



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE THUNDER BAY MUSEUM

In 1926, Kingsway was beautified by the addition of 377 laurel leaf willow trees, but it wasn't enough to attract homebuilders.

Street has storied past

BY TORY TRONRUD

KINGSWAY, a street now over a century old, was the creation of several energetic and resourceful local investors just before the beginning of the First World War.

Realtors G.R. Duncan and William C. Lillie, with the backing of investors T.J. Bowler, T.E. Dean (a Fort William dentist) and lawyer J.E. Swinburne, created the Kingsway Addition in 1913.

Those were heady years for the Lakehead. The city's population had more than doubled in the previous decade and looked to double again within a few years. Fortunes were there to be made by those who had property to sell, but the real profit was in developing new subdivisions on the outskirts of town. The new Kingsway Addition was really nothing more than open field at the time; along Arthur Street there was no construction west of Franklin Street except the Canadian Northern Railway's main line.

Access to the new addition was essential to its success. Thus a road named Kingsway, extending from Arthur Street south to Ford was graded, covered in splendid macadam for a solid mile, and opened for traffic in August of 1914, much to the delight of speeding drivers. It took only a few weeks for N.B. Gerry to break his arm in a motor accident on the new road.

Unfortunately, the road opened at the same time that war curtailed im-

LOOKING BACK



migration and collapsed the housing market. No one built in the new subdivision until 1923 when Twin City Oil (later Lakehead Oil and Feed Company) opened at its northern end, joined by the Bell Lumber Co. in 1931.

An attempt was made in 1926 to attract housing by beautifying Kingsway. The Fort William Young Men's Board of Trade planted 377 laurel leaf willow trees along the street, and urged the city to call it a boulevard. But housing did not emerge until after the Second World War. Twenty-three homes went up in 1950 between McGregor and Walsh followed a few years later by 70 additional homes on the west side of the CN tracks.

The erection of motels in the 1950s was a nod to the fact that Kingsway was part of the main highway heading south out of Thunder Bay. The Kingsway Motel was first (1954) followed by Two Cities and

Baird's (both 1956), the Blue Swan Inn — later renamed Thunder Bay Motor Hotel and then the Continental Inn — (1959), Holiday Inn (1960) and the Fort Motel (1961). Over three dozen homes nestled between the hotels in 1960.

Some interesting residents of Kingsway included NHL star Rudy Migay (in the early 1960s) and actress Alexa Boycun, who married movie mogul Alexander Korda, and whose parents owned the Two Cities Motel.

Highway construction eventually diverted tourist traffic away from Kingsway, turning it into a residential street and hurting the motel business; today only three motels remain. The character of the street also changed. In 1972, three small apartment blocks were built on the west side of the street. By 1999, the number of blocks had risen to 14, some of substantial size, while the number of private homes fell.

But whatever happened to the willows? Most of them lived beyond maturity and were cut down, not to be replaced.

It appears that only two remain, clearly identifiable by their immense size and magnificent character. Watch for them next time you travel the Kingsway.

Looking Back is written weekly by one of various writers for the Thunder Bay Museum. For further information visit the museum at 425 Donald St. E., or view its website at www.thunderbaymuseum.com.

Ancient star stirs the imagination

BY MAUREEN ARGES NADIN

IHAVE often wondered why some childhood memories are so fleeting while others remain indelibly carved into our consciousness.

I can still see myself as an 11 year old child, diligently copying down information in geography class about the Cradle of Civilization — the Fertile Crescent in Mesopotamia, located in what is now modern-day Iraq. Human civilization, we were taught, flourished from here because of the fertility of the land for growing food. A logical place for a civilization to begin, the 11-year-old me reflected.

A recent scientific discovery by the NASA Kepler team has the somewhat older me pondering those same reflections. A quick Google search on the age of human civilization will yield varying results, depending on where you start the clock. It's been some 6,000 years since Mesopotamia and further back than that if you count back to Neolithic times.

Suffice to say that we humans have inhabited this blue planet of ours, estimated to be some 4.5 billion years old, for thousands of years. Most of us consider our civilization to be advanced — at least in some ways.

Arguably, we have a long way to go in other ways. But what if we lived on a planet that was almost as old as the Universe itself (estimated by scientists to be a healthy 13.8 billion years)? What if we had developed our civilization over millions of years instead of thousands? Who would we be today?

NASA's Kepler mission, which has now found and catalogued over 1,018 exo-solar planets has recently discovered a planetary system around a star, romantically named Kepler 444, which is believed to be two and a half times older than our solar system. That's roughly 11.5 billion years which surely qualifies as ancient and then some in galactic and cosmic terms.

