

# National

## Saturn braided rings mystery to scientists

PASADENA, Calif. — Voyager 1 gazed back at Saturn Thursday, adding more dazzling data to an already priceless legacy that poses new questions for space scientists, especially the mystery of the planet's theoretically impossible "braided" rings.

Astronomer and TV's "Cosmos" host Carl Sagan called the strange rings — which appear to twist serpentine as they circle the mustard-yellow planet — "an absolutely stunning development."

Under the laws of physics as they have been understood for centuries, such a configuration is an impossibility.

Puzzled scientists, abandoning the restraints of professional language to describe the rings as "weird," "bizarre" and "mind-boggling," said only that unknown forces must be at work.

"It is not that the laws of physics are wanting, but that human brains have not yet been clever enough to explain this," said Sagan, who dropped by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory Wednesday to see the latest pictures.

"I suspect this means the rings are dynamic, changing objects being pulled by gravity. I am guessing that when Voyager 2 arrives next August we will find that formation has changed — but determining what is going on here will be a big job, a real feat of mathematics."

Voyager 1, launched more than three years ago, made its close encounter with Saturn more than 947.6 million miles from Earth at 5:46 p.m. CST Tuesday, skimming just 77,200 miles above its clouds at 56,599 mph.

The space probe spent 22 hours and 23 minutes inside the multihued rings, sailing out Wednesday night on a course that will eventually make it the third man-made object to leave this solar system, after two Pioneer spacecrafts.

A full day of experiments was scheduled Thursday, including the closest encounters with two of Saturn's 15 known moons, Hyperion and Iapetus. JPL scientists face their heaviest workload during the rest of the week as the flood of information is processed and analyzed.

President Carter, who watched the Saturn encounter for an hour Wednesday, hailed it as "a superb scientific achievement" in a phone call to JPL scientists.

He also said he was proposing budget funds for a similar mission to Venus, but the final decision on the money will be up to President-elect Ronald Reagan and the incoming Congress.

A twin to Voyager is due to reach Saturn next August and then cruise on to explore Uranus for the first time in 1986 and possibly distant Neptune in 1989.

Saturn, second largest planet in the solar system, is a bitter cold ball of mustard-colored gas. Its girdling

rings — one of the most spectacular sights in the solar system, first seen by Galileo in 1610 — are believed to be made up of chunks of ice — "dirty snowballs."

The rings are far more numerous than earthbound astronomers had thought. The five rings visible through telescopes apparently are actually hundreds of rings of different sizes. On close examination, they have provided many puzzles, none more baffling than the "braided" feature.

"In the strange world of Saturn's rings, the bizarre has become commonplace," sighed Dr. Bradford Smith, head of the imaging team as he told reporters of Tuesday's discovery.

"It boggles the mind that this can even exist. There appear to be kinks in the braids, which make it even more difficult to understand."

Scientists could only speculate the rings are reacting to gravitational pulls unknown to them and difficult to imagine.

The braiding was discovered in the outermost F-ring, which was found only last year by an earlier space probe, Pioneer 11.

That appeared to rule out the possibility that Voyager 1 observed some transitory development, Smith said.

"If it's been around one year, it's been around billions of years, which means this weird configuration is stable."

## Book taken off shelf

OAK LAWN, Ill. — A citizens group says "Show Me," a sex education book featuring children engaging in sexual experimentation, shows a little too much, and members say they will fight to ban the book from the local library.

The Oak Lawn Library Board refused to back the group's bid to ban the controversial book, but voted 5-2 Tuesday to keep it under wraps in the librarian's office, and make it available only upon request, to adults.

The book is a "juvenile portrayal of children (and teenagers) finding out about each other, looking at each

other's bodies," a library spokesman said.

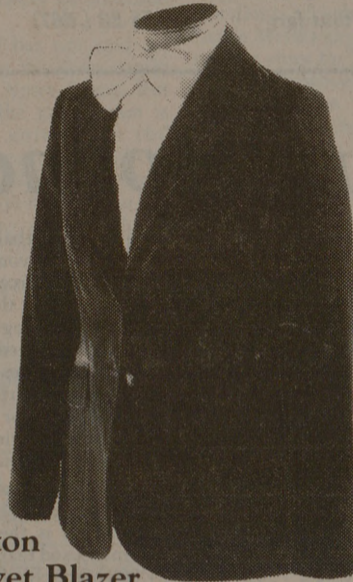
But Nancy Czerwiec of the Oak Lawn County Awareness Group in the Chicago suburb called the book "smut" and said it contained "deviate sex."

Czerwiec said the library board ignored a petition of 800 signatures against "Show Me," and her group will continue its campaign to ban it. She warned the group would seek court action as a "last resort."

However, Head Librarian James M. O'Brien said courts in Oklahoma, New Hampshire and Toronto, Canada, have already ruled that "Show Me" was not obscene.

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## 118 driven from Bahamas

### Haitian refugees returned

NASSAU — Armed police ordered reporters off Cayo Lobos, then used nightsticks to herd 118 Haitians into a ship waiting to return them to the homeland they fled two months ago.

Filed reports of American television crews contrasted sharply with a government spokesman in Nassau who said, "There were some problems initially with the Haitians refusing to go, but there was nothing physical."

Bahamas Defense Force headquarters in Nassau refused to confirm whether the removal of the Haitians had been completed. "I'm not at liberty to tell you," said a spokesman. But at 10:30 p.m. Wednesday, he said, "I think it is still going on."

The Haitians left their homeland in September in a 33-foot wooden sailboat. Five died at sea, and 118 survivors were cast onto Cayo Lobos by a storm which swept their frail craft away.

They were without food or drinking water until discovered by a U.S. Coast Guard patrol plane.

When told they were to be returned to Haiti, the leader of the group, Claude Pierre, 25, of Port-au-Prince, said, "They are going to have to kill us right here, it is a decision we made together before we left. We knew we might die. We knew that the voyage was dangerous. But we know we will die in Haiti if we stay."

A 135-foot supply vessel named Lady Moore sent to Cayo Lobos Tuesday to remove the Haitians was met by refugees throwing rocks and brandishing knives, sticks and sharpened shells. The vessel withdrew.

A Bahamas Defense Force patrol craft arrived at the island Wednesday carrying nine military policemen armed with automatic weapons. The evacuation began.

Five Cuban-Americans, who also took refuge on the island this week after their boat burned and sank, have been aboard the Lady Moore since Tuesday. American authorities will take responsibility for them when the ship arrives in Port-au-Prince.

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