

Remembering Arthur C. Clarke—Renaissance Man

Joseph N. Pelton, Professor, The George Washington University

Arthur C. Clarke (Dec. 17, 1917-March 18, 2008) was not a scientist or engineer whose career had the technical or theoretical significance of an Isaac Newton, a Madame Curie, a James Clerk Maxwell or an Albert Einstein. No, the unique contribution of Sir Arthur Clarke was his ability to combine the left and right sides of his brain to link mathematical and scientific reason with literary and artistic thought. The result was both a great writer and innovator. His books such as 2001, 2010, 2061 and 3001--The Space Odysseys, A Childhood's End, Rendezvous with Rama and Fountains of Paradise as well as many, many more gave us remarkable insights into a future that might be. His writings—both scientific and science fiction--envisioned new technology such as self aware machines, space elevators, limitless and renewal energy, and possible worlds of peace and prosperity. For his contribution of the idea of the geosynchronous global satellite network alone he should be remembered as a great person of the 20th and the 21st century. One only needs to read Ascent to Orbit to note the quality of his scientific writings.

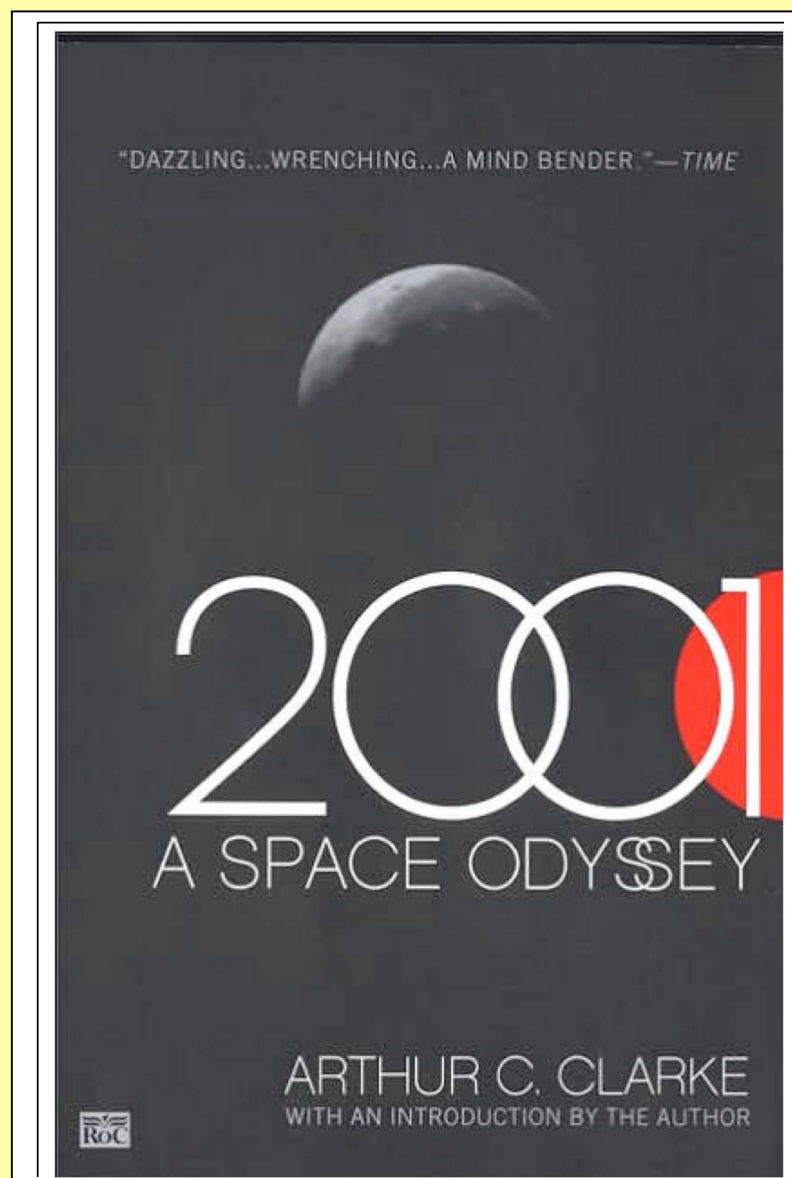
For his vast body of literature, profound insights, and contributions to society--both scientific and literary--we should recognize him as an intellectual and artistic treasure that only rarely appears within human society. Clearly Clarke was the Leonardo da Vinci of our time.

Like Leonardo he was able to skip light-heartily and yet profoundly from the world of science to the world of speculative literature and the arts. Few people have that unique ability to combine with equal grace and insight the world of science and the arts and make a substantial and lasting contribution to both. Below is a brief synopsis of Arthur's life. It is far from complete and omits key accomplishments such as his being the unofficial table tennis champion of Sri Lanka and much more. Yet I hope it provides some flavor of his extraordinary life.

