By Vernon Whetstone
Amateur Astronomer

It goes without saying, things are different in the big city. Most of you know that I have moved from Benkelman to Arvada, Colo. to start a new job. The hours for the job require me to work at night so I have the occasional opportunity to look up.

There is not nearly as much there to look at as there was in Benkelman. The bright lights of the city and Denver International Airport, where I work, blot out all but the very brightest of objects.

But, there are a few that get through. For example, I have been watching the planet Jupiter as it rises in the early evening to make its way across the sky. It is bright enough to be easily seen no matter what the surrounding light.

On Saturday, Oct. 29, Jupiter will be a what is called opposition. That is, it will be opposite the Sun in our sky. It will rise at sunset and set at sunrise and be visible all night.

If you have a pair of binoculars or even a small telescope, now is a good time to examine the “King of the Planets” during its ride across the sky. Look first for the four bright Galilean moons (Io, Europa, Callisto and Ganymede) which binoculars will easily show. Next using a telescope, look for the distinct northern and southern equatorial bands around the planet.

The southern band, which has been missing for several months, is starting to become visible again.

Last week during my early morning shift, I was able to see Orion quite distinctly, bright Sirius in Canis Major and Procyon in Canis Minor and Aldebaran, the bright eye of Taurus the Bull. Unfortunately, that is all I could see of him. The distinct “V” shape of his horns was not visible.

However, strangely enough, the tiny Pleiades star cluster was visible. It was very faint but could be seen. Also visible were some of the stars of Auriga, the Charioteer although the entire circle could not be seen. Bright Capella was quite obvious.

Below Auriga the only stars of Gemini that were visible were the two main stars, Castor and Pollux, nothing else could be seen.

Something else I have been watching is the moon. On one occasion recently when the moon was just at first quarter I had the opportunity to observe the shining orb rise directly over the main airport building at DIA. That was quite an inspiring sight, and me without a camera.

But this week, I want us to go back to our old friend, Pegasus, the Flying Horse. Pegasus can be seen about an hour after sunset about halfway up the eastern sky. Look for the big square, or right now he looks more like a baseball diamond standing on one corner.

If you live in, or have access to, a very dark-sky place you might be able to see several stars inside the square. If you don’t live in a dark-sky place all you will be able to see is the square itself made up of four second magnitude stars.

Dark sky or not, binoculars or a telescope will show many stars and some other galaxies inside this square.

As you are looking at Pegasus understand this, you are looking out of the flat part of the disk of the Milky Way Galaxy. From our point of view out here on the edge of the galaxy it is only a few thousand light years thick.

Using Pegasus as our “window” we are looking a rather significant way to the edge of our

galaxy.

SKY WATCH: New moon today. Start watching the planet Mars about a half-hour before sunrise for the next couple of weeks as it moves closer to Regulus, the brightest star in Leo the Lion. They will be closest on Nov. 11.

NEXT WEEK: More astronomical blathering.