

Don't Take Me To Your Leader

By Hannelore Volpe

Well, I've missed the deadline. Not that I was really ready to sign up for the trip of a lifetime - a one-way ticket to Mars.

But more than 8,000 brave Canadian souls did, along with more than 200,000 other Earthlings who want to go to Mars - forever. They're hoping to be part of the Mars One colony, which aims to have people living on the Red Planet in a decade. If the colony thrives, more humans would be flown there every two years.

I was surprised at the number of people who want to live out their lives on Mars, but maybe I shouldn't have been. About 40 people will ultimately be chosen to blast off.

The lengthy selection process will be televised, making the whole thing the ultimate reality TV show. This will be followed by six to eight years of training for the rigours of

this new way of life.

As for me, no way am I leaving my family, my friends, my garden. I like living on a planet that has breathable air, fresh water and rich soil, even if we as a race seem to be doing our darndest to take these things away. If I flew off to Mars, I'd be in some oversized, glorified tin can packed with wires,

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blinking lights and all the tightly packed stuff necessary for survival - and no gravity. If you developed an acute attack of cabin fever, tough luck. Going outside for a little walk would entail major suiting up, not to mention the danger of floating away for good.

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And in that first Martian year, I'd miss seeing my

husband and children harvest our vegetables, hosting loud family gatherings, going for coffee at Starbucks, visiting the Strawberry Festival, the Markham Fair, town events like the

World Music Festival and browsing through the Care & Share Thrift Store for espresso cups - it would be too much to bear.

Instead of Robert Lindner's Jet Propelled Couch, I'm staying right here close to the stationary variety.

But I'm fascinated by and grateful for those with enough courage, such as Canadian astronaut Commander Chris Hadfield, to put their body and nervous systems on the line to help further mankind's knowledge.

Humans have gone into orbit, developed the International Space Station and landed on the Moon. But Mars? That's a whole other frontier. It would take the better part of a year to even get there.

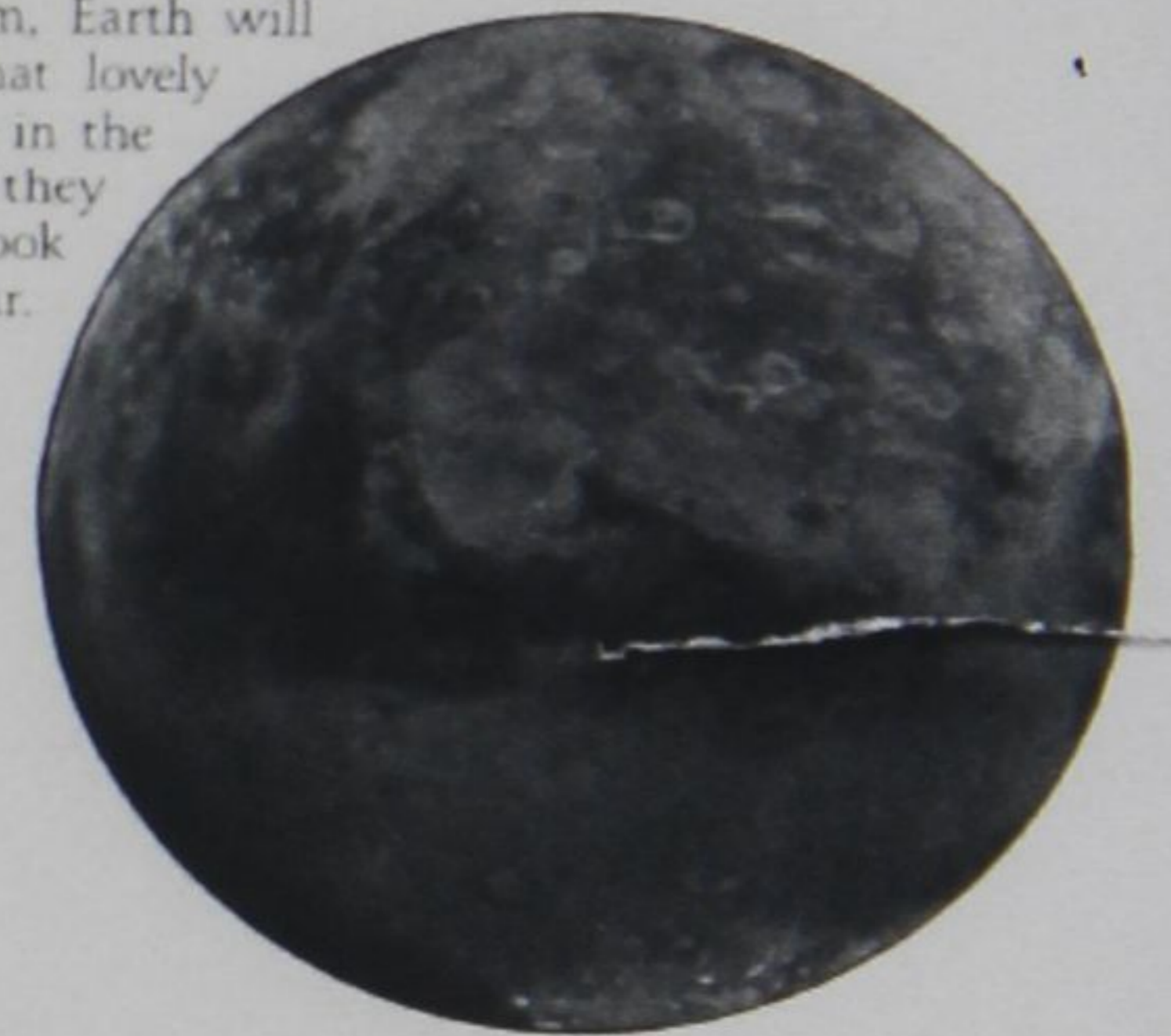
Humans have been fascinated by Mars, our nearest planetary neighbour, for a long time. Science fiction writer Ray Bradbury depicted Martians as dark and golden-eyed in *The*

Martian Chronicles. The scenarios of his imagination and that of other writers must have trickled down into our collective consciousness until we humans really did begin to explore Mars. The first Mars Rover was sent to the Red Planet almost a decade ago, and now two Rovers continue to send photos and information back to Earth. But alas, so far no Martians have been found and the immortal words, "Take me to your leader" have yet to be uttered by humankind.

