

Half-Way There

In 2021, shortly after the James Webb Space Telescope was stabilized at the second Lagrange point, an exhaustive series of calibration maneuvers was carried out. During testing, a minor anomaly was noted in the telemetry stream. It was first reported by club member Janet Byron, a graduate student from Northern Arizona University working for the summer at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff. She had detected some minor out of band luminance values, and further analysis had suggested there might be a possible defect on one of the giant telescope's mirror segments. Since the 10 billion-dollar 6.5 meter compound mirror had tested flawless on Earth dozens of times, the only plausible explanation was that a tiny bit of debris had become affixed to the mirror surface during launch.

Ms Byron reported to Gerold Hanover, the NAU PhD supervising the telemetry analysis team, and he examined the unexpected data, concluded that it was indeed anomalous, and referred the report to Dr. Franklin Jackson, the NASA astronomer managing the shakedown phase of telescope deployment. Jackson called in a half-dozen software, electronics, and optics specialists, who pored over the abnormal readings for three days of extended meetings. While these meetings were taking place, Ms Byron looked for further data anomalies, but found none, and reported accordingly to the chain of command.

The engineers investigating the first batch of data were having a hard time explaining how some putative "bit of debris" could have adhered to the mirror, and they were relieved when Ms Byron's updates arrived, indicating no further evidence of a defect or the presence of a foreign body. The investigation was concluded, with varying degrees of dissent among

the members, and the anomaly was ascribed to a transient spec of foreign material temporarily obstructing a square millimeter of the mirror. Since it was now gone, nothing further was done, and the investigation was quickly forgotten by everyone.

Some weeks later, Janet Byron happened to be analyzing another data stream from the Webb that contained a similar anomaly. This time, it seemed to be located on a different part of the mirror, on a completely different segment. She performed some reasonably accurate thumbnail calculations and concluded the anomaly was probably not, after all, due to an issue with the mirror segments or the optical sensors, but to a hitherto unknown object—very small—in orbit. She knew that everyone on the Webb telescope project would be relieved to find all implications of mirror defects resolved, and she reported to Dr. Hanover immediately.

Hanover passed the information up the chain of command, and Dr. Jackson received it with mild relief, and handed it off to a team of astronomy graduate students in Flagstaff (most of whom are also members), charging them to locate the object and record appropriate measurements of orbital position, albedo, dimensions, mass, and other parameters of interest to astronomers. He suggested that when the object's properties had been documented they should pass their findings on to ODPO, the office of NASA's Orbital Debris Program.

The Flagstaff team had some difficulty locating the object. As it happened, Ms Byron's rough calculations were too rough to replicate, and so a scan was begun to find the object. Since observing time is always scarce for graduate students, it was some months before a possible candidate was located. Further study of its orbital trajectory confirmed that this could have been the source of the original anomaly. Prof. Harriet Batson, their supervisor, insisted that they also confirm this object as a possible source of the second anomaly, but when they extrapolated its position they found no correlation at all. When Prof. Batson, our local expert in celestial mechanics, examined their working papers, she quickly discerned the problem: the object was not in a terrestrial orbit at all. The Earth was following the object by a relatively fixed distance—the object itself was orbiting the Sun, traveling along the Earth's own path through space.

That there should be something, however insignificant, following the same path around the Sun is neither unusual nor surprising, since

other planets have been observed with their own co-orbital asteroids. But since this was the first Terrestrial co-orbital object, the news did garner considerable interest in the local astronomical community.

In the October 2025 issue of *Stargazer Magazine*, the Midnight Marauders Observing Club of Arizona published our first widely-available detailed metrics on the object. We calculated that it was oblong, roughly two meters in length and less than one meter wide, with a mass of about 90 kilograms. This information was picked up by the world astronomical community, and also, for a short time, the object became a focus of the usual social media speculation about extra-terrestrial technology spying on humanity. This quickly petered out, however, when it was noted that the object was almost completely non-metallic.

During 2026, sporadic studies appeared concerning the object, but its notoriety continued dwindling to near-obscurity. The object, known officially as 2021-U1, was now thought to have been preceding the Earth by about 45 degrees for millions (or even billions) of years, until a paper in *Amateur Astronomy* by Scadrollo Bedlovovitz (Stanford Astronomical Society) made a precise series of measurements and concluded the object was extremely recent—probably in orbit less than a century or two. He also pointed out, quite reasonably, that there was no way to extrapolate a prior path from which the object could have originally intersected Earth's orbit and ended up in such perfect synchrony.

