

other consideration from outside the theory.

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NEWS

THE SUPERNOVA MAN

... "Searching from his backyard, Robert Evans discovers supernovae [the distant nuclear explosions of collapsed stars] by coupling a small telescope with a keen eye and a mental map of hundreds of galaxies. . . . On clear nights, Evans aims his home-built telescope skyward and scans nearby galaxies for a discrepant dot of light. Several times a year he finds one. 'He's absolutely unbelievable,' says Gerard de Vaucouleurs [U. Texas]. '[His is] a rate of detection that has never been achieved by anyone else, and it shows that there are a lot of supernovae that we are missing'. . . . Over the years, Evans has gained familiarity with more than 700 galaxies, each mentally catalogued with its distinctive surrounding stars. No other person can claim such a vast mental storehouse of familiar galaxies, yet Evans modestly likens his

talent to remembering a person's face. . . . Using Milky Way stars as guideposts, he hops from one fuzzy patch to the next at the rate—on good nights—of one per minute. With such speed, Evans can sift through as many as 500 galaxies in a session, dramatically boosting his chances of spotting a supernova. . . . Evans has made 10 discoveries—eight in the last two years—and four times he spotted the supernova before it had reached its maximum brightness, testimony to his diligence."

[(John R. Gustafson in *Science* 85 6(3):78, 80, 82, Apr 85) (Reproduced with permission from Press Digest, *Current Contents*®, No. 20, May 20, 1985, p. 15. Published by the Institute for Scientific Information®, Philadelphia, PA, USA.)]
