UNDER AN ECLIPSED MOON—A BRIEF ACCOUNT

November 16, 2022
Howard L. Cohen

I don't do "Facebook" but if interested in learning how Marian and I experienced the recent November lunar eclipse, please continue.

Tuesday, 2022 November 8 was an auspicious day. It began with a total lunar eclipse beginning at 3:02 a.m. EST with the Moon descending in a Florida western sky.

The day ended with Election Day ending at 7:00 p.m.

Most people probably would not have arisen so early to see this lunar eclipse though such eclipses can put on quite a spectacular show.

Marian and I left our house about 2:30 a.m. to view the eclipse. We drove to a nearby neighborhood, Hammock Ridge, west of Gainesville, that has a low western horizon since the Moon would set before the eclipse ended. Trees in our own neighborhood would allow seeing only the very beginning of the eclipse.

After unloading folding chairs, snacks and my camera, we set up by a walking path near our car in a small park with a baseball field and playground. Jackets helped keep us warm in the chilly 63 degree morning hours. We then settled in to watch the eclipse unfold. We remained alone as no one else came to enjoy the view. Only a few cars passed as twilight finally brightened the morning landscape.

We returned home about 7:00 a.m. tired but having seen an exceptionally beautiful eclipse in unexpectedly clear skies since early weather reports predicted some clouds.

The Moon in total eclipse was quite bright sporting a gorgeous reddish hue with a noticeable gradient of color and light across its disk ending in a bright lunar limb.

Unlike a full moon sky that sports only a few bright stars, sparkling luminous points filled our darkened eclipsed sky. In fact, one astonishing effect of a lunar eclipse is to witness the sky and landscape magically change from bright to dark as the eclipse progresses. Some street lights lit the area but they were mostly behind us keeping the western sky moderately dark. (Being in a dark sky location helps.)

I took only landscape photos to show just the eclipsing Moon setting over the western horizon, hopefully against a starry background. This could prove difficult since the Moon, even in eclipse, can require short exposure times compared to background stars.

However, I had some success but needed to combine two separate exposures, a short exposure for the Moon and a longer one for the star field.

See **first attached photo**. This was a beautiful sight.

(Don't view second attached photo until finished reading.)

This photo, taken at 5:57 a.m., shows the fully eclipsed Moon low over the western horizon among many stars in a now darkened eclipse sky, now twenty minutes into an eighty-five minute long total eclipse.

If you believe in prophecies, one could believe this “red blood moon” was foretelling Florida, once a swing state, would now turn“red” at the end of Election Day!

Regardless, an added treat was seeing the *Pleiades Star Cluster* (“Seven Sisters”) shining magnificently above the eclipsed Moon.

The planet Uranus was also located just above the Moon but one would have needed optical aid to see this faint planet, not considered a naked-eye object.

However, some news media **touted the appearance of Uranus during this eclipse but misled, as they often do with astronomical events.**

For example, *The Washington Post* (Marcia Dunn, washingtonpost.com/health, Nov. 6, 2022) wrote:

"As an extra treat, Uranus will be visible just a finger’s width above the moon, resembling a **bright star** [bold my emphasis]."

Uranus would have hardly been a “bright star” since this faint planet always stays close to naked-eye visibility even under perfectly dark sky conditions. (Uranus was not discovered until after the invention of the telescope.)

Can you find Uranus in this photo?

Probably not for it sits among the many faint stars!

So, I have **attached a second photo** (labeled to show this faint planet).

Star gazing is not always easy and can often require some effort. If you missed this exquisite eclipse, mark your calendars for **Friday, March 14, 2025,** the next total lunar eclipse. Unfortunately, this eclipse is nearly two and one-half years away.

By coincidence, this date is also “Pi Day” (3.14...) and the start of the Jewish Holiday of Purim. Yes, this will be another early morning event with totality beginning at 2:26 a.m. EDT!

And one has to wonder where the news media get their news?