

# Mountaineer Skies

Volume 3, Issue 2

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/~planet/index.html>

February 2003

## From the Editor's Desk

The **Chinese New Year**, known in China as the Spring Festival, begins on February 1 this year. For more information about this, please read Bruce McClure's article on page two.

**Jupiter is at opposition** on February 2. See the second article on page two for an explanation.

**Mercury is at its greatest western elongation** on February 4. See the second article on page two for an explanation.

If you have found *Mountaineer Skies* to be useful and have enjoyed our planetarium shows, we would appreciate it if you would consider contributing to their upkeep. Donations *of any size* can be made to the WVU Planetarium Project at the WVU Foundation, Inc., phone (304)284-4000. We would very much appreciate your help.

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## Visible Planets in the Night Sky

### Beginning of February, 2003

	Const	Rise	Transit	Set	Mag
Sun		7:24	12:33	17:43	- 26.8
Mercury	Sgr	5:56	10:48	15:40	0.0
Venus	Sgr	4:27	9:21	14:14	- 4.3
Mars	Oph	3:17	8:07	12:58	1.3
Jupiter	Cnc	17:29	00:35	7:42	- 2.6
Saturn	Tau	13:36	21:00	4:24	2.2

### Middle of February, 2003

	Const	Rise	Transit	Set	Mag
Sun		7:08	12:34	17:59	- 26.8
Mercury	Cap	6:08	11:05	15:59	- 0.1
Venus	Sgr	4:41	9:34	14:26	- 4.2
Mars	Oph	3:05	7:50	12:26	1.1
Jupiter	Cnc	16:24	23:33	6:42	- 2.6
Saturn	Tau	12:39	20:04	3:28	2.3

### End of February, 2003

	Const	Rise	Transit	Set	Mag
Sun		6:50	12:32	18:14	- 26.8
Mercury	Cap	6:19	11:33	16:44	- 0.4
Venus	Sgr	4:49	9:47	14:45	- 4.1
Mars	Sgr	2:52	7:35	12:19	1.0
Jupiter	Cnc	15:25	22:36	5:46	- 2.5
Saturn	Tau	11:44	19:12	2:37	2.4

Oph	Ophiuchus, The The Serpent Holder
Sgr	Sagittarius, The Archer
Tau	Taurus, The Bull
Cnc	Cancer, The Crab
Cap	Capricornus, The Goat

## About: the Chinese New Year

This year, the first day of February is also the first day of the Chinese New Year. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, which is strictly seasonal, the Chinese calendar is both seasonal and lunar. The New Year starts on the second new moon after the December solstice, with the date, depending on the year, coming anywhere from January 21 to February 19. In 2003, the second new moon of winter falls on February first – ushering in the Year of the Goat (or Ram).

Purportedly, the calendar has been in use since the Emperor Huang Ti introduced it around 2600 BC. There are twelve animals associated with the Chinese calendar, and it's believed that a person born during the year of a certain animal possesses that animal's characteristics. A story says that these twelve animals gathered around the Buddha to say goodbye to him when he departed from Earth.

The New Year celebration promotes peace and happiness. It lasts until the arrival of the full moon this February 16, the two weeks spent in enjoying thanksgiving and reunion with family, ancestors and community. The Lantern Festival finalizes the New Year activities.

This February first, on the first day of the Chinese New Year, Jupiter just happens to be nearest to Earth for the year. At its biggest and brightest, this planet easily outshines every star, lighting up the night sky from sundown to sunup. According to astrology, Jupiter's influence is particularly jovial (from Jove - Jupiter's other name). So with Jupiter greeting the New Year with its bright and beautiful presence, a jovial Year of the Goat could be in store.

