By Vernon Whetstone

Amateur Astronomer

I enjoy receiving reader response. For one, it is a comfort to know there are people out there reading the column, and two, I enjoy hearing how excited some of you are when you make a discovery for yourself.

In this case the reader, who lives in the Valentine, Neb. area, said she had used the directions printed recently for finding the Andromeda Galaxy. She said that once she had located Pegasus and followed the two arms of the Andromeda constellation, it was right there and she could see it.

The reader said further she could see it without binoculars, but with the optical help it looked better.

Thanks, I enjoyed that. If you would like to contact me, my e-mail address is thestargeezer@gmail.com

Even with Autumn’s chill in the air, the Summer Triangle is still high in the west after sunset.

The three stars of the triangle, Vega in Lyra, the Harp; Deneb in Cygnus, the Swan; and Altair, in Aquila, the Eagle, can be found an hour after sunset with no problem. Vega is the lowest, Deneb on the right and Altair on the left. By observing the triangle we can fondly remember the nice, warm days of summer.

One constellation we haven't talked much about is Hercules. It can be found these cold November evenings by drawing a line from Deneb, down through Vega and you will hit the hero in the hip. The shape of Hercules is generally a giant "H" laying on its side.

The body of Hercules is an asterism commonly called "The Keystone" as it is shaped sort of like the stone that is placed in the top of an arch. It is not a square nor is it a rectangle.

If you have your binoculars with you, check out the lower side of the body slightly below where the left arm connects. There is a fuzzy ball of stars named M13, or the Hercules Cluster.

It is a globular cluster of stars containing an estimated 400,000 stars spread across 140 light-years. It is at a distance of 25,000 light-years from Earth.

It can be seen with the eyes alone from your favorite dark-sky place. In binoculars it becomes a faint-fuzzy, but in even a small telescope at higher magnification it becomes a blazing ball of light.

Below Hercules is a constellation called Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown. It is a line of stars shaped like a "U" with the open top pointed toward Hercules. The bottom of the "U" shape is nudged up against the kite shape of Bootes (pronounced Bo-oates).

SKY WATCH: First Quarter Moon Nov. 13. Jupiter is the bright object in the south after sunset, and in the early morning Saturn is making a return. It can be seen after 6 a.m. MST in the east. Nov. 15 and 16 a just-past-first quarter Moon will be hanging out with Jupiter and Uranus.

If you are out looking on Nov. 16 and 17 and happen see the odd meteor or two they could be part of the annual Leonid meteor shower which will peak during the early morning hours of Nov. 17. With a zenith hourly rate (ZNR) of 20, it is not really something to go out of the way to see unless you are really stoked about meteors.

The bright streaks of light are the left over bits and pieces left by Comet 55P/Temple-Tuttel. The almost full Moon will block out most of them until it sets at about 4 a.m. MST. Keep those cards and letters coming in, folks.