

MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE

SUBJECT: DO WE NEED TO FORM A SEARCH PARTY FOR PLANET X?

One finds so many amazing things on the internet. Sometimes astonishing factoids are discovered without trying. Even more amazing, once in a great while, accurate information gets disseminated, though not as often as one might wish.

For example, all the excitement in the 1930's about Pluto being the ninth planet was apparently premature—well, as much as the world could *get* excited considering the Great Depression had just gotten underway. (Would Walt feel the same today about naming Mickey's dog "Pluto"? Wouldn't he feel goofy about it?)

To add insult to injury, not only did Pluto get downsized to the politically-incorrect title of dwarf planet, it's not even the only dwarf planet in our solar system! Ceres, Eris, Makemake and Haumea are also recognized as dwarfs. Who knew? Yet, sadly, much indecision still exists surrounding Orcus, Quaoar, 2007 O10, and Sedna, all hanging out in Neptune's neighborhood. Perhaps they will become planetoids or planet-ettes. Or, how about Plantagenets, since that dynasty is long gone? (Do the parking lot owners where Richard III was found three years ago now put in a *Richard III Rex* brass cap? How ignoble.)

And just when people thought it safe to travel in the solar system again, two Cal Tech astronomers claim to have found "evidence" of Planet X buzzing around. Is this the fabled Niburu? According to these intrepid night-sky detectives, a giant planet is traveling a strange route outside Pluto's orbit. Technically, it remains undiscovered because so far it's just a mathematical thing. No one has actually "seen" this planet. Nevertheless, the fact that no one has seen "Planet 9", as some astronomers have taken to calling it, has not deterred YouTube aficionados from enjoying several months of the-world-will-end-by-such-and-such-a-date videos. Then, when the end does *not* come, a new wave of "experts" and "prophets" forecast the next date for the world's demise. Indeed, having a blood moon coupled with a blue moon really accelerates the cycle. (Here's a great trick. One simply goes to Australian TV websites the day *before* the predicted end of the world, say 10:30 p.m.—since Australia lies *across* the international dateline—to see if the world has actually ended. So far, it has not. At least nothing noticeable suggesting its end seems evident.)

"There's a sucker born every minute," P. T. Barnum supposedly quipped. I wonder if he time-traveled, thus learning about the internet. Interestingly, however, no real evidence supports the notion Barnum ever uttered that less-than-kind phrase. How do I know? The internet said so...along with so many other amazing things. But when it comes to the internet, remember: *Caveat emptor!* Just Google its meaning.