



The Observer

St. Kitts - Nevis

THE FEDERATION'S POLITICALLY INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

DR. CHARLES' HEALTH CHAT

LUNACY, OLD TERM FOR NEW PHENOMENA

As one columnist to another, the author would like to address the interest in effects of the moon, on health, and that which also affects us, the fruits of the earth. For millennia, the moon has inspired admiration, awe, dread, and mystery. Modern research has shown that the moon does affect life on earth, even if it sometimes means its influences are not what moon lore of the past has stated.

Most today dismiss the powers of the moon more fervently than respected scientists or tabloid gibberish. There are more lunar effects than most people would imagine. In the 4th century B.C., Aristotle said that sea urchins reach sexual maturity and taste best at the full moon. No one bothered to check his claim until the 20th century, when a British biologist proved him right. Nova Scotia fisherman have long known that the biggest catches of herring are usually at the full moon. Fisherman in the Florida Keys also know that Yellow Tail Snapper are more easily caught in schools, at night, during the full moon.

Just as the moon raises the tides, every day, predictably, people, animals, and plants are always under the moon's influence. Japanese scientists discovered that once every lunar month (Oriental astrology is based on lunar months, unlike Western astrology which is based on solar months), bus and taxi cab drivers had predictable periods that affected their ability to drive. When a taxi company adjusted the drivers schedules *around* their lunar cycles, traffic accidents almost disappeared. And much of the full moon lore has been proven true. A medical survey at a prestigious Connecticut college revealed that a huge majority of women prefer to have sex at the full moon. It is also known that human gestation rates usually last a period of nine lunar months. Results of three separate studies of nearly one million births in New York City revealed that most women ovulate around the full moon.

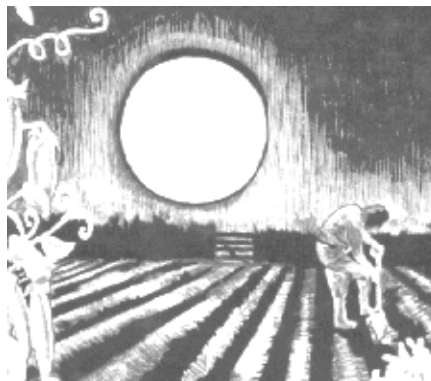
One of the oldest ideas about the moon was that it brings moisture in many forms to the earth's inhabitants and affects the earth's moisture, its oceans, rains, and morning dews. The Romans believed that the amount of blood in a man's veins ebbed and flowed like the tides, and when a friend took ill, they prayed to the moon goddess Diana. In spite of ridicule, a surgeon in Tallahassee Florida examined the hospital records of some 1,000 tonsillectomy patients to see what he could learn of unusually heavy bleeding after surgery. What the good doctor saw was that

more than 8 out of 10 *problem bleeders* had gone under the knife during a full moon. Ancient medical astrologers had advised against this practice more than 2,000 years ago !

The principles of *lunar sympathy* are still followed in many parts of the world, in spite of public rebuke or ridicule. The lunar birth sign of Chinese Astrology still determines the names of thousands of children every year. Star maps follow the path of the lunar passage, day by day and season by season. The sky is divided into 12 such *signs*, categorized into one of four *elements*, earth, air, fire and water. Some signs are said to be better for planting, some for harvesting. Even some plants should be sown or harvested in one sign. In gardner's parlance, the period from new moon to full is called *waxing*, or light of the moon. The period from full moon to new, *waning*, or dark side of the moon. When Burpee seed company marketed an electronic planting clock in 1976, it was made to show at a glance, the time phase of the moon for proper planting.

Francis Bacon wrote that children and young cattle brought forth in the full of the moon, are stronger and larger than those in the wane. In Cornwall, when a boy is born in the wane, it is believed that the next birth is a girl. And when a birth takes place on the "growing" of the moon, the next child will be of the same sex. But please take into account our new C sections.

We in Nevis have one of the better opportunities to see the solar and lunar returns. In terms of gardening, modern adherents of the *Almanac* believe that plants which produce fruit or flower above ground should be planted during a waxing moon. Plants which yield fruits below ground, e.g. potatoes, carrots, should be planted during a waning moon. These ancient notions have not been taken lightly in agriculture. Brown and Chow conducted numerous experiments with regards to moon phases and plant growth with beans, potatoes, and tomatoes. They found, for example, that the metabolic rate of potatoes was lowest at the new moon and steadily increased at the pass of the full moon to the third quarter (waning moon). This translates into better growth for potato spuds planted during the waning moon, as the ancients stated ! Rounding out this concept, Dr. Gravius of University of Lyon found that tomatoes and sunflower seeds uptake of increased oxygen coincided with the new and full moon phases. Old phenomena for new concepts, or blatant ignorance of one's history ?



The ancient world was perfectly aware of the entire range of the moon's influence. People believed that the full moon, could drive men mad, trigger epilepsy, and increase fecundity. Sailors during the time of Pliny were afraid to sleep on the deck during the full moon for fear of any number of dire consequences, from insanity to blindness. This study was followed up by Dr. Kelley, in his report "Mania and the Moon", *Psychoanalytic Review*, 1942.

The British gave prominent recognition to the moon's role in insanity. In the 1600's, Sir Matthew Hale, who later became Chief Justice of England, argued before a court that *lunacy* was most assuredly caused by the moon, particularly the full moon. In Sir William Blackstone's definition of lunacy was written into law, distinguishing a *lunatic*, whose madness is monthly, usually at the full moon, and someone who is *insane*, which meant (and still means) someone perpetually and hopelessly psychotic. In today's *Taber's Medical Dictionary*, lunacy is called an "archaic" term.

But one wonders when watching today's predigested news, cable mania, and O.J. updates, just how archaic the term "lunacy" actually is. In 1882, the German psychiatrist Koster, published a monumental study of the correlation of the phases of the moon and hundreds of patients. This followed with hundreds of studies on moon phases in relation to mood swings, self-destructive behaviors, violent acts, and even murders. Not long ago, health workers at Boston City Hospital told the *Boston Globe* - "full moon nights are busier and crazier than normal nights."

So, all of a sudden, we're not so quick to dismiss the idea of lunacy. Recount the time in 1936 when Sarton sailed from Boston to St. Vincent aboard the *Lady Drake*. Sarton set out to visit "Fort Charlotte upon Berkshire Hill, one of the many fortified places established during the eighteenth century in the West Indies when the peace of those heavenly islands was frequently troubled by wars. Some of the old military buildings are now used as hospices for the poor of the colony, one of them being devoted to the insane." It was at the facility that Sarton was guided on a tour by the guard who said that the patients "were generally easy to handle, except about the time of the full moon when special precautions had to be taken in order to restrain them."

So, the next time you venture out at night and see the moon full, please be careful driving, or watch those behind the wheel. Also learn to separate your tomatoes from potatoes, even though both are attributed to the *nightshade* family.

Links

www.privinfo.org

www.schoolofnaturalmedicine.info

© Dr. Charles McWilliams, Nevis Island's Integrated Physician