

Michigan once had 27 different time zones



RAYMOND E. BULLOCK

SKY WATCH
Our unpredictable weather conditions notwithstanding, it is officially spring to which two events in April can attest: the start of Daylight Saving Time and Easter, although neither of them have any astronomical significance. Daylight time is merely a convenience; Easter is a religious celebration, the date of which is determined by the phase of the moon.

Only the three outer planets (Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) will be visible all month. Mercury will be too close to the sun to be seen; Venus, which is at inferior conjunction on April 1 (located between the earth and the sun), will appear in the morning sky by mid-month. There will be a rare occultation (covering) of Venus by the moon, but it will not be visible from our area.

Look for the moon, high in the

south southeast, on the evening of the 1st. The red star above and to the right of the moon is the planet Mars. It will form a large triangle with the stars Castor and Pollux, the "heads" of the Gemini twins. (The two stars will be to the left of Mars; Castor is 4.5 degrees above Pollux.)

Watch Mars during the month as it shifts its position through the constellation of Gemina. On the 1st it will be six degrees below and to the right of Pollux. During April Mars will travel 13 degrees and will end up to the left of Pollux.

Also watch as Mars' brightness changes; on the 1st it is brighter than Pollux, but by the end of the month the intensities will be equal. (Mars' fading is caused by the earth drawing farther away from it.)

The moon will be in the constellation of Leo on the evening of the 2nd. The star nine degrees to the left of the moon is Regulus,

the "heart" of the lion. On the following night the moon will be eight degrees below Regulus. The moon takes less than one calendar month to complete an orbit around the earth, and it will be located near Regulus again by the end of April.

Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. on April 4. Daylight time always begins on the first Sunday in April. On that day our clocks are set forward one hour. We are not altering the speed of Earth's rotation or the length of the day, we are merely adjusting the device by which time is measured. We gain a later sunset and an extra hour of daylight in the evening at the expense of a later sunrise and an extra hour of darkness in the morning. Our fussing with the clock is nothing compared to what went on 100 years ago.

Prior to 1883 there were no standard time zones; everyone kept "local" time. "Noon" occurred when the sun was due

south and the shadow cast by a stick was at its shortest. Obviously, local noon in Detroit was different from noon in Plymouth, which was different from Lansing and Grand Rapids, and so on. At one time there were 27 local time zones in Michigan!

Every state had local time zones making it impossible for railroads to schedule their arrivals and departures. They solved the problem by dividing the nation into four main time zones in 1883. Naturally these "standard" time zones were not immediately accepted by all the public, but over the passage of many years standard time became the norm. It wasn't until 35 years later that Congress, acting in its usual hasty manner, made the standard time zones the law of the land.

Michigan was originally placed in the Central Time zone because we are geographically closer to the Central Time longitude line in Chicago, than we are to the East-

ern Time line in Philadelphia. Later the people of Michigan voted to place the state in the Eastern zone so it would share the same time with businesses on the east coast.

Meanwhile, back in the 1993 April sky, Mercury is at maximum elongation (greatest apparent angular distance) from the sun on the morning of the 5th. It will be 28 degrees to the left of the sun and "officially" will be a morning object, but because it will be only a few degrees above the horizon it will not be visible.

Notice the bright star six degrees to the left of the moon at 8 p.m. on the 5th. That is the giant planet Jupiter, which has a considerable number of moons itself. A pair of binoculars will be powerful enough to let you see the four largest, which will look like faint stars stretching along the equator of the giant planet. To the west of Jupiter will be Europa; to the east will be Ganymede,

then Io (EYE oh) and Callisto. These moons perform an intricate ballet around Jupiter, and the change in their position is apparent over the course of just several hours. By 3 in the morning Europa will be passing in front of Jupiter, and Ganymede will be to the right of Io.

Full Moon will occur at 2:44 p.m. on April 6. The moon will be fully lit by the sun and will be visible all night. Some Native American Indians called the April Full Moon the "Grass Moon" or the "Egg Moon." The star rising in the east southeast, two degrees to the left of the moon, 45 minutes after sunset, will be Spica (SPY ka) in Virgo.

Raymond Bullock is the former coordinator of the planetarium and observatory at the Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills. He now works for a Troy laser firm that specializes in laser displays and effects.

Local attorneys to help Clinton

Seven men from the Observer & Eccentric area have been appointed to a committee to recommend candidates for appointment to the U.S. District Court, Eastern District, and the post of U.S. Attorney, Eastern District.

The committee will recommend two or three people for each of the three vacancies on the federal bench, as well as the position of U.S. Attorney, Eastern District, currently held by Steven Markham, a Ronald Reagan appointee.

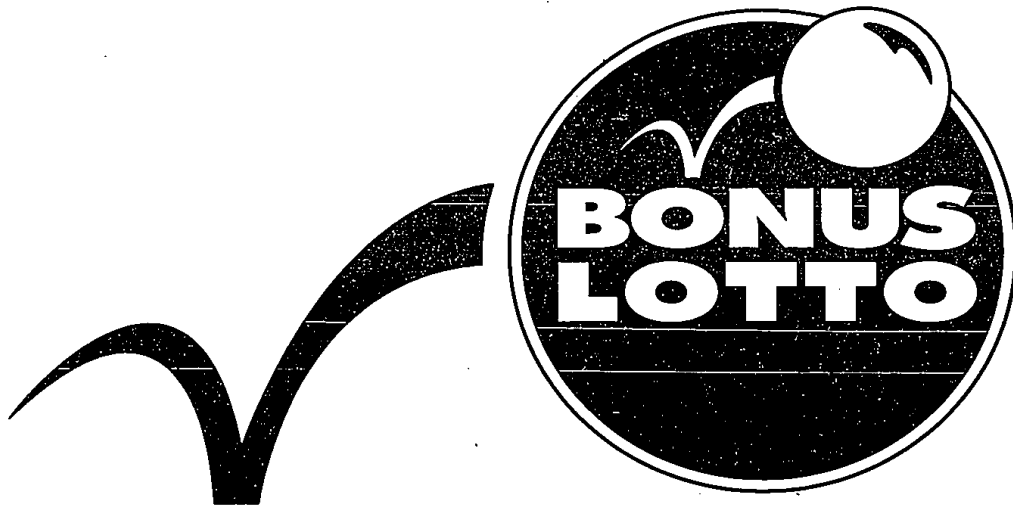
Senators Don Reagle and Carl Levin will review the recommendations and pick one of the candidates to recommend to President Bill Clinton, who will make the appointments.

The local committee members are: David DuMouchel of Birmingham, George Googasian of Oakland Township, Michael Kramer of Bloomfield Township, David Page of Bloomfield Hills, Paul Rosen of Farmington Hills, Theodore Sacha of West Bloomfield, and Fred Woodworth of Birmingham. All are lawyers.

There are 27 men and 11 women on the committee altogether, including chairman Leon Cohan, a lawyer for Detroit Edison.

Fourteen of the committee members are from Wayne County, nine from Oakland County, three from Macomb County and 11 from elsewhere in Michigan.

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