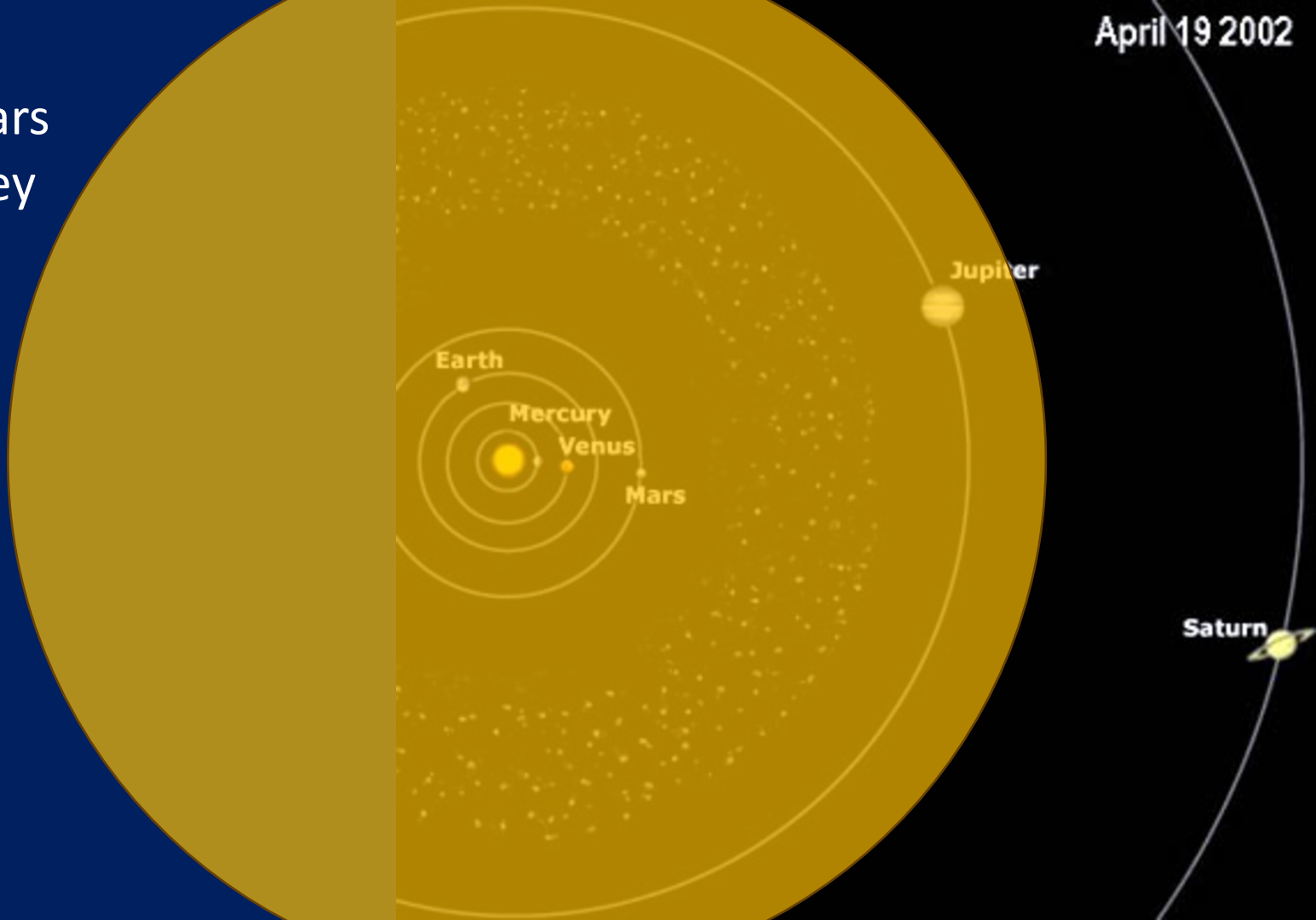


A Colossal Star Erupts:
***Examining One of the Largest Stars in
the Milky Way As It Fades From View***

