

Look for 'teapot' in March skies

By Raymond E. Bullock
special writer

March always brings us the official start of spring, and this year it also brings Easter.

The amount of sunlight we receive this month increases by one hour, 26 minutes.

Of the five naked-eye planets, only Saturn is visible before sunrise, low in the southeast before dawn.

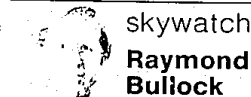
Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury are all evening objects. Jupiter is nearly overhead, in the faint constellation of Cancer the crab. Mars, the red planet, is high in the southwest, in Taurus. Venus is the bright "star" in the west after sunset.

MERCURY has its best placement for evening viewing later in the month. The moon is approaching the bright orange-red star Antares (an 8th magnitude star) about 45 minutes before sunrise. Antares is the "heart" of Scorpius the scorpion.

Last Quarter Moon is at 5:32 a.m. on March 8. The moon is beginning the last-quarter of its orbit around the earth. It has passed Antares and is now 10 degrees to the southeast (left) of that star. Watch the moon pass through the faint constellation of Sagittarius the archer from March 8 through March 11.

In Greek mythology, Sagittarius was a centaur, a creature who was half man and half horse. It is unlikely that the Greeks, or anyone else for that matter, ever "saw" the outline of a centaur in this part of the sky. This star pattern was named to honor Sagittarius.

Today, it is much easier to see the outline of a "teapot" in this part of



skywatch

Raymond E.
Bullock

the sky. The moon is located directly above the "spout" of our teapot on the morning of March 9. The star directly to the east (left) of the moon is the top of the teapot's cover.

On the next morning the moon has moved to the east of that star, and is located above a curving row of stars that mark the handle of the teapot. The bright "star" to the east (left) of the moon on the morning of March 11 is the planet Saturn. This is the planet with the beautiful rings.

THE VOYAGER spacecraft showed us that the solar system's three other giant gas planets (Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune) also have rings, but only Saturn's can be seen with a low power telescope.

The moon will be three degrees to the east of Saturn on the following morning. Four weeks, one half-hour after sunset on March 11, and try to spot Mercury.

Bright Venus will be no problem, but Mercury will be a challenge. It will be only a few degrees above the horizon. You will need an unobstructed view of the west and binoculars to spot Mercury. If Mercury proves to be too elusive for you, be patient, as each night goes by Mercury will be higher in the sky and will be much easier to see starting the next week.

New Moon is at 3:10 a.m. on

March 16. The moon is located between the earth and the sun and is not visible. Look for the thin waxing (growing) crescent moon on the evening of the 16th.

It is only 16 hours past new phase and will be difficult to spot. Look slightly north of due west with binoculars, 30 minutes after sunset. An unobstructed horizon is a must.

If you spot the moon, try for Mercury. It is due west and higher in altitude than the moon.

If Mercury still eludes you on the 16th, try again on the evening of the 17th. Now the moon will be about six degrees above Mercury, and on the 18th the moon will be four degrees to the north (right) of Venus. From the 17th through the rest of the month, Mercury is best placed for observing.

On Wednesday evening, March 20, the moon will occult (cover) the stars of the Pleiades (PLEE-ah dees). The Pleiades is a beautiful star cluster in the constellation of Taurus. The cluster looks like a tiny "hipper" through binoculars.

On the evening of the 20th, the moon passes directly across the Pleiades and blocks their light. This will be the last time this century that such an occultation will occur.

THE MOON passes through each member of the zodiac each month,

but only when the alignment between the earth and the moon is correct can an occultation occur. Each time the orbit of the moon takes it through Taurus after this night, it will pass above or below the Pleiades.

The bright star to the left of the moon is Aldebaran (al DEE-ah ran), the orange-red eye of Taurus. Sixteen degrees above Aldebaran, at about the same color and brightness, is the red planet, Mars.

Easter is on March 31 this year, but next year it falls in April. Determining the date of this very erratic holiday is not as difficult as you may think. All you need to know is the phase of the moon and a few rules.

The ground rules for determining Easter were set up in the year 325 A.D. when the Emperor Constantine called for a Council at Nicaea for the purpose of calendar reform.

Based on the advice of his Christian council, he decreed that Easter would be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon that occurs after the vernal equinox (the start of spring). The reason for choosing the full moon, rather than the new moon, was so people making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land could travel at night by the light of the moon.

SINCE the start of spring occurs on March 20 or 21, the earliest Easter can be is March 22. But now we have to consider the inevitable exceptions to the rule. If the first full moon to occur after the start of spring falls on a Sunday, then the following Sunday is Easter. If the full moon happens to be on the same day as the vernal equinox, then the April full moon is used. If the April full moon falls on a Sunday, the following Sunday is Easter unless that date is later than April 25, which is the latest date Easter is permitted to fall. If that Sunday does fall after the 25th, then the previous Sunday, the one with the full moon, must be used.

So all things considered, Easter can come as early as March 22, which it last did in the year 1818, and will again in 2395, or as late as April 25, which it did in 1943 and will again in 2038.

This year Easter Sunday is March 31, which is just one day after the full moon. Now wasn't that simple?

An excellent and free evening of entertainment and fun is planned to date with the day in the month. Sky Garden, a free open-air concert, is planned for 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Michigan State University, East Lansing 48824.