Bruce McClure

### Request for Articles and Photographs

If you have an article or photographs that you would like to submit for publication, please send them to:

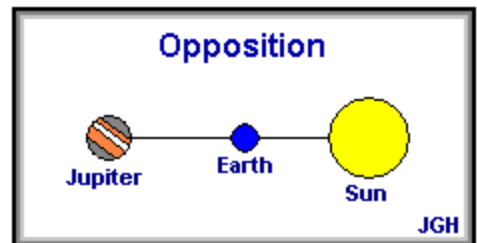
John Hopkins  
Subject: Submissions  
256 Hodges Hall  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, WV 26506

Or email to: [jhopkins@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:jhopkins@mail.wvu.edu) with "Submission" on the Subject line.

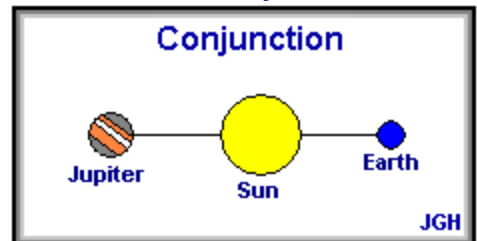
## Opposition, Conjunction, and Elongation

On February 2, Jupiter is at **opposition**. What does that mean?

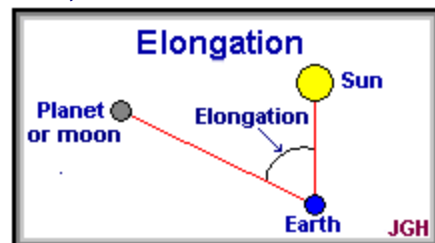
When a planet is said to be in **opposition**, it means that the Earth is directly between that planet and the Sun. This is a good time to view the planet.



When a planet is said to be in **conjunction**, it means that the Sun is directly between that planet and the Earth. During this time, the planet is not visible from Earth as the Sun is in the way.



**Elongation** is the angle made between a planet or moon and the Sun as seen from the Earth. At greatest eastern elongation, the planet is seen in the evening sky and at the time of its greatest western elongation, it is seen in the morning sky.



## 2003 Planetarium Shows



**MARSQUEST**

**Narrated by Patrick Stewart**

[http://www.as.wvu.edu/~planet/mars\\_quest.htm](http://www.as.wvu.edu/~planet/mars_quest.htm)

February 14 & 28, 2003 <i>MarsQuest</i>	March 14 & 28, 2003 <i>MarsQuest</i>	April 11 & 25, 2003 <i>MarsQuest</i>
May 9 & 23, 2003 <i>MarsQuest</i>	June 13, 2003 <i>MarsQuest</i>	July, 2003 Closed

