

ASTRONOMY

Copernicus Honored

Nationwide observance of 400th anniversary of the death of Polish astronomer is being planned for May, 1943. Sponsored by Kosciuszko Foundation.

➤ NATIONWIDE observance of the 400th anniversary of the death of Nicolas Copernicus, Polish astronomer, and the birth of modern science is being planned by The Kosciuszko Foundation for May 24, 1943.

Hundreds of American universities and other institutions have been invited to participate by Dr. Henry N. MacCracken, president of Vassar College and also of The Kosciuszko Foundation, whose letter of invitation was made public recently.

With Poland now associated with the United States in the war of survival and several million citizens of Polish extraction living in this country, it is the desire of the Foundation to make the Quadricentennial of the Polish astronomer one of the greatest scientific tributes of history.

The University of Krakow, the alma mater of Copernicus, has now for the first time in 575 years been closed by the invader. Its professors have been thrown into a concentration camp, and it is understood that two-fifths of them have lost their lives for the crime of being connected with the University of Copernicus. All visible monuments of Polish culture have been destroyed, but today Copernicus stands, Dr. MacCracken declared, the irrefutable answer to the invaders.

The heliocentric system of Copernicus fixed the sun at the center, with the earth and all the planets revolving around it, while the stars were fixed in space at enormously greater distances.

The geocentric system of Ptolemy

fixed the earth immovably at the center, with the sun, the other planets, and all the stars as well revolving around it.

The Copernican system revolutionized and enormously expanded man's conception of the universe. The earth, transported to the skies, became a planet. The sun became a star, and all the stars became suns, other possible worlds at vast distances.

The first printed copy of "De Revolutionibus" was brought to the dying Copernicus barely in time for him to hold it in his hand and to know that his great work had been completed.

May 24, 1543, Copernicus died and science was born.

Science News Letter, November 21, 1942

MEDICINE

Thyroid Extract May Decrease Bruising

➤ WOMEN recruits to the army of war workers who may get many a bump and bruise while learning unfamiliar kinds of work with heavy machinery may be helped by a discovery at the University of California Medical School of a remedy for easy bruising.

Small doses of dried thyroid gland extract, the University reports, may be effective in treating women who bruise easily.

The condition occurs predominantly in women with fair complexions, thin-textured skins and symptoms of glandular disorder. The black-and-blue spots, which come from such slight pressures, that usually the victim does not remember the bump which gave them to her, are not due to any defect in the blood's ability to clot, University doctors have discovered.

Probable causes are undue thinness of the skin, abnormal fragility of the smaller blood vessels and defective cushioning of the blood vessels beneath the skin.

Many remedies were tried in the University medical school study, including vitamin K, vitamin C and the anti-pellagra vitamin, niacin. K is the anti-bleeding vitamin, C has an effect on the fragility of blood vessels and niacin has an effect on skin health. None of

these proved effective, however, in treating easy bruising.

Thyroid extract is a powerful substance which should not be used without the advice of a physician.

The University report warns against confusing easy bruising, which is of no significance in persons of otherwise normal health, with true purpura, or bruised appearance, that may occur in diseases of the blood, spleen, liver or kidneys.

Science News Letter, November 21, 1942

MEDICINE

Polio Incubation Period Averages 12 to 13 Days

➤ INFANTILE paralysis takes from 12 to 13 days, on the average, to develop after a child has been exposed to the disease, Dr. Albert E. Casey, of Birmingham, Ala., reports (*Journal, American Medical Association*, Nov. 14).

This period, known scientifically as the incubation period, varied from five to 35 days in the 37 cases Dr. Casey studied. The 12-13 day incubation period is compatible, he reports, with that in 11 cases reported in medical literature and with the incubation period in monkeys or chimpanzees inoculated with freshly isolated human strains of the infantile paralysis virus.

Science News Letter, November 21, 1942

RESOURCES

Brazil and Peru Supply Rotenone for Insecticides

➤ PASS the ammunition!

That's just what two good neighbors to the south, Brazil and Peru, have undertaken to do during the next twelve months, to the tune of some 4,500,000 pounds.

The ammunition is rotenone, needed in our unending defense against insects. It is an essential ingredient in fly sprays and other insecticides. It is extracted from the roots of certain tropical plants of the bean family, that grow both in southeast Asia and in the Amazon basin of South America.

Before the war, we used to get a large part of our requirements from Malaya and the East Indies, the rest from South America. Now our two South American friends are coming to the rescue by greatly increasing their exports.

The rotenone-bearing roots will be supplied through regular trade channels and the Commodity Credit Corporation will act as sole purchaser for the United States, paying agreed-on prices.

Science News Letter, November 21, 1942

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