



ALLYCE'S ATTIC

SUPER SIZING

by MARY ALLYCE



In 2004, director Morgan Spurlock released the documentary "Super Size Me", in which he pigged out on fast food to draw attention to the dangers of the trend to make everything, including portion sizes, bigger if not better. The results included a number of unhealthy side effects, not the least of which was a significant increase in his weight. Duh.

Apparently, we need to super size and overstate everything. Advertising, astronomy, sports and news, among others, found power in hype and tacking on the word "super" was an easy, quick attention getter. We have Super Sale Saturdays, Super Moons, the Super Bowl, and news anchors frequently sound like they're breathlessly announcing the apocalypse complete with a snazzy logo and a coined title like Apocalypt-aggon proving the word "super" is not necessary to overblow a point. We have Blue Blood Moons, Snowmageddons, Snowpocalypses, and my new favorite, Bomb Cyclones, which translates to really big snowstorms where the barometric pressure falls 24 millibars in 24 hours, if you want technicalities.

As a kid growing up in Wisconsin, snow and cold temperatures were expected anytime from November (sometimes October) through March (sometimes April). If it was less than six inches we called it a "dusting". If it was really heavy, it was a blizzard. Windchills, didn't exist before the 1970's. They weren't needed. If it was even a degree above 32o, it was a "January thaw". If you went outside and your feet went numb and the first breath you took froze the hair inside your nose, it was "pretty darn cold". We knew what it felt like without a number attached. It was winter. It was cold. It snowed.

And then there's the moon. There were always full moons, new moons, and the occasional eclipse of the

moon. It wasn't enough. Last winter at the end of January, we had a much anticipated Super Blue Blood Moon. Maybe I'm too hard to impress, but it seemed to me we'd just had a Super Moon and maybe even a Blue Moon. Until the last few years, I thought Blue Moon was primarily a song about a lovelorn soul and the most exotic lunar occurrence was the annual appearance of the Harvest Moon. That one had something to do with the autumnal equinox. It was a really pretty, big, fat moon.

For those of you who are into this stuff, a Super Moon is a 14% bigger and 30% brighter moon and a Blue Moon is two Super Moons in one month. If there's also an eclipse, it's a Blood Moon, so we got the highly ballyhooed Super Blue Blood Moon. Did the old Harvest Moon turn into a Super Moon? Was it ever a Super Blue Moon? When did this happen and if so, why, and who makes these decisions?

I want my lovely, evocative Harvest Moon back. You keep the new ones.

Not that supersizing everything is new. Super Novas, the phenomenon of an exploding star, was first described by a Caltech professor in 1931. Superman first appeared in 1938. Super Dave showed up on the John Byner Comedy Hour in 1972 and the super peppy song "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" came along in 1964 in the movie "Mary Poppins". Interestingly, the word appeared in print way back in the 1930's, although who coined it is disputed. All agree, however, it falls under the definition of a 34 letter, 14 syllable, feel-good nonsense word.

Which takes us back to the good old Super Moon. Turns out the term

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has no official astronomical designation. It was first used by astrologer, Richard Nolle, in 1979. I guess it just sounded good. Sort of like supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. Face it, we love to super size everything, including our words.

So have a super spring. And don't worry if you missed the last three Super Moons. There are three more coming up in June, July and August. Looks like a super special summer ahead. See you super soon.

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