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Astrology offers worlds beyond horoscopes and fortune-telling



Astrologer Jill McDonald



By LISA ANTONUCCI

Staff Writer So, what's your sign? It may be one of the oldest lines in the book, but astrologer Jill McDonald asks the question with great sincerity.

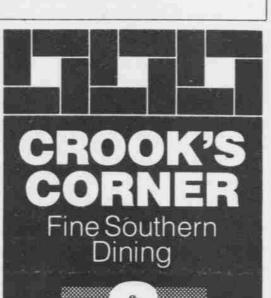
"Astrology is so fascinating," she said. "You can never exhaust the information that's there for you."

For McDonald, astrology goes beyond fortune-telling and daily horoscopes. "It's kind of like psychology. Each part of a person's birth chart represents a part of that person."

A birth chart is the most basic type of reading, according to McDonald. All one needs to know is the exact time and place of birth, and the chart maps the location of all the planets, the sun and the moon for that moment.

"The birth chart shows the energies a person will be working with throughout his entire life," McDonald said. "It's not saying you will be this certain way - you still have plenty of choice - it just says you will probably react a certain way."

The first step in discovering a person's astrological tendencies is to look at the associated planets and their individual meanings. Each planet represents a part of the human personality. For example, the sun is 'identity' while the moon is 'emotions' and the planet Mercury represents the mind.



The chart then tells what zodiac sign each planet was in at the time of that person's birth. "If you were looking at the planet, the (zodiac) constellation would be behind it," McDonald said. "The signs correspond to the constellations - the big imagined pictures people saw (in the sky)." These zodiac signs are the well-known Aries, Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, etc., each with a set of basic characteristics.

McDonald said that after determining how the planets and zodiac signs affect a person's personality, an astrologer must consider the 'house' in which he or she is located. There are 12 houses which are numbered counterclockwise around the chart.

"The houses come from the time of birth," McDonald said. "Their planets are charted by either a computer or looking in a reference book." Each house represents an area of life such as financial status, relationships or career placement.

The four basic elemental forces fire, earth, air and water - must also be taken into account. McDonald said these are ancient elements in astrology, and three different zodiac signs are associated with each element.

"They are an even more basic way of identifying personality traits," she said. "It's usually one of the first things I look at, because they give a broad overview." She said that fire represents action, while air is associated with intellect. Water represents emotional traits, and being born under the element earth can make one more deliberate and slow in accomplishing goals.

McDonald has always been interested in astrology and took it up as a full-time job after giving up teaching German and humanities at Illinois Wesleyan University.

"I've had my birth chart since I was 14 years old," McDonald said. "I know it by heart. Yet no matter how many times I go over it, or how many other astrologers I talk to, I'm always learning something new."

Besides birth chart readings, which take about an hour and a half, there are several other types of readings that McDonald gives.

Some chart readings look at events in the near future. These are helpful to people who want to make a business decision or pick a date for a special occasion, McDonald said.

Chart comparisons can be helpful to people in relationships, whether they are getting married or are going into business together, McDonald said. They tell how compatible people will be and what areas will give their relationship difficulty, so that people can be aware and deal with these issues when they arise.

Besides giving readings, McDonald occasionally teaches classes in her home. She also publishes a monthly newsletter called "Starnotes" to which people can subscribe.



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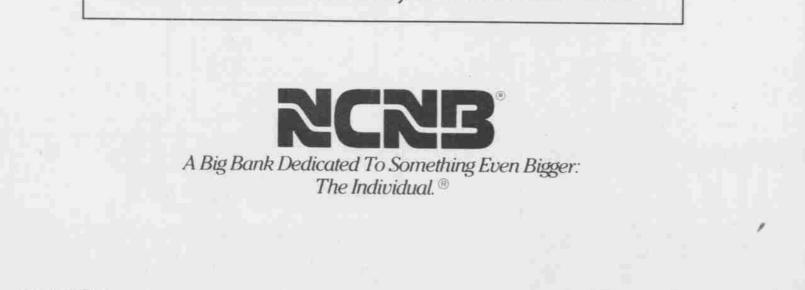
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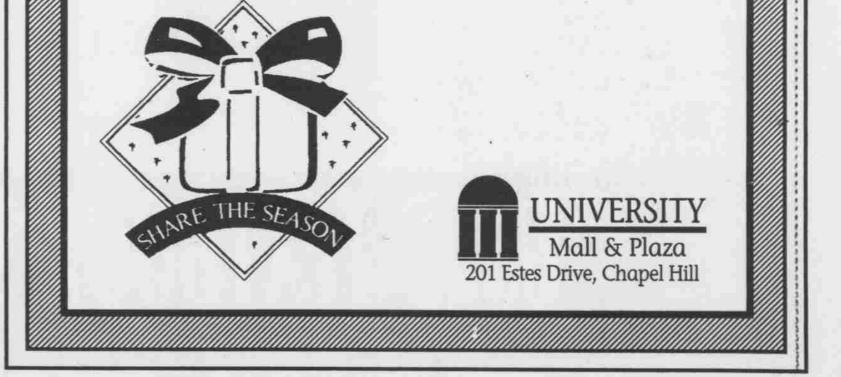
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