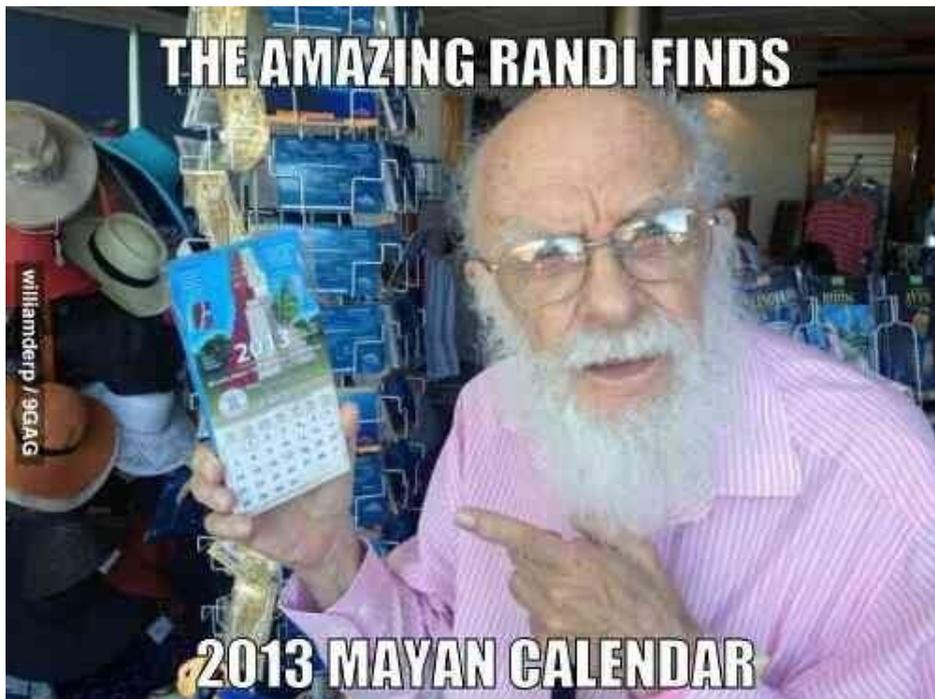


Another Panic Averted?

Written by James Randi

Thursday, 20 December 2012 14:43



Damn! Every time we look forward to The End of the World, we're disappointed! What could be the problem...?

Well, here's another news flash: While the world – it's true – is inevitably coming to an end, that event's not due for several billion years. Unless paper has a far longer life than I ever imagined, no reader of my books need fear being consumed by a Black Hole or vaporized by a visiting galaxy. Being pursued by lawyers or asked to visit your IRS office, are far more likely and dangerous fates to expect. Certainly, we should relax the popular notion that all – everything, *to ute le monde*

– ceases in this year 2012, largely based on the delusion that the Mayans, in the still-unsolved cessation of their highly-developed community, chuckled their way to extinction knowing that we were doomed to follow them in 2012. No, their very complex calendar does

not

end on December 21 or 23, 2012. They just ran out of room on the big chunk of stone on which they incised the calendar, and that was also the end of one major "epoch" in their calendar system... And, in any case, if they were so damn smart, why weren't they able to discover that those Spanish chaps who showed up on their shores in 1524 were not really so friendly...?

Another very popular belief is that the 2012 End will be brought about by a rogue planet colliding with the Earth. NASA has an excellent grasp of such a possibility. They tell us that if such a collision were really coming up, astronomers would have been tracking it for at least the past decade, and it would be visible by now to the naked eye. Obviously, it does not exist.

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NASA insists, succinctly and definitively:

Credible scientists worldwide know of no astronomical threat associated with 2012.

I suggest that any of my readers who doubt this assurance sit through the next few days, see what doesn't happen, and vow that they'll not panic when the woo-woos ring this tired old alarm again. But they will raise another alarm, be sure of that...

While the initial wild theories had set this disaster to happen back in May of 2003 – and nothing happened then, either – the prophets moved the date forward to the winter solstice of 2012, which conveniently coincides with the end of a cycle on the ancient Mayan calendar. Now, I hate to disenfranchise the doomsayers, but the Mayan calendar in fact does not end on December 21, 2012. Another period begins immediately afterward, which the artists of the Yucatan peninsula didn't get around to carving into stone, perhaps because they didn't have a bigger stone, or maybe they just didn't care. Come to think of it, have you ever seen a printed 2030 calendar? If not, will you decide that the world will end in 2029...?

Relax, folks. We'll still have taxes, war, upheaval, crime, and trouble to deal with...

There! Isn't that comforting news...?

James Randi is founder of the James Randi Educational Foundation