

HOW OLD IS THE UNIVERSE?

LL 8/01/02

Your Mission (SYDTAI): Get a grip (slippery though it might be) on the age of our local star system, the Milky Way Galaxy, and using this awareness, also get a feel for the age of The Universe.

Let's pretend that the center of our galaxy explodes every 12,000 years or so, emitting massive cosmic ray bursts which last for several hundred years (as in Seyfert Galaxies).

If you were to watch a time lapse movie which was compressed so that one full revolution of the galaxy lasted an hour, you would see these galactic center explosions flashing at a rate of **six per second** for the full hour.

As you are watching these flashes flickering on the screen, try to comprehend that **the time between two flashes represents 120 centuries or roughly 200 human lifetimes.**

After the hour you have witnessed **one** revolution of our galaxy, with 21,000 galactic center explosions.

In its lifetime it has rotated an estimated 40 times.

The Universe is thought to be about twice as old as our galaxy.