IRS speeding up refunds for Desert Storm troops

The Internal Revenue Service is trying to speed up refunds due those people serving in Operation Desert Storm.

By writing "Desert Storm" on the top of the income tax return and on the envelope, those who are due refunds will have their returns expedited, according to IRS district director John Hummel.

Although military personnel and others in the Middle East have an automatic extension of time to file their returns, we want to help those individuals who want to file early to receive a refund," Hummel said.

Local IRS offices will help prepare and other representatives of soldiers in the combat zone to file federal tax returns. "We can

also file the return electronically so that the refund is issued even more quickly," he said.

A Tryx tax service also is offering free electronic filing for Desert Storm military personnel and their spouses. For the returns prepared in their office.

Tax returns filed electronically can reduce the waiting time for a refund to a little as two weeks, compared to the regular filing which takes about six to eight weeks to receive a refund, according to Brenda Shaw of Antelope Snow & Associates.

People who would like more information about special provisions for taxpayers serving in Operation Desert Storm, may call the IRS toll free at 1-800-829-1040.

OCC offers free programs to aid people in transition

Oakland Community College's free admission Transition Center is offering a series of programs designed to offer support, direct a student's education and career planning for those coming with various academic backgrounds.

Participants will examine personal academic and career goals and identify the methods to achieve their goals in one of the following ways: evening seminars offered in March at the college's five campuses.

Those interested could phone the Transition Center at 313-487-1000, ext. 2222, for more information. Registration is required and space is limited.

At Auburn Hills Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222. At Farmington Hills Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222. At Highland Lakes Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222.

At Oak Park Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222. At Troy Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222.

At Westland Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222. At Warren Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222.

At Farmington Hills Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222. At Highland Lakes Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222.

At Oak Park Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222. At Troy Campus, 2500 E. Grand Ave., contact: Brenda H. Hines, coordinator, 313-487-1000, ext. 2222.

'Town Hall' features British spy

Author John G. C. Smith, who has written a book about the life of a British spy, will be the featured speaker at the "Town Hall" event.

The event will be held at the "Town Hall" in the city of Detroit. The speaker will discuss his book, "The Spy," which details the life of a British spy.

The event will be held at the "Town Hall" in the city of Detroit. The speaker will discuss his book, "The Spy," which details the life of a British spy.

The event will be held at the "Town Hall" in the city of Detroit. The speaker will discuss his book, "The Spy," which details the life of a British spy.

PRE-SEASON SALE



Visit Our NEW SHOWROOM

AIR CONDITIONER



- Quality Construction
- Durable
- Quiet Performance
- Lower Energy Cost
- Installed From

TTJ018 **\$1,295.00**

High Efficiency Gas Furnace



- Up to 97% Efficiency
- A/C Prepped
- No Chimney Required
- Installed From

TVC00B942 **\$1,995.00**


1899 S. TELEGRAPH
BLOOMFIELD HILLS
338-9255
642-7150

CALL TODAY FOR A FREE IN-HOME ESTIMATE

ANNOUNCING


A NEW PARTNERSHIP

A. J. DESMOND & SONS



362-2500

VASU, RODGERS & CONNELL



549-0500

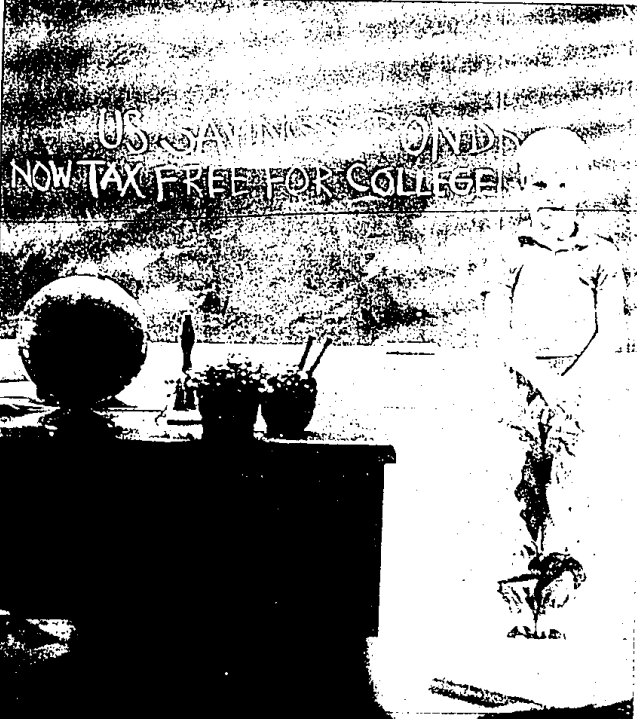
Now combined to continue our traditions of caring, personal service

A. J. DESMOND & SONS

Trust

The Hometown and Observer's Eccentric "Creative Living" section

has the largest selection of suburban display real estate ads in the metro area.



U.S. SAVINGS BONDS

NOW TAX FREE FOR COLLEGE

With tuition costs rising, it's never too early to start saving for your child's education, and the best way to save is with U.S. Savings Bonds. Safe and secure, today's Bonds can also be completely tax free when used for college tuition. For more information, call 1-800 U.S. BONDS.

CELEBRATE AN AMERICAN TRADITION
50 YEARS OF U.S. SAVINGS BONDS

A public service of the public area