly means to promote observational astrology with no regards for what goes into the thinking behind solar system structure and the motions of the planets, something essential for putting life processes in proper context.

You too will continue to feed youngsters with the same rubbish you ended up believing, an irrational exuberance it is indeed –

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V15g-REdI-w>

While magnification is a facet of astronomy and now time lapse footage, it does not march under the banner of 'science' or the 'scientific method'. True astronomy is something that comes to a person and no equipment or education can but it.