



★ **Cosmic Odyssey: How Intrepid Astronomers at Palomar Observatory Changed Our View of the Universe**

Linda Schweizer

The MIT Press (Nov 24, 2020)

Hardcover \$39.95 (312pp)

978-0-262-04429-5

Linda Schweizer's *Cosmic Odyssey* is a thrilling account of the cosmological discoveries of the past century that "pulls back the curtain" on the brilliant, eccentric scientists who achieved those breakthroughs.

This exceptional book begins with the history of the Palomar Observatory, from its opening in 1936 through to the evolution of its four large telescopes, including the "Big Eye" with its 200-inch diameter Pyrex mirror. These telescopes have been a constant presence at the forefront of astronomical research. With stunning images and lucid descriptions, *Cosmic Odyssey* evokes the "cramped, oil-drenched arms of the Big Eye's massive horseshoe" and the "workhorse gears forged nearly 90 years ago," where gifted astronomers from across the world have spent countless hours observing the cosmos, "hunched on the small, hard metal seat" in a cage 100 feet above the ground.

Describing monumental insights achieved over many decades, the book paints a masterful portrait of our dynamic, tempestuous universe, with its galaxies colliding, supernovae exploding, stars spewing winds of energy and matter, webs of dark matter linking objects across interstellar space, mysterious brown dwarfs hiding in the outer reaches of the universe, and black holes bending light and gravity.

Cosmic Odyssey also provides an extraordinary insiders' glimpse into the "pioneers" and "mavericks" who "were enabled by technology, emboldened by curiosity, and open to serendipity" and who, through passion, rivalry, and cooperation, "drove innovation and experimentation." More than 100 leading astronomers were interviewed for this book, and their individual insights include animated stories about the characters working at the "monastery" on the hill, including a colorful British team observing quasars, dubbed the "Flying Circus," and two "Buccaneers" who explored the mysteries of Jupiter.

A comprehensive and gripping achievement, *Cosmic Odyssey* is destined to be a landmark work on the history of astronomy.

KRISTEN RABE (November / December 2020)

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