At this point, Mr. Bedlovovitz conferred with Ms Byron, who he considered to be the asteroid's discoverer, and they agreed to apply to the International Astronomical Union for naming rights. Bedlovovitz accepted Byron's choice of the first name of her significant other (and soon to be spouse), and asteroid 2021-U1 was thereafter known as Eddy. The irony of this choice would not become clear for another two years.

In 2027, a group of amateur astrophotographers from clubs around the world trained a network of powerful telescopes on asteroid Eddy for several nights, collecting and integrating multi-hour exposures. As their image resolution improved day after day, they eventually achieved an extraordinary level of clarity in a picture that went viral overnight and caused repercussions lasting for a decade or more.

The Eddy asteroid was not a rock, or a chunk of ice. Eddy was a person,

a frozen humanoid corpse, following (preceding, to be more precise) the Earth's path around the Sun.

Once a few more clear images had been constructed, confirming that it was indeed a human-like figure, a joint NASA / SpaceX remote controlled probe was hastily constructed and beat numerous other competing probes to its rendezvous with the corpse some 11 months later. In the fall of 2029 the body was returned to Earth and examined by a small army of scientists from a dozen disciplines.

Since the body had been tracking Earth's orbit, it had remained in the same relative position, about 45 degrees ahead of the planet, undetected for an unknown period of time. Not only was a human corpse extremely small in the scale of planets and stars, but this one wore no protective gear, no space-suit or enclosing escape pod, so there were no large metallic surfaces that might have registered on terrestrial radio or astronomical instrumentation.

The first question, of course, was whether Eddy was really human, or merely looked human. Upon initial examination, the body, a normally proportioned male, was indistinguishable from any other healthy, average person who had been slowly frozen, after swift bloating and hypoxia caused by the hard vacuum of space. His tissue damage was extensive, first by the ebullism from gasification of bodily fluids, and next by the innumerable cycles of freezing, surface melting, and re-freezing as the body moved in and out of direct exposure to the Sun.

Eddy was clad in unfamiliar clothing styles that proved difficult to trace to any Earthly source. There were no labels in his garments, and he carried no personal paperwork, licenses, photos, or other identifying materials.

His outer coat was unquestionably leather, but from an unidentifiable species, since it exhibited an unknown genetic signature, although the man's genetics tested entirely human. The coat, like all his other clothing, was finely fabricated, almost certainly by machinery similar to that found in modern factories on Earth.

The body was accompanied by a small assortment of tools—a large leather-sheathed knife, a cleverly fashioned folding multi-tool, a contoured canteen filled with two liters of almost reagent-pure water, a magnetic compass, three gas-powered lighters, a semi-automatic handgun with six

full clips, and a small hollow crystal talisman on a leather cord around his neck. The markings on the compass were in Arabic numerals, which with the pistol seemed sufficient confirmation that Eddy came from a world, or an alternate universe, that was extremely similar to our own. None of the artifacts, though conventional, bore identifiable manufacturer brands, and the pistol's markings and serial number had been filed off. The knife appeared to be custom made, and the multi-tool bore a blemish that matched one on the canteen where an enamel logo may have been.

Popular speculation held that the man had been an adventurer or survivalist of some kind, but nothing about his condition bore the slightest connection to being found in space with no sign of life support. Further speculation among the public favored an extra-Terrestrial origin, preferably from Nemesis, the hypothetical "sister Earth" located at the third Lagrange point on the opposite side of Earth's orbit. The fact that numerous space vehicles had observed that portion of the orbit and found no such extra planet did not deter a fast-growing phalanx of conspiracy theorists from concocting fanciful tales of collusion between malevolent financiers on Earth and Nemesis that, one way or another, always ended up with Eddy being ejected into space from a Nemesis spacecraft. Nevertheless, Eddy was unquestionably human, and almost certainly of Earth origin. It was as if he had been snatched from a hunting trip and deposited, with appropriate angular momentum, some 125,000,000 kilometers away from his home planet.

