

Star Guide: Moon takes center stage

By Tony Berendsen

The moon is the Earth's natural satellite, created as the result of a Mars-size object colliding with our planet billions of years ago. It is the most noticeable celestial object in our sky besides our star the sun, and is visible at night and during the day.

The moon causes the tides that mariners have timed for ages, inspired poems of love and creepy stories of lunatics. It has also inspired a generation of humans, timed with the development of rocket technology to test our ability to adventure beyond our precious atmosphere and walk on the moon's surface.

Oct. 28 was International Observe the Moon Night. Thousands of people all over the world took part in a worldwide effort to take note of the moon, observe it through telescopes, and remember the recent history of its exploration by humans.

Many like myself grew up in a time of space adventure – not science fiction stories in books for movies, but the reality of sending astronauts into space to explore the moon. Astronauts became the heroes of a generation, spurring interest in science, math and engineering.

The Challenger Learning Center of Northern Nevada joined with UNR to put on a local event for Observe the Moon Night. They offered telescopic observing of the moon through university telescopes, and a showing of the documentary film "Mission Control, The Unsung Heroes of Mission Control."

If you want to do some observing on your own, by eye, binoculars, or using a telescope the **Astronomical League**

offers lunar observing programs. The programs are a great way to learn to recognize features on the moon, and learn about them at the same time. If you complete the requirements for observing per their rules they will even award a certificate to you acknowledging your effort.

Another great way to learn about the moon is to download a lunar viewing app on your phone or tablet. There are a lot of great free apps too. Not only can they tell you the dates of different phases of the moon, but maps show the names and locations of lunar features.

On July 20, 1969, humans first set foot on the Moon. It was an amazing event for humans to accomplish, venturing beyond our atmosphere, breaking the gravitational bonds of our earth. We walked, drove, planted a flag, collected rocks and soil during our visits.

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