Look to the skies this month for brightness of Venus

By STEVEN L.J. RUSSO

Located in the west-northwest this month, and for the past several months, is a very conspicuous starlike object. Much brighter than any other starlike object, this is the planet known as Venus.

First observed telescopically by Galileo in 1610, the planet appeared to change its shape as it changed its position in the sky.

Galileo assumed, correctly, that the only way a planet could go through phases was if it orbited the sun. It was this discovery that led to the end of the geocentric, earth-centered solar system theory. Currently seen through a small telescope, only half of Venus is lit up; this phase best seen before it gets totally dark outside.

Venus is often referred to as our "sister planet." It is about the same size as the Earth, and even looks the same in satellite photographs. After that, the resemblance stops.

The upper regions of its atmosphere are made of mists of sulphur, so thick that from the surface of the planet, the sun is almost invisible. The thick clouds reflect 75 percent of the sunlight back into space, which is why Venus is so bright. It is the brightest object in the solar system, after the sun and moon, and is the only planet which casts a shadow on the Earth. It is also bright enough to see in broad daylight if one knows where to look. Two percent of the sunlight reaches the planet — about the amount of sunlight that reaches Moscow, Russia on a cold, cloudy winter day. This small amount is trapped below the clouds, building up a "greenhouse effect," so the temperature on the surface is a warm 900 degrees.

The rest of the energy causes severe weather and intense pressure. The winds blow over 100 miles per second, lightning flashes at the rate of 25 times per second, and the pressure on the planet is more than 90 times the pressure on the surface of the Earth; what a deep-sea diver would experience 3,000 feet beneath sea level. The clouds of sulphur produce rain; rain of sulphuric acid, in an atmosphere made mostly of carbon dioxide.

This planet, believe it or not, was named after Venus, the goddess of beauty. In reality, the planet is a "living hell." However, viewing it from here on Earth, about 30 million miles away, the planet is worthy of the name of the goddess, and definitely worth the look.

Until next month — look to the stars!

May Visibility of the Planets

• Mercury — This elusive planet will be visible most of the month low in the west after sunset.

• Venus — This very bright planet is also in the west after sunset. It is at greatest brilliancy on May 6.

• Saturn — The ringed planet rises just before midnight this month, and is low in the southwest by sunrise.

• Mars — The red planet rises about four hours before the sun, and is just about due south at sunrise.

May Phases of the Moon

• Full Moon: May 1, rises 8:15 p.m., sets 5:29 a.m.

• Last Quarter: May 8, rises 2:13 a.m., sets 11:46 a.m.

• New Moon: May 15, rises 5:07 a.m., sets 8:39 p.m.

• First Quarter: May 23, rises 12:37 p.m., sets 1:57 a.m.

• Full Moon: May 31, rises 9:35 p.m., sets 5:05 a.m.

*These times are for Poplar Ridge. Your times may vary.

May Schedule

"First Light — The Space Telescope Story"

If you missed it in March and April, this will be the last chance to see "First Light" this year. Imagine a telescope powerful enough to see a firefly in Sydney, Australia from Washington, D.C. — more than 10,000 miles away. The Hubble Space Telescope possesses this amazing power, and the Southern Cayuga Atmospherium-Planetarium examines this exceptional instrument in "First Light — The Space Telescope Story," at noon, 2 and 4 p.m. May 7.

Through an exciting blend of special effects, music, photographs and narration, "First Light" explores the fascinating world which the space telescope will reveal to us when it is launched on the space shuttle when flights resume. The show examines how the telescope's space-age technology will bring distant galaxies into sharper focus and provide a more detailed view of our own solar system.

"First Light" details the development of the telescope since one of the earliest astronomical observatories was built 400 years ago. Since then, telescopes have become increasingly powerful and exact but have not been able to overcome the blurring effects of Earth's atmosphere. The Hubble Space Telescope will be launched into space, where the Earth's atmosphere won't hinder our ability to see distant objects clearly. Data from the telescope will be analyzed by the Space Telescope Science Institute located on the campus of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md.

The program was written and produced by the staff of the Davis Planetarium of Baltimore's Maryland Science Center. The distribution of "First Light" is made possible by a grant from NASA Educational Affairs and the Space Telescope Science Institute Associates Program.

All who attend will receive a May star chart and weather outlook, and a Space Telescope information sheet.

For information and reservations (which are highly recommended) call the planetarium at (315) 364-7111.

Using star chart

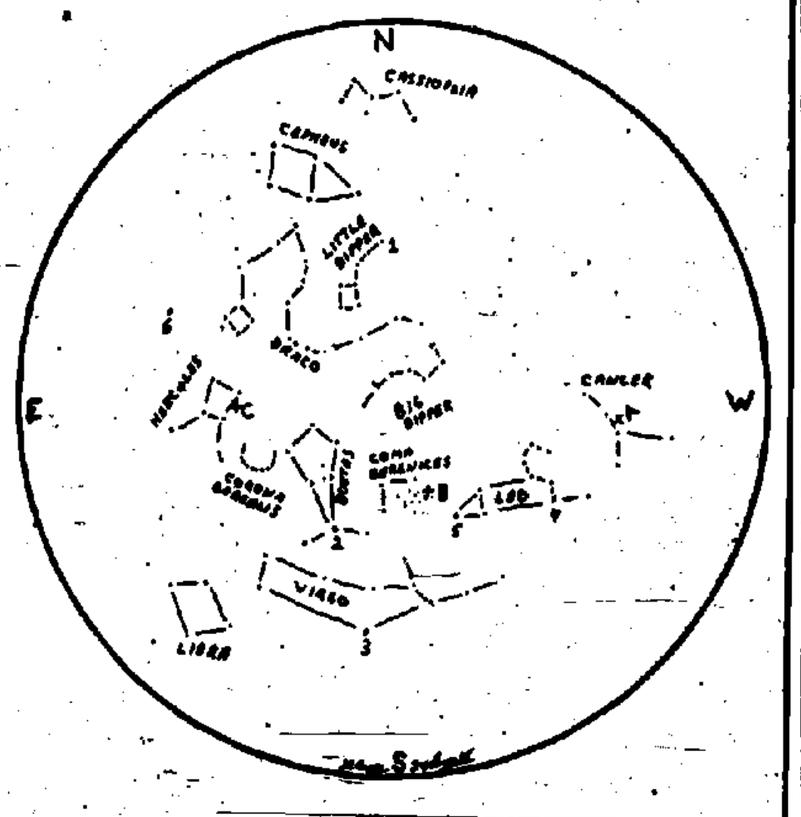
Locating the stars using this star chart can be an interesting experience and is quite simple.

If you wish to locate a star in the sky, hold the star chart overhead so that the 'N' at the top of the chart is facing north. Your star chart is now aligned with the 'real sky.' If possible use a flashlight with a red filter over the end so as not to ruin your night vision.

The constellations on the chart are labeled with capital letters. The stars are numbered on the charts and other astronomical objects are lettered. Although the chart is made to correspond to the sky of the middle of the month at 9 p.m., it can be used at any time of the month.

Only the brightest stars and recognizable constellations are labeled.

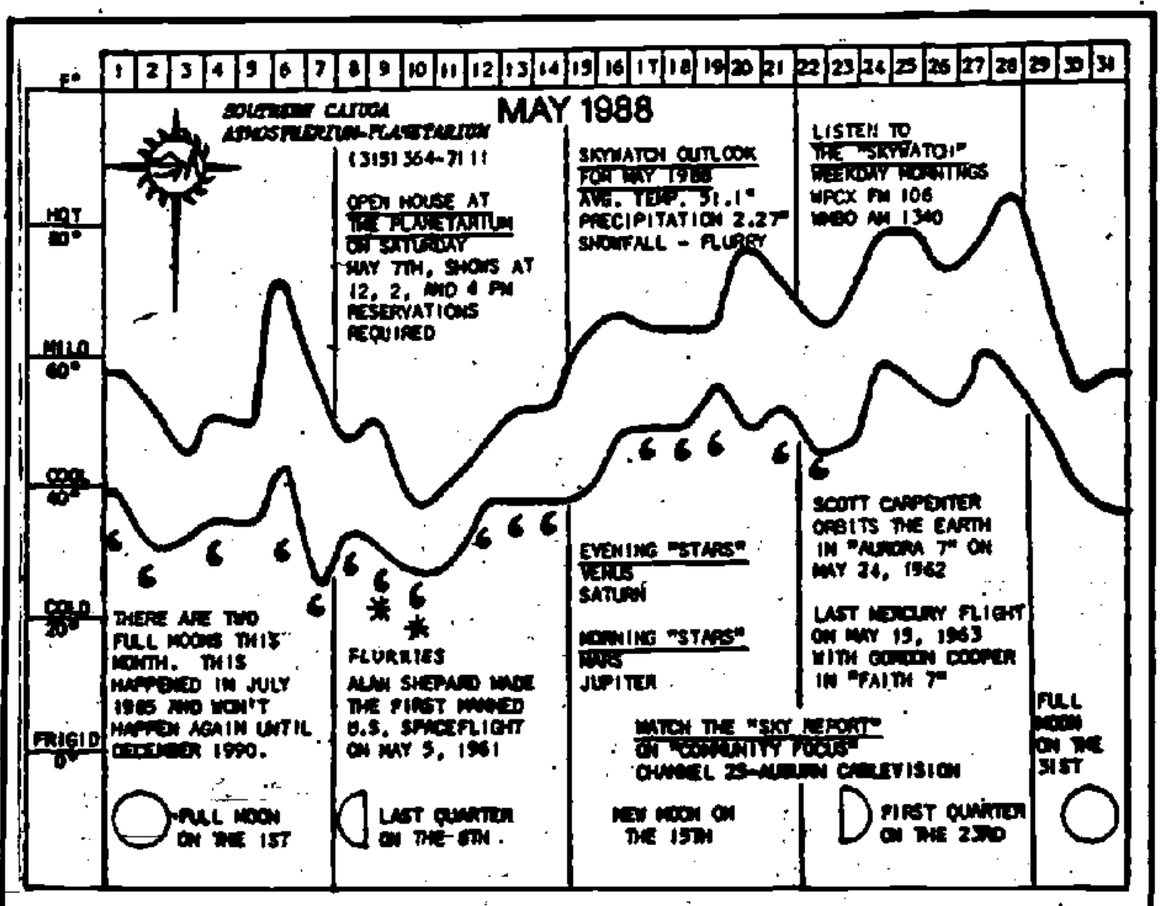
When you try to locate the real stars and constellations, it may not be quite as easy as finding them on the chart. Clouds, haze, lights, the Moon and an obstructed horizon may make for less than perfect observing conditions. However, with a little practice one will find observing easy and enjoyable.



Stars

Chart provided

1, Polaris; 2, Arcturus; 3, Spica; 4, Regulus; 5, Denebola; 6, Vega. Deep sky objects: A, Praesepe cluster; B, Coma berenices cluster; C, Hercules cluster.



Skywatch

Chart provided

This long-range weather outlook for Central New York is based on past-year records when solar activities were similar to those of this month. These factors may have some effect on weather patterns. Students of the weather may wish to follow daily conditions in order to determine the accuracy of this chart.

A real ice-breaker

NENANA, Alaska (AP) — Ah spring! For most of the nation, it's a time of fragrant flowers and verdant renewal. In Alaska, it's when the ice breaks.

So momentous is the event that since 1917 Nenana has held its Ice Classic, an opportunity for area residents to predict the exact moment of the ice break-up on the Tanana River.

This year, three Anchorage residents shared the $130,000 prize for being the only ones out of 146,300 entries to correctly guess when the 3-to-4-foot-thick ice would begin flowing down the river: 10:15 a.m. Wednesday.

"It kind of took everyone by surprise," said Wayne Taylor, contest manager. "It's the first time the ice has ever gone out on April 27."

The prize was split among Dan Nicoll, a construction worker, Mac Davis, 43, an accountant, and his 62-year-old brother, Harry, a retired postal worker who lives in Sacramento, Calif.

TODAY'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Middle-Name Madness

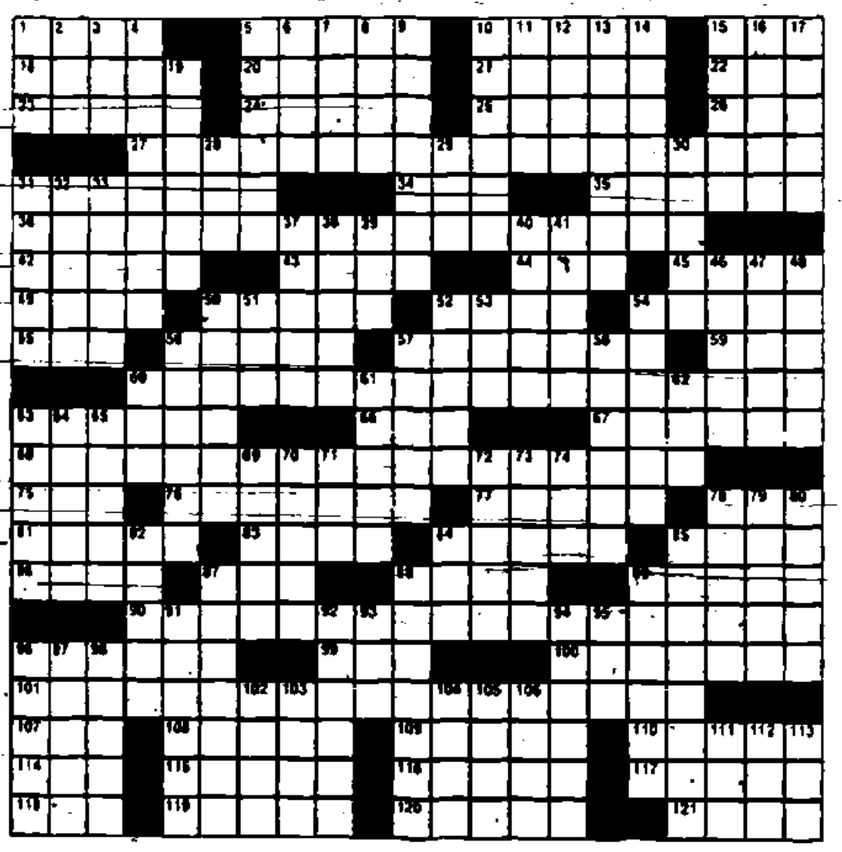
BY JOEL D. LAFARGUE/Puzzles Edited by Eugene T. Maleska

ACROSS

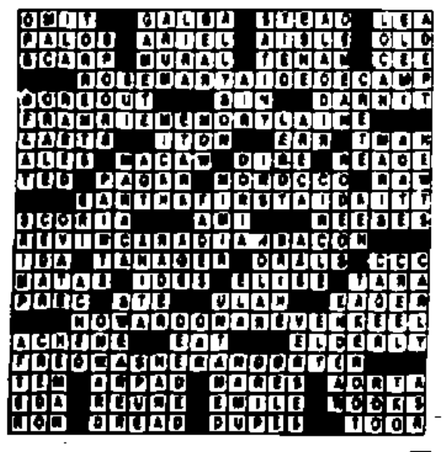
1 Leave out
5 Nero's successor
10 Place
15 "The — Rig": Burns
18 Whence Columbus sailed
20 Book by André Maurois
21 Seats splitter?
22 Ancient
23 Line of cliffs
24 Orozco work
25 Break time, for some
26 Aitch preceder
27 Actress-turned-adjutant?
31 Confirmed
34 Hamartiologist's topic
35 Rats!
36 Nostalgic singer?
42 Endures
43 Lay — (flatter)
44 Morne flier?
45 Counterfeiter's nemesis
49 City in S France
50 Large parrot
52 Terrible
54 Author of "Hard Cash"
55 Koppel or Turner
56 Allotheist, e.g.
57 Where Fez is
59 Like steak tartare
60 Singer with medical training?
63 Smelting residue
66 "— Blue?": 1929 song
67 Della and Pee Wee
68 Actor who comes for breakfast?
75 Peak in 30 Down
76 American songbird
77 Some tests
78 Top bowling score for Brutus
81 Hari et al.
83 Fateful date
84 "Für —," Beethoven opus
85 Mitchell estate
86 Going before: Abbr.
87 Relig. title
88 — Bator
90 Raring to go
90 Balanced actor?
96 Part of a buttercup
99 Break bread
100 On in years
101 TV star who cleaned up his act?
107 Pro — (for the time being)
108 Hungarian hero
109 Kind of nest
110 Main artery
114 Author LeShan
115 Celebrate Alumni Day
116 Francis of the N.H.L.
117 Board members?
118 With 95 Down, a Tarzan
119 Terror
120 Deceives
121 Kidnapped

DOWN

1 Harvest goddess
2 Singer Davis
3 Dockers' org.
4 Hard rains
5 Reproductive cell
6 Cuckoopint
7 Calabrian coin
8 Smokey, for one
9 "Little Women" actress: 1949
10 Very smooth
11 Even
12 Slave of old film
13 Fictional lamp owner
14 Reduce in dignity
15 Boston landing spot
16 Fragrant resin
17 Skillful
19 Frightens
28 — generis
29 Cause of inflation?
30 Where Suda Bay is
31 Musical term
32 Cape for John Paul II
33 Brought down the house, abroad
37 — Torrance, marshal in "The Rifleman"
38 Mythical flier
39 Part of a barn
40 Dormouse
41 Betel palm
46 Famed teammate of Mantle
47 "— With Judy," 1948
48 Tritons
50 Gourd-shaped rattle
51 Actor's rep.
52 Andrea —
53 That 4/15 org.
54 Cowboy shindigs
56 Emulates Wyeth
57 Mythical Norse giant
58 Social group
60 Silkworm
61 Backs a dicer
62 Barbie's boyfriend
63 Be sparing
64 — of Lebanon
65 Rounded
69 One of the Pointer Sisters
70 Horowitz contemporary
71 ID datum
72 Ryan of mound fame
73 Sea water
74 — in apple
78 N.B.A. player
79 Angler's basket
80 Are her songs Simon-ized?
82 Agonized
84 Guido's high note
85 Become settled
87 One under oath
88 Feral
89 Make beloved
91 Straight ahead
92 Conveyed legally, as an estate
93 River blade
94 They're often metered
95 See 118 Across
96 Miller's "— the Fall"
97 Can you'd-believe-this?
98 Dolph Lundgren role
102 Mold overflow
103 Mandlikova of tennis
104 Whale in a 1966 film
105 Twerp's cousin
106 Strike order?
111 Friend of Milne's Tigger
112 Part of Ali's rec.
113 Invite



Last week's solution



PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

A	C	R	O		R	O	A	D		S	P	L	I	T
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C	A	N	E		P	O	E	M		L	I	B	E	L
A	I	D		H	O	R	S	E	R	I	D	E	R	S
P	R	O	F	E	S	S			A	C	E	R		
			I	R	E		C	A	K	E		A	S	K
L	A	P	S	E		L	O	P	E		S	T	U	N
A	B	U	T		G	I	V	E	S		H	O	N	E
M	O	S	S		H	E	E	D		F	O	R	G	E
B	U	S		G	E	N	T		C	A	R			
		Y	A	R	N			P	R	I	N	T	E	R
S	E	C	R	E	T	A	R	I	A	T		A	B	A
O	S	A	G	E		M	O	A	T		E	B	O	N
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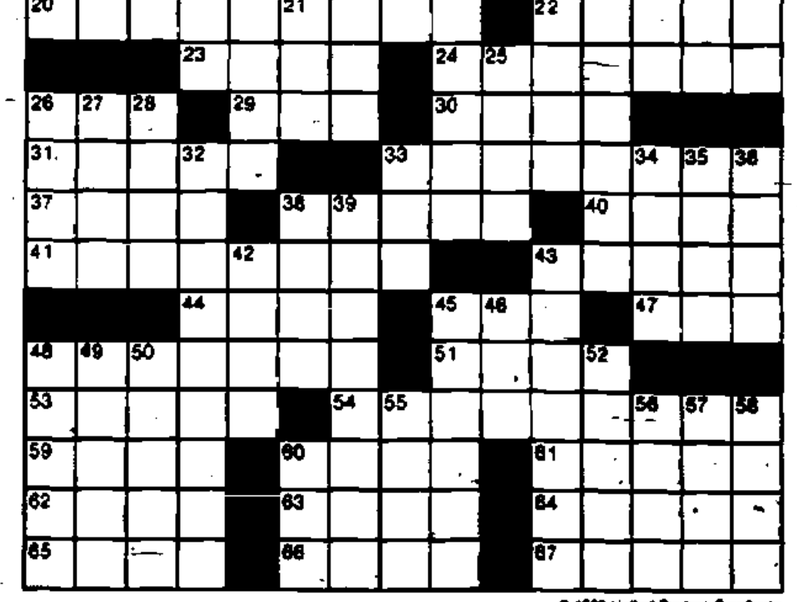

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