Moon and Jupiter pair up

By Vernon Whetstone
Amateur Astronomer

While there may be no “celestial spooks” in the sky this evening, there will be many of the earthly variety wandering from house to house seeking treats. Remember to be generous, even though you may want the leftovers in the bowl for yourself.

Another thing that won’t be in the sky, at least for the early goblin crowd, is the moon. The just-past-full moon won’t be coming over the eastern horizon until around 8 p.m. local time.

Tomorrow night, Nov. 1, look at the eastern horizon at about 9 p.m. local time for the brilliant planet Jupiter sitting just above the upper edge of the moon. Will be a nice sight in binoculars or a small telescope.

If you miss it, or it is cloudy, not to worry. The moon and Jupiter will be in almost the same position on Nov. 28, Dec. 25, and Jan. 21. Mark your calendars.

Jupiter has been, and will continue to be at least for the rest of the month, between the horns of Taurus, the Bull.

This is a very rich area for scouting with binoculars. Just to the upper right is the very nice Pleiades star cluster, and to the lower right is the not as bright, but just as interesting Hyades star cluster.

Prominent members of the Hyades form the “V” shape of the bull’s face, or as some see it, the bull’s horns.

Aldebaran, the brightest star in Taurus, looks like it is in the middle of the cluster but in actuality is located about half way between us and the cluster.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled program.

The last two characters of the Perseus/Andromeda group are the king and queen of our story.

First the queen Cassiopeia, the one whose vanity started this whole mess. Almost everyone is familiar with the “W” shape of the constellation. However at this time of year she looks more like a squished “M” laying on her side.

She can be located by looking north about halfway up the sky between the very low–almost below the horizon–Big Dipper and the Great Square of Pegasus.

Cassiopeia is one of the circumpolar constellations and thus is above the horizon all night rotating around Polaris, the North Star.

In fact, if you happen to be out in the early morning before sunrise look to the north to find our queen on the opposite side of Polaris.

She won’t regain her usual “W” shape until spring.

The king in the story, Cepheus, can be found just to the lower left of Cassiopeia. Imagine a picture of a house drawn by a child, in essence a rectangle with a pointy roof. That is our king.

For ease of location first find Polaris, the North Star (you remember how to use the pointer stars in the Big Dipper don’t you?) The top of the pointy roof is located a little more than 10

degrees (about the width of your clenched fist held at arms length) to the upper left of Polaris.
If it helps, imagine him as being upside down.
One more thing, don’t forget to move your clocks back an hour on the morning of Sunday, Nov. 4, when Daylight Savings Time ends.
SKY WATCH: Third quarter moon, Nov. 6. Jupiter is the ruling planet of the early evening and Venus is the bright object in the early morning eastern sky.
NEXT WEEK: More astronomical blathering.