But if those intrepid Mars explorers eventually do set up colonies, they will become Martians.

They will become history's first interplanetary immigrants. If future generations of Earth explorers continue to live on Mars, their children and grandchildren will know no other life. For them, Mars will be the only home they have ever known. And in the process of merely surviving on Mars, they will have pushed the frontiers of human knowledge forward and shown the resiliency of the human spirit - at warp speed.

For them, Earth will become that lovely blue speck in the sky that they can only look at from afar.



Readers Write

Eco-Homes Tour A Success

To the Editor:

Whitchurch-Stouffville Community Energy Cooperative's first Eco-Homes Tour on Sept. 21, with close to forty participants visiting four unique homes, enjoying the bounty of five local food producers, and hearing two excellent speakers, was a success on several levels. First and foremost, it succeeded in bringing together members of our community. To those who were able to attend, the WSCEC board thanks you for coming out, listening, asking questions, learning, and possibly husking corn and stacking chairs.

This event also succeeded in raising awareness about some key aspects of sustainability. Homeowners, supported by subject matter experts from local green energy companies, explained their particular energy efficient technologies, from straw bale and polished concrete construction to solar panels and geothermal systems. Following the tour, participants enjoyed a harvest dinner featuring seasonal foods from surrounding farms and vendors. After dinner, two speakers from Eden Mills described steps their community is taking to become carbon neutral.

Finally, the Eco-Homes Tour was successful in generating discussion and interest in future possibilities, not only for individual homeowners but for the community as a whole. On that note, we are looking into a suggestion from one tour participant - an electric car workshop. As mentioned on the tour, we encourage you to submit any ideas for events, big or small, that will help to inform and promote the vision of our cooperative.

Myles O'Brien

Whitchurch-Stouffville Community Energy Cooperative
www.energycooperative.ca



God and Culture:
Searching for ways to make God relevant
A few thoughts from Heise Hill Church's
Senior Pastor @steveauthier



Why God transcends Christianity to deliver peace message

During the four days from September 19th to 22nd, a unique experience took place in Stouffville. The inaugural Stouffville Peace Festival descended among a community whose history rises from the legacy of peace inspiring people.

Internationally renowned genocide expert, Gerry Caplan, expressed it well in his introductory address at the festival's peace panel when he said,

"The idea of a peace festival is so novel and unusual that you have to shake your head and say, I don't remember when the last one was. A peace festival is quite something."

It is quite something because it is unique for a community to gather for even such a universally held value like peace. Who does not want peace? Yet, we do not find peace festivals popping up in communities around the world. Here's hoping that this is the start of a universal trend.

When the festival's steering committee met to imagine what might be accomplished we were quite clear that we were dreaming big, that we were dreaming much bigger than simply a group of historic peace churches getting together to promote peace among its closed church community.

"You cannot put a dent in the violence of the world by thinking small. You have to think big. If you want to imagine peace, you have to think big-God big!"

The outcome of our inaugural festival surpassed our expectations. The peace theme resonated well with the Stouffville community. The buzz at the play *Commemorate!*, the diverse spiritual experience of the labyrinth walk, being part of the Weekend of Music and Peace; the crowd and excitement at the peace plaque unveiling ceremony, highlighted by the release of peace doves, and then finally the wisdom and peace insights brought forward at The Peace Panel by panelists Gerry Caplan and three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee Izzeldin Abuelaish, as well as the superb panel moderator Dr. Jane Philpott, all played integral parts in establishing the festival as a genuine opportunity to unite in imagining peace.

During the course of the festival on several occasions non-church people commented about how great it was to see how we, as a Christian group, had made this event so open to a diversity of approaches to imagining peace. This of course was highlighted in our peace panel by the fact that one panelist was a Palestinian Muslim, the other a Canadian Jew, and complimented with a Christian moderator. In all cases, those making the comments were surprised. Much too often faith groups think that God only works through their faith group.

The challenge to peace in our world is much too important to God to simply rely on the limitations found within any one faith group. The limitation is not God's, it is the individual faith groups' limitations. Yes, God could attain world peace exclusively through Christians, but since we are not passionately responding to what he calls us to through the nonviolent peace teachings of Jesus, he is going to transcend the self-imposed limitations of one faith group. Otherwise, we would surely destroy each other.

We at Heise Hill Church are humbled to have been part of this inaugural peace festival. We also encourage you to learn more about the peace teachings of Jesus. We encourage you to learn more about how relevant the revolutionary teachings of Jesus can be to your life and to this world. We invite you to take steps to discover who the historical person of Jesus is, what he said, and what he told his followers to do, especially how he told us to love our enemies. We pray that your journey leads you to a church community, more importantly we pray that it leads you to know and experience Jesus, and to know his way of peace.

Find the Stouffville Peace Festival on Twitter @WSPeaceFest, on Facebook at facebook.com/StouffvillePeaceFest

11760 Woodbine Ave., Gormley
905-887-5489
visit us at: heisehill.org



We Meet Sundays at
10:30 am