A recent article on the Earth and Sky website quotes Dr. Daniel Huber from the University of Sydney, one of the authors of the research paper which announced the discovery, as saying, "We've never seen anything like this. It is such an old star and the large number of small planets makes it very special."

The five small planets orbit close to their parent star, meaning that their year would be less than 10 days. Scientists say that the lack of liquid water combined with the heat and



COSMIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

radiation from the host star, make these planets uninhabitable — at least to life as we know it.

But we know that the building blocks of life exist seemingly everywhere in the Universe and research leader, Tiago Campante from the University of Birmingham says in the same article "We now know that Earth sized planets have formed throughout most of the universe's history which could provide scope for the existence of ancient life in the galaxy."

Campante recently told CBC radio that scientists can extrapolate that stars like Kepler 444, a class K star, make up about 10 per cent of our galaxy. We can assume that these stars also have planetary systems that are just as old as Kepler 444's but are orbiting in the habitable zone of their sun. It's very possible that other civilisations may have developed there which have had "a head start of a few billion years."

"The possibilities are unimaginable," he muses.

Indeed. But you me, who had already started reading science fiction, would have taken a shot at it. What would they be like? Would they have advanced to the point where they have eradicated all the plagues like war and disease that challenge our existence?

If so, think what we could learn from them. Would they have evolved to the point where they no longer require a physical body? — a thought that is a bit more appealing to the present age achy me than the 11 year old version.

Or does civilization and life have a natural beginning and end? Could they have advanced to the point where there was nothing left to do but start over again at the beginning?

As Campante says, the possibilities are endless. Thank you, Kepler 444, for keeping us open to the mysteries of life and the universe.

Maureen Arges Nadin is a freelance writer and space enthusiast whose column appears monthly in this space.

Sacred Sperm explores sex taboos

BY TIA GOLDENBERG AND ISAAC SCHARF
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Like so many parents, Ori Gruder was grappling with how to talk to his 10-year-old son about sex. Being a member of Israel's ultra-Orthodox religious community, which tends to keep discussions of sexuality to a whisper, made the task even more difficult.

So Gruder created Sacred Sperm, an hour-long documentary in which he tries to tackle the hard questions he can expect from his son. The film presents an intimate, informative and at times awkward look at the in-

sular religious community and its approach to sexuality, fleshing out deeply entrenched taboos in the conservative society.

"What is it about that little sperm that looks like a tadpole and has everyone so hot and bothered?" Gruder ponders in his narration of the film.

Gruder, a 44-year-old father of six who once worked for MTV Europe and didn't become religious until age 30, gives the viewer a rare peek into private ultra-Orthodox lives, taking the camera into his own home, into ritual baths and circumcision ceremonies, to the religious school system and more.

The film already has been shown in Jerusalem, London and California and is touring the U.S. festival circuit, including Atlanta on Feb. 15.

It begins with a visit to a rabbi, who grants Gruder his blessing to create the movie but implores him to do so "modestly." Gruder's wife expresses reservations about the project because it could elicit unwanted attention from the community.

"Maybe that's why I should do it, because people don't talk about it," Gruder responds.

Under Orthodox Judaism, masturbation is forbidden, seen as a violation of an age-old covenant with God that promotes and encourages procreation. Sex is viewed as a sacred act and intercourse is permissible only after marriage.

"One who spills his seed literally kills his sons," Prosper Malka, one rabbi interviewed in the film, tells Gruder.

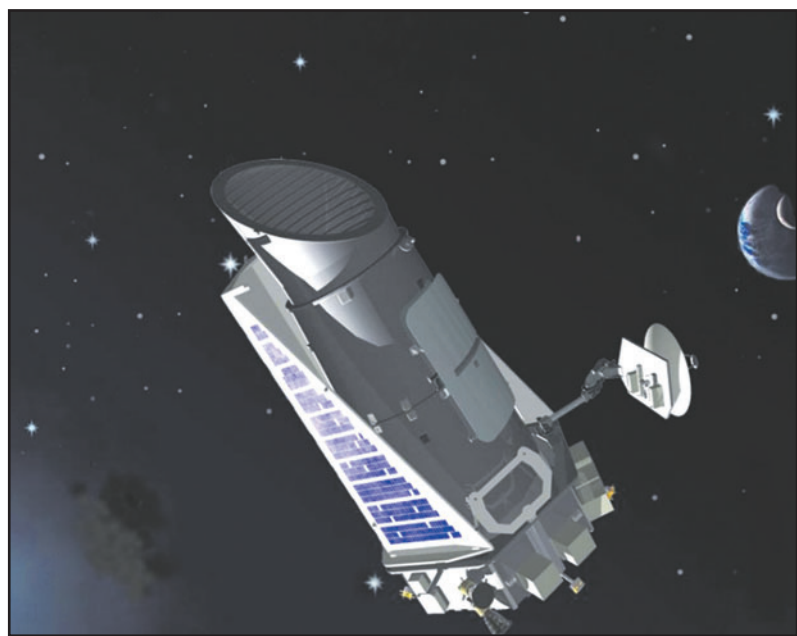
Gruder explains the theological reasoning behind the Jewish ban on spilling sperm: "The reproductive organ is called the 'covenant.' Spilling one's seed is called 'damaging the covenant.' And abstaining from masturbation is called 'guarding the covenant.'"