For several months, numerous scans and surveys were conducted, combing the Earth's path around the Sun, following orbital precession backwards for a century or more, and in early 2028 a second orbiting corpse was found, ironically, not far from the third Lagrangian. The second body was different from Eddy. It wore a one-piece synthetic lab coverall, over hospital scrubs, and a small crystal pendant, identical to Eddy's, was clutched in its frozen hand. Again, there were no personal items to identify the body, and the scrubs and impermeable coverall both bore no brand names or logos. An exhaustive search through government facial recognition databases failed to turn up any plausible match for either Eddy's bloated and frozen physiognomy.

After Eddy2 was recovered and analyzed, orbital scans continued,

and in December of 2028 a third co-orbiting corpse turned up. Within six weeks, a third probe was sent across the ecliptic to bring it back.

Meanwhile, retrospective analysis of the Eddyoid positions was completed, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, revealed that at least two of the bodies had not been where they were found for very long. Bedlovovitz had been correct: their first appearance, however barely discernible to the technology of the time, was as recent as the late 20th century, 1989 to be exact. Photographic plates from Mt. Palomar Observatory were soon included in the retrospective analysis, and showed that Eddy2 had not been in his position of discovery in August of 1989, and was definitely there on images recorded in November of the same year. Eddy1's date of appearance in orbit was not confirmable in the same way, but it seemed reasonable to assume Eddy1 came from roughly the same time period.

The details of Eddy3's discovery last December, and subsequent analysis of images in the historical record, however, were not completed until February of this year. The photos showed that Eddy3 had appeared only three months prior to his discovery, sometime in September of 2028. This took the scientific community by surprise, since it had been thought that all three bodies appeared in orbit during the same time period, no doubt because they were all victims of the same mysterious events. Yet Eddy3 had not appeared in orbit until 40 years after the first two Eddies.

Examination of the third Eddy did little, however, to bring speculation to a close, and led to a generally accepted belief that it might never be known how these three men came to be found, defenseless to the harsh environment of space, racing around the sun at 107,000 kph in various positions along Earth's orbital path.

The third body was also widely thought to be the last. It wore a conventional business suit, complete with tie and a silk handkerchief in the breast pocket. But, significantly, all labels had been cut, somewhat crudely, from the garments, even the underwear, and there was nothing in the suit pockets—no wallet, no currency, no business cards, or even a branded ballpoint pen.

These theories came to a head when, just four days before this article was being written, three more Eddyoids appeared very close to the Earth, two females and another male, in a region of space already monitored by numerous satellites. At this very moment, Eddy3 is being unwrapped and

laid out for examination, and another drone is heading for the three new arrivals.

As of this writing, no more mysterious casualties, or Eddyoids, as all six corpses are now known, have turned up.

No satisfactory resolution to the mystery of the Eddyoid origins has been widely accepted so far. Rumors from NASA say that the latest trio of Eddyoids is also in coveralls and scrubs, so if they don't provide any substantial new clues, it may be many years before any satisfactory explanation is found.

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In June of 2066, the six remnants of the Tempus Fenestra Confab, LLC met at their Seattle laboratory for the first time in seven years.

The acting chairperson, Ellanish Whitmore, called the meeting to order. "Well, here we are," she said. "But what's the point?"

Her fellow members nodded in somber agreement.

Saul Bledsoe, whose brother, their last temporonaut, had impulsively entered the machine in the winter of 2059 after leaving a suicide note, spoke up in a soft but firm voice. "I've thought about this for a long time. We cannot allow Art's departure to have been in vain. We've sent six people now, and surely one of them will manage to either return, or leave a sign for us in the historical record."

"We've been over this," said Jim McCafferty, lead mathematician. "The resonators have all been silent. They've left no markers and we've never been able to beam in on anyone. They're not going to return. It's as simple as that."

The room was silent until Frank Mortraub said, "I've examined the designated signaling locations over the last 50 years with a fine tooth comb. Nothing. And if Scott Trafalgar got all the way to 1800, surely he would have made contact with someone in the Royal Society, or Ben Franklin, or anyone with an ounce of scientific curiosity. Hell, the cigarette lighters alone would have made him famous. But there's no record anywhere."

"Maybe Trafalgar was right, and we've been overshooting by centuries, not years." Tammy Wilson was the team's electronics engineer, and it was

she who had helped Scott convince the others to try sending him farther back.

Bledsoe said, “Frank, I beg of you, just look harder. Dig deeper. There has to be some evidence of their presence!”

