

Look for the Blue Moon

It is a dirty job, but someone has to do it. I just hate to be the one who has to explode the balloon of everyone's expectations.

With the upcoming full moon on Aug. 31, the internet has been a-twitter with the news of late that this will be a "Blue Moon" with the hinted intonation that it will indeed be blue.

Sorry folks, the only thing true about that is the moon will be full on Aug. 31.

Now, in all fairness, this moon will be what is called a "Blue Moon" only because it is the second full moon in the same calendar month. The moon was also full on Aug. 1.

This particular definition of a "Blue Moon" is only a recent invention, the term, "Blue Moon" has been around for about 400 years.

In its earlier forms it alluded to an event that was absurd, akin to the statement that the moon was made of green cheese.

In later terms the statement could refer to a rare event, something that did not happen all the time.

There have actually been occasions where the moon did indeed turn blue. They were associated with massive volcanic eruptions, huge dust storms, and large forest fires.

But in modern parlance, "Blue Moon" alludes to the second full moon in one calendar month. Such events are indeed rare happening about seven times in the moon's 19-year cycle.

The last occurrence of two full moons in one month was in December of 2009 and won't happen again until July of 2015.

Speaking of the moon, it was with great sadness that the world learned last week of the death of astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first person to set foot on the moon.

I will never forget hearing him speak the words, "Houston, Tranquility Base here, the Eagle has landed," and "That is one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind."

I still get goosebumps when I hear those words because I remember how I felt when I first heard them.

Neil was a quiet, reserved man, always giving credit to those who were behind the scenes making all of the "show" possible, he always referred to himself as just doing his job.

A statement from his family said if anyone wanted to honor Neil they should, "honor his example of service, modesty, and accomplishment. And the next time you walk outside on a clear night and see the moon smiling down at you, think of Neil Armstrong and give him a wink."

I intend to do just that on Aug. 31, when the moon may not be blue, but it will be full. Rest in peace Neil Armstrong, May we all follow your example.

SKY WATCH: Full moon, Aug. 31. Saturn and Mars are still visible evening objects. The nice triangle they formed with the star Spica last week has now elongated into an isosceles triangle with Mars extending the distance to the east.

They are in the southwest just after sunset. In the morning skies Jupiter is first over the horizon at about 2 a.m. local daylight time followed by brilliant Venus.

NEXT WEEK: More astronomical blathering.

