By Vernon Whetstone
Amateur Astronomer

Lots to look at this week, let's get to it. I think we can safely say that winter has past and spring is here.

It is more than just a calendar date, it is an astronomical event also. Our old friend Orion, the king of the winter sky, has all but disappeared over the western horizon by sunset these warming spring evenings.

The only remnant is a bit of his right shoulder, the star Betelgeuse, just above the western horizon just after sunset. But don't worry, by August he will be peeking over the eastern sky in the early morning.

About an hour after sunset in the east two of the three stars of the summer triangle are above the horizon and the top three stars of Orion's nemesis, Scorpius, are rising to see what is going on.

By 10 p.m. MDT all three of the triangle stars are above the horizon giving us a hint of what is to come.

Now is a good time to dig out that telescope you got for Christmas and put it to use.

Find Vega, the topmost star of the triangle and the brightest star in Lyra, the Lyre. Look one degree (about twice the width of the full moon) to Vega's lower left for a nice double star.

The pair, called Epsilon Lyrae one and two, are in reality a quadruple star system, there are four of them. Hence the other name for the pair, the double-double.

In binoculars you can see the pair, but to see the double-double, you will need that telescope. They make a magnificent sight in a telescope eyepiece.

Since we are in the area, skip over the lower left to Cygnus, the Swan, or the Northern Cross. At this time of year the swan is parallel with the horizon with the tail to the left and the beak to the right.

What I want to look at is that beak, the double star Albireo (al-BEER-e-o).

Again, that telescope will be needed. The nice thing about Albireo is one of the pair is blue and the other is yellow. A nice view in the eyepiece.

One more thing before we go in for the night. Looking due south find the constellation Virgo, the Maiden. The very bright star Spica is along the bottom of the pattern of stars making up the constellation. Look a little further right of Spica to find another bright object, the planet Saturn.

In the telescope the rings are continuing to open to make a nice view.

The only thing left of that four-planet conjunction in the early morning sky is a wide grouping of close-to-the-horizon Venus, dim Mars a little higher to the right and Jupiter even further up and right.

Venus will hang around until the end of June but Mars and Jupiter will continue to climb higher each earlier each morning.

Sky Watch: New moon today. The spring constellation Leo, the Lion continues to dive toward the western horizon and will be half gone by the end of July.

On Sunday evening, June 5, a slender four-day old moon will be hanging just below M44, the Beehive star cluster in Cancer. Binoculars aren't needed to see it, if you are looking from a very

dark-sky place, but they will help. Look between Leo on the upper left and Gemini on the lower right.

June 7 look for the moon below and left of Regulus in Leo. On Jun 9 the moon will be to the lower right of Saturn and on June 10 to the lower right of Spica.

Next Week: More astronomical blathering.