Ellanish looked down at her notes. “There’s no point in further speculation,” she said. “We don’t know why none of them managed to leave a mark. If the Team of Three couldn’t do it, then clearly something went wrong. Something consistent.” She paused, as if expecting someone to interrupt. Then she said, “Tony? You and Fyvush insisted on this meeting. What’s on your mind?”

Anthony Santorini, mechanical engineer and one of their founding visionaries, glanced at Saul Bledsoe, and then stood up. “We have to try again,” he said.

Everyone but Saul either shook their head or groaned. Ellanish grimaced and said, “Surely you’re not serious.”

“I am,” Santorini declared, glancing at Bledsoe’s clenched jaw. “I’m convinced,” he continued, “that if we build a significantly larger resonator, perhaps even a ring of resonators for the next traveler to wear around the waist, we’ll be able to target in on it no matter what year they end up in.”

Mortraub slapped the table and glared at Santorini. “It’s already a tremendous paradox-risk sending any resonators. What about our ‘one absolute rule’? We all agreed that this was one principle we would never violate! No advanced tech. Nothing to confirm the temporonaut’s origins! If we send some obvious crystal contraption on the next trip, who knows what the consequences could be?”

Fyvush Epstein cleared his throat.

Ellanish looked up, hoping to distract the rising tempers. “Fyvush? You said you had an item for the agenda? Is it relevant?”

“I think you all should take a look at this” he said, pulling a sheaf of papers from his briefcase.

The membership glanced at the prints: *Eddyoid Status Report, 2029*.

“What’s an Eddyoid?” said Bledsoe.

“Read it,” said Fyvush. “It’s relevant.”

For a few minutes, the room was silent. Mortraub looked up from the paper. “Where did you find this? I should have been informed.”

“It just turned up,” Fyvush replied. “In an online newsletter from an

Arizona astronomy club. The Midnight Marauders. My wife was deep searching for her paper on the first space telescopes, Hubble, Webb, Morton 5.”

“What does our work have to do with astronomy?” asked Mortraub.

“Nothing. But read the paper. It’s obvious.”

Tammy Wilson looked at Jim McCafferty. “It’s not surprising we would have missed something like this,” she said.

McCafferty nodded. “The first few decades of the web were utter chaos. Traffic doubled every two years until the 2045 Solar Max. We were so focused on what was happening at the signaling places we didn’t notice anything else.”

The room fell silent once again, for a long time. The members re-read the report and shook their heads.

Ellanish spoke first. “Then there’s no further discussion of another trip?” she said. “And no need for a bigger resonator?”

Everyone nodded.

Wilson and McCafferty began whispering. The others looked on impatiently.

“I think I know what has to be done,” said Tammy, while Jim nodded.

Bledsoe stood up again. “I still don’t see how all our people ended up in space,” he said. “And they called all of them Eddy? It doesn’t make any sense.”

“Yes it does,” said Tammy. “We got it right, but we only did half the job.”

“What’s that supposed to mean? We lost six good people!” Bledsoe was getting edgy.

Tammy continued. “We got the time travel right, but we didn’t account for the space travel.”

“Space travel? What the hell are you talking about?”

“We’re so Terra-centric,” she said softly. “When they traveled through time, the Earth moved on without them.”

Bledsoe frowned.

Ellanish muttered, “We expected them to just reappear in the same place half a century earlier. But when they came out, the ‘same place’ wasn’t there anymore.”

McCafferty said, “We need a whole new technology. We have to

integrate some kind of matter transmission, or a spatial targeting system, something to synchronize with the Earth's motion. Otherwise they'd be just as likely to reappear inside a mountain."

"Well, not *just* as likely," said Tammy.

Bledsoe relaxed a little. "We still have some of the original fund left."

Ellanish glanced around the room. Everyone looked exhausted, but hopeful. "Alright," she said. "Enough of this. Let's get started."



In Memoriam

2059 #1 Dr. Paul Pedersen (Eddy2) -> Arrived 1989.

2059 #2 Team of Three (Eddy4, 5, 6) -> Arrived 2029. Janet Bingham, Eleanor Dixon, Jackson Duluth.

2059 #3 Scott Trafalgar (Eddy1) -> Arrived c. 1800.

2059 #4 Art Bledsoe (Eddy3) -> Arrived 2028.