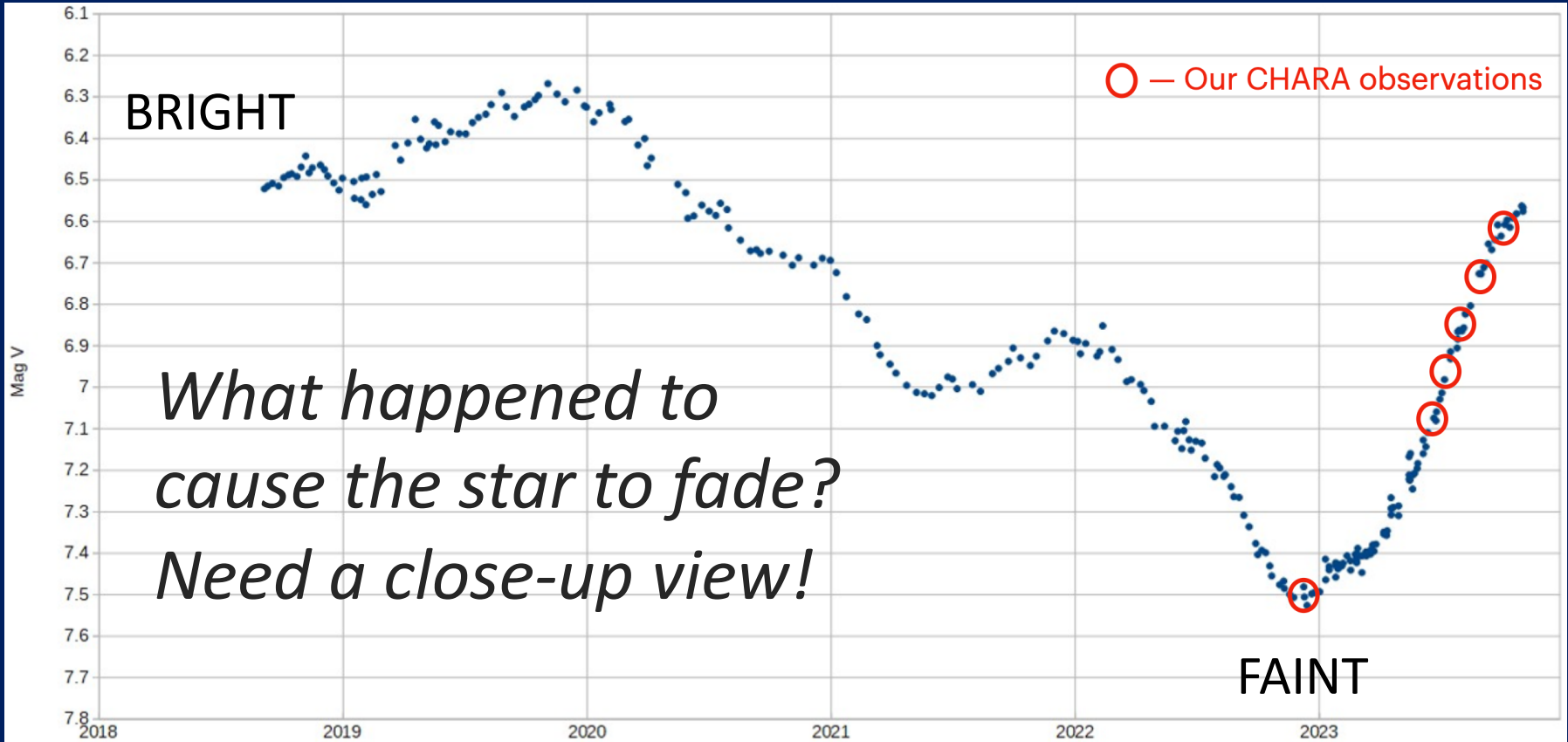
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April 19 2002