While other world religions such as Roman Catholicism take a similarly dim view of masturbation and premarital sex, the film makes clear how much more ultra-rigorous the ultra-Orthodox Jews are. They live strictly regulated lives according to Jewish law that governs everything from diet to dress.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/CHANNEL 8 AND G02FILMS

Ori Gruder, left, and rabbi Yisrael Aharon Itzkovitz swim in their clothes in a ritual bath.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Kepler telescope spacecraft is seen in an artist's image.

Artists have a gourd time

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CASA GRANDE, Ariz. — The annual Running of the Gourds Festival, an event that celebrates the fruit's growing popularity, has taken over Pinal County this weekend.

The Pinal Fairgrounds & Event Center has been a gourd-lover's paradise since Friday. Wuertz Gourd Farm, a family-owned gourd farm, has been putting on the festival for the past 12 years.

There will be more than 60,000

gourds for sale, co-owner Waylon Wuertz said. About 120 vendors will be showing roughly 5,000 pieces of art. "The diversity of all the gourd art is just amazing," Wuertz told the Casa Grande Dispatch.

A gourd is a type of fruit characterized by a hard shell and is often used for artwork. The items for sale at the festival range from \$5 knick-knacks to \$15,000 high-end art pieces, Wuertz said. Artists use gourds to make everything from hats to utensils.

Love is in the air for young and old this month

BY ANNETTE O'BRIEN

IN MY advanced age, I think it is a bit ironic that this month of February is set aside to remind us of the risks of heart disease and stroke, as well as it being the month profit-makers mark aches of the romantic heart skilfully controlled with expressions of love, with flowers, chocolates, and jewelry.

Actually, back in the olden days my ancestors proclaimed "February, the shortest month in the year, is also the worst." History also tells us it was the shortest month because Augustus Caesar took a day from February and added it to August to make that month, named after him, longer than Julius Caesar's month July.



INDEPENDENCE

I imagine being in the throes of winter; it is the month of storms, cold frigid weather and dark nights that add to it being the worst. Back then, it was the month of purification as the Romans wanted to cleanse themselves of their follies for the New Year, which began on March 1. Perhaps the cleansing of the heart by its expression of love is

also part of a purification.

Personally, I am glad that February is here, with traditions that actually affect the heart both physically, spiritually (ironically) and lovingly.

Traditionally, legend has it that birds chose their mates on St. Valentine's Day. If you should see any of these birds on this day, it will give you a clue as to what you have to look forward to in your love life: Red-breast: sailor, Goldfinch: millionaire, Sparrow: love in a cottage, Bluebird: poverty, and a flock of doves: good luck in every way. I am sure I will see a chickadee on the 14th, there are flocks at the feeder, but of course, they do not mean a thing in the sphere of romance. You can't win them all.

You may feel that because we are

over the hill, February, outside of its relation to our physical well-being, does not apply to us. I beg your pardon. According to an unknown sage, "there may be snow on the roof, but there is still fire in the hearth."

Why should we not have "love, flowers, chocolates, valentine cards in our lives? I know chocolates are not good for us, especially if we suffer from diabetes, are overweight, and worry about tooth decay. Just take them out and enjoy the sweetness, arrange the flowers in a vase and enjoy them for weeks, and accept love without guilt. The embers are slowly fading.

Psychologists tell us that roughly 10 per cent of the population suffers from chronic loneliness.

Being alone can "drive up your

blood pressure; affect your immune system, your cognitive abilities, and sleep." I have not been able to find the remedy for loneliness, but I do know that having someone to care for and to care for you is just good medicine.

The receiving of cards, flowers, chocolates or jewelry is certainly nice for the young and old. Even if it is from a grandchild, friend, son or daughter, lover, husband or wife. In the words and wisdom from grandpa: On Valentine's Day the wise man, looking for love, forgets the past, but never the present.

Annette O'Brien's column appears every other Sunday on this page. Send comments or suggestions to independence@baytel.net.