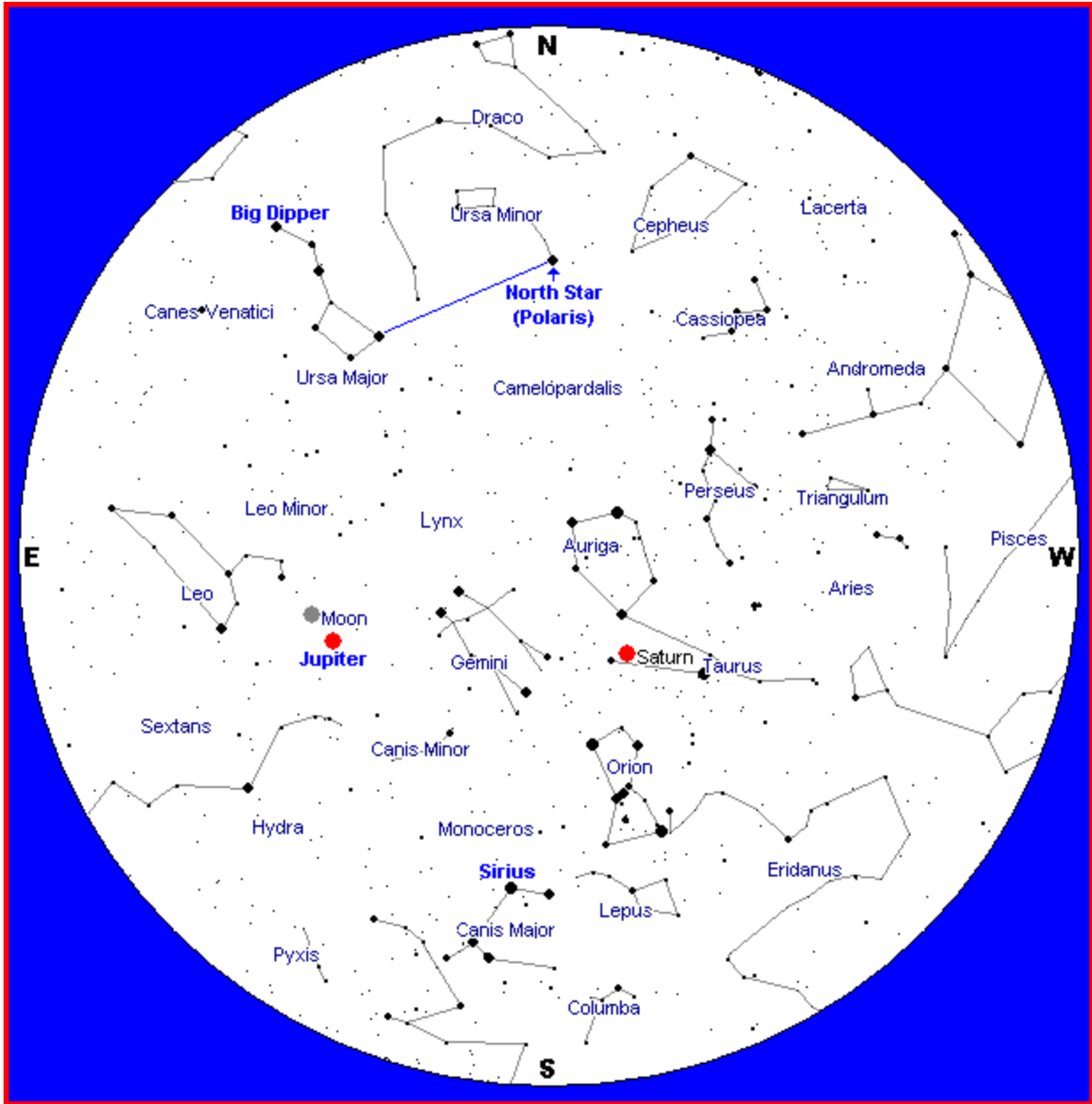
For those who are interested in bringing a group, such as schools or scouts, during the day, please call for more information. These shows are usually given on Tuesday or Thursday mornings.

For further information or reservations, please call John Hopkins at (304)293-3422, extension 1443 or by email at: [jhopkins@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:jhopkins@mail.wvu.edu)

### Selected Sunrise/Sunset and Moon Rise/Moon Set Times

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Moon Rise	Moon Set	Moon Phase
Feb 1	7:28 A.M.	5:38 P.M.	7:59 A.M.	5:54 P.M.	New Moon
Feb 9	7:19 A.M.	5:47 P.M.	11:25 A.M.	12:59 A.M.	First Quarter
Feb 16	7:11 A.M.	5:55 P.M.	5:41 P.M.	7:22 A.M.	Full Moon
Feb 23	7:02 A.M.	6:03 P.M.	1:02 A.M.	11:01 A.M.	Last Quarter

February 2003 Sky Chart\* for:  
 10:00 P.M at the beginning of the month  
 9:00 P.M in the middle of the month  
 8:00 P.M at the end of the month



\*Sky Chart used with the kind permission of **Heavens-Above** at <http://www.heavens-above.com/>

The TOMCHIN PLANETARIUM is named in honor of the late Harold Tomchin, of Princeton, W.Va., who made a generous donation to ensure its continuing operation, and whose family continues to support the planetarium for the educational benefit of WVU students, staff, and faculty members, as well as the local community. Contributions can be made in support of the planetarium through the **WVU Planetarium Project** at the **WVU Foundation, Inc.**, phone (304)284-4000. **Thank You.**



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