- Massive stars grow as they age
- RW Cephei is a huge **hypergiant**
- Unstable: recent eruption

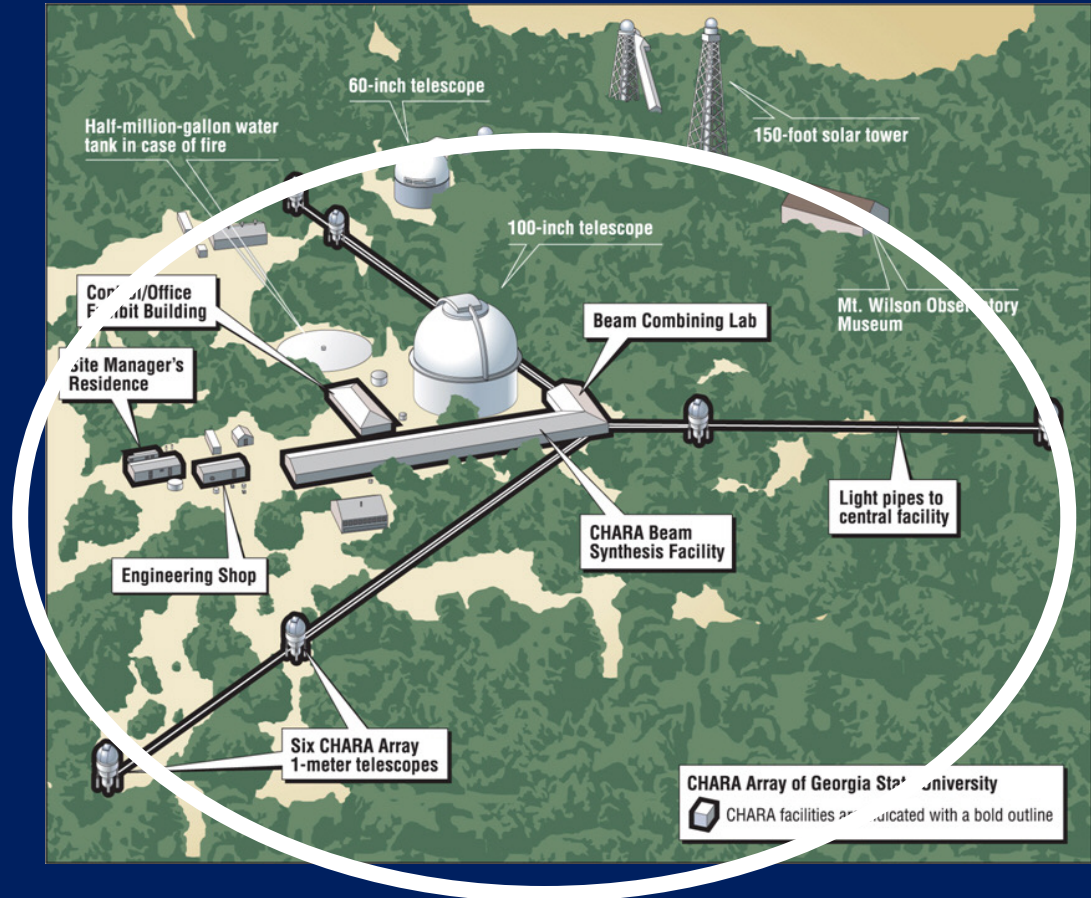


GREAT DIMMING OF RW CEPHEI

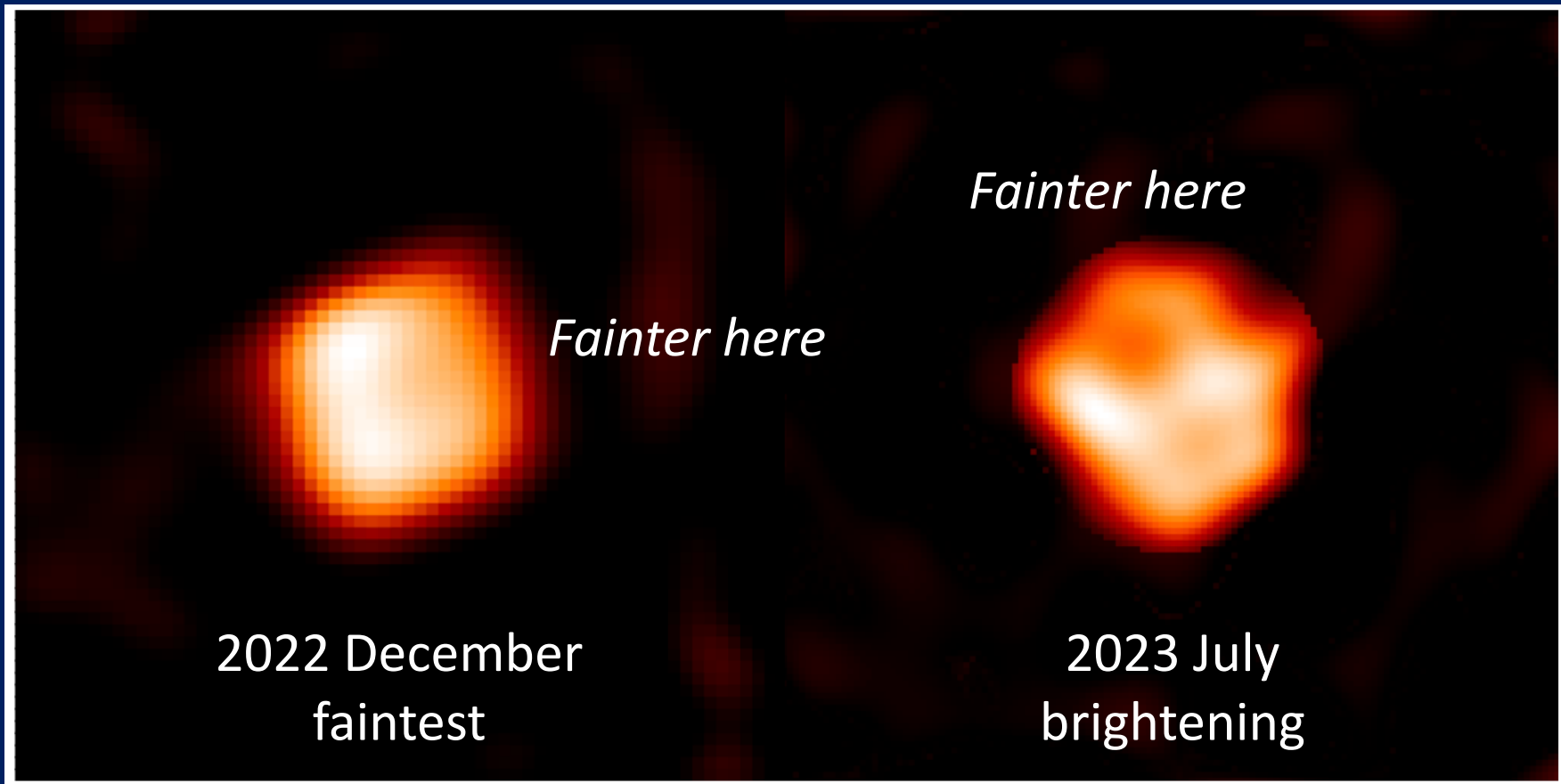


CHARA ARRAY INTERFEROMETER

- Great distance makes RW Cephei appear a million times smaller than full Moon
- Only CHARA Array can discern the details of the star



CHARA IMAGES OF RW CEPHEI





- *Similar to Betelgeuse*

Illustration credit: NASA, ESA, and E. Wheatley (STScI)

SUMMARY

- RW Cephei recently experienced a great gas eruption
- Ejecta formed dust causing strange appearance in images
- Ejections will influence final mass of star and its neutron star or black hole remnant

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