

A Reprint from *Tierra Grande*

MOONSTRUCK

BUYERS CAUGHT IN LUNAR LAND RUSH

BY DAVID S. JONES

Talk about out-of-this-world real estate. Would you believe millions of earthlings have bought land on the moon?

According to the Lunar Embassy, more than 400 million acres of the moon have been sold worldwide. Among the buyers are two former U.S. presidents and movie stars ("Star Trek," of course).

The Lunar Embassy is the brainchild of Dennis Hope, who 20 years ago claimed ownership of the moon and other planets in our solar system. Hope bases his claim on what the 1967 United Nations Outer Space Treaty does not say. While the treaty stipulates no government can own extraterrestrial property, it does not prohibit individuals and corporations from doing so.

"Therefore, under laws dating back from early U.S. settlers," proclaims the Lunar Embassy website, "it was possible to stake a claim for land and register it with the U.S. government office of claim registries."

Hope, better known as the "head cheese," says his confidential list of lunar buyers includes 250 celebrities, companies buying gifts for clients, investors, professionals, space hobbyists and 30 NASA employees.

An acre of land purchased from Hope's planetaryinvestments.com sells for \$29.95. That includes a lunar deed, lunar map where an "X" marks the location of

your property, a copy of the lunar constitution and bill of rights, mineral rights, registration card and the buyer's name "deposited on the moon in a transorbital mission."

But Hope isn't the only one claiming title to the moon and selling parcels to would-be moonies. Lunarland.com is thinking much bigger. They offer a 100-acre block for \$2,150 and the parcel size increases to a "quadrant property" they will part with for a little more than \$1.1 million.

The lunarland.com website shows the current locations already sold. Of course, it's of the lighted side only. The website notes there are nine billion acres on the entire moon's surface, and it is all land — no oceans covering valuable real estate. At least buyers don't have to worry about getting stuck with swampland.

Who really owns the moon? Geneva, Ohio, residents say they claimed the moon as their own back in 1966.

Thirty-five Geneva residents signed the "Declaration of Lunar Ownership" 38 years ago and unveiled it to the world at the high school auditorium.

Meanwhile, in an effort to bring the planetary land rush down to earth, Virgiliu Pop, a Ph.D. candidate at Glasgow University, has claimed ownership of the sun. His intention is to charge the other extraterrestrial owners for solar energy. Pop registered his claim in 2001.

Noting that extraterrestrial land claims are as "valid as Monopoly money," Pop — who has written papers on extraterrestrial property rights — says he now "owns the electric company on the game board."

As the planetary land rush moves throughout the solar system, it is now possible to shop online at buyuranus.com. While poking good-natured fun at planetary ownership, they are more than happy to take your \$14.95 and sell you a piece of Uranus.

One thing is certain. We haven't heard the last of the claims. Members of the International Institute of Space Law, the International Astronautical Federation and others see the need for serious discussions on extraterrestrial property rights.

Once the colonization of the moon and planets begins, it will no longer be a laughing matter. And should oil be discovered on one of the celestial bodies . . . ✦

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