The concept of the geosynchronous communications satellite that he contributed in 1945 was of truly great importance. These systems now serve humanity to provide global news broadcasts, support billions of telephone calls, offer worldwide Internet connectivity, hastens trillions of dollars in electronic fund transfer, and helps sustain a global economy in so many ways. He also wrote extensively on rocketry, the oceans, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and transportation. For years to come we will be mining his rich legacy of ideas, and images of the future. We will examine his "homo futuris" --the intelligent and thoughtful species that we may yet become.

The appropriate recognition of such a unique man and his contributions is hard to quickly determine. Yet one "memorial" seems particularly fitting. This would be to designate the "geosynchronous orbit" that so clearly identified as the best way to provide global communications from space as the "Clarke Orbit".

You can contact your government representatives to the International Telecommunication Union as well as the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation www.clarkefoundation.org if you concur and wish to indicate your support for this proposal. We in the U.S., in Japan and around the World salute Arthur C. Clarke for all his accomplishments and contributions.



Arthur Clarke, in 1945, was the first to conceive of the use of the geosynchronous orbit for global satellite communications. As such he is the father of the satellite communications industry. In his nearly 100 books he addressed a variety of space applications, artificial intelligence, the “space elevator”, alternative energy sources such as Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion and anticipated many of the most important inventions of our times.

This Is Your Life Arthur C. Clarke –Renaissance Man

- ❑ Born in Minehead, England during WW I in December 16, 1917
- ❑ Moved to Ballifants in 1924
- ❑ Attended the Huish Grammar School in Taunton, Somerset, England- 1927
- ❑ First Rocket experiments in early 1930s
- ❑ Light beam transmitter of sound developed in 1934 (age 17)
- ❑ “Executive Grade” Civil Service Exam- Entered the Civil Service 1936
- ❑ the “fastest slide rule in Whitehall” (age 18)
- ❑ Entered the Royal Air Force as Class II Radio/Wireless Mechanic March 18, 1941
- ❑ “ExtraTerrestrial Relays” appears in Wireless World presenting the idea of a global communications satellite network (October 1945)
- ❑ “The Rocket and the Future of Warfare” essay by Arthur Clarke outlines ‘Mutual Assured Destruction’ and wins RAF contest (November 1945)
- ❑ “Guardian Angel” written in July 1946 (basis of Childhood’s End) and completed just before he started studies at King’s College,
- ❑ Started college in general science at King’s College, London (October 7, 1946)
- ❑ Elected Chairman of the British Interplanetary Society (1946)
- ❑ Graduated with a First Class degree in two years King’s College
- ❑ Childhood’s End published to critical acclaim and huge success (1953)
- ❑ First visit to Sri Lanka in 1954 and first underwater expedition in 1955
- ❑ Launch of Sputnik on October 4, 1957
- ❑ Title of “2001: A Space Odyssey” selected as the title of the screen play based on Arthur Clarke’s “Sentinel” short story (May 1965)
- ❑ Rendezvous with Rama won the Hugo, Nebula, Campbell & Jupiter Awards (1973)
- ❑ Fountains of Paradise novel presenting the concept of a space elevator
- ❑ Arthur C. Clarke Foundation launched at the US White House (1983)
- ❑ Ascent to Orbit, a Scientific Autobiography, published. (1984)
- ❑ Arthur is designated the Chancellor of the International Space University (1985)
- ❑ The Arthur C. Clarke Foundation and Washington, D.C. Government recognizes Arthur C. Clarke Day at Smithsonian Air & Space Museum (October 3, 2001)
- ❑ Sixtieth Anniversary of Wireless World celebrated, UN recognized Arthur C. Clarke Day on Oct. 3, 2005
- ❑ Arthur reaches his 90th birthday in Sri Lanka on December 16, 2007 having written well over a hundred short stories, books and screenplays for critically acclaimed movies, including “2001: A Space Odyssey” that is considered one of the top ten movies of all time. He is also widely acknowledged to be the “father of satellite communications” and an leading exponent of the “space elevator”
- ❑ Arthur goes to rest in peace March 18, 2008 with millions of mourners lamenting his departure from this planet as he finds his place among the stars. At the time of his death there was an X-Ray event (NGC) that represented a release of energy 250 times greater than ever recorded. Accident or fitting cosmic tribute?

His many friends and supports now hope that the ITU, the UN and other international agencies will join the International Astronomical Union in declaring the Geosynchronous Orbit the Clarke Orbit.

Joseph N. Pelton, Former Dean, International Space University
 Founding President of the SSPI and Founder of the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation