

My thanks to the editor for allowing me time off last week so I could attend my 45th high school class reunion. It was a fun weekend for all. It would have been better if there weren't so many "old" people there. (Here I must insert a very large grin).

As summer decrescendos into autumn, the temperatures begin to moderate into a much cooler evening which make for some comfortable viewing experiences. Another plus is the noted absence of bugs, especially those pesky mosquitoes.

Bright Venus has abandoned the evening sky in favor of her big brother, the planet Jupiter, which is just past opposition.

Opposition means it is now opposite the Sun in the sky rising at sunset and setting at sunrise thus visible all night.

Fellow outer gas-giant planet Uranus has also passed opposition and is keeping company with Jupiter these evenings. It can be seen in binoculars just to the left of the giant planet.

Don't confuse the star 20 Piscium for Uranus. It is located about halfway between the two planets in appearance. Uranus will be the one farthest left and appear slightly greenish.

The Summer Triangle of Vega, Altair, and Deneb can be seen directly overhead and in the days to come will be transiting the meridian into the western half of the sky and as the days progress getting even further toward the horizon soon to exit stage left.

At the last Observational Astronomy class meeting we could not get any glass on comet 109P/Hartley. It was located between Cassiopeia and Perseus near the Perseus Double Star Cluster. But there is still hope.

Hartley will be getting brighter and soon could be visible without any optical aid. On Friday, Oct. 22, look for Hartley below the constellation Auriga very near open star cluster M37.

Since our last try to observe the Moon was clouded out, why don't we try it again. This time on Saturday, Oct. 16, at the same place, the north end of the parking lot at the Dundy County Fairgrounds.

Bring your binoculars if you have them and I will provide the telescopes. Bring something to sit on, your favorite crunchies to eat and your favorite soft drink and we will enjoy the evening.

The Moon will be just past first quarter and should provide a nice object for observation.

SKY WATCH: First quarter Moon tomorrow, Oct. 14. Mars is still visible in the east after sunset. It is about as bright as a first magnitude star and is located in the middle of the constellation Libra, the Scales in the southwest. Look soon because it will be leaving the evening sky in the next couple of weeks.

If you are a morning person, which I am not, it is now possible to catch a glimpse of Saturn returning to the morning sky. It will be right on the eastern horizon about an hour before sunrise. As the weeks progress it will be getting higher and more easily observed.

On Tuesday, Oct. 19, the Moon and Jupiter will be keeping company. Look about an hour after sunset in the southeast. Uranus will be a companion too but might be washed out by the light of the almost-full Moon.

NEXT WEEK: More astronomical blathering.