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Science robs solar eclipse of its zest

By ROBERT SCHEYER
Of the Emerald

When the moon's shadow passes over the Pacific Northwest on Feb. 26 local astronomers will observe the sun's disappearance with only a tourist's curiosity.

"Nowadays an eclipse has lost its zest," says astronomy Prof. Robert Zimmerman. "Twenty years ago an eclipse was studied to observe the sun's corona (a bright gaseous cloud emitted by the sun), but that condition can now be created artificially."

The corona is the reflection of small particles off the sun, says University astronomer Greg Boeshaar. Called the solar wind, it can be as hot as a million degrees.

Boeshaar's wife Pat, also an astronomer, says, "A total eclipse is probably one of the most spectacular events you can ever catch because it's the best way to get a look at the sun's corona."

All three astronomers stress the importance of not looking at the sun for any length of time before or after totality with the naked eye.

"It's all right to look at the sun during totality, but at any other time you will burn out part of the (eye's) retina. Unless you're sure (of totality) I wouldn't look," Greg Boeshaar says.

"In Eugene the eclipse will reach 99 percent of totality," Pat Boeshaar adds, "but even then it (the sun) will not be safe to look at."

Safe methods of viewing the eclipse include using a modified telescope or using a pin-hole camera with part of the side cut out to see the sun's reflection.

In using a telescope, place a white card about 5 inches from the viewing end and watch the shadow of the tube for the beam of emerging light to be intercepted on the white surface.

A 'pin-hole reflector' can be made by taking a flat mirror and covering it with a piece of paper that has a hole in it the size of a dime. The mirror should be mounted to reflect sunlight 50 feet or so onto a shaded wall, which can even be indoors. The 6-inch solar image can be studied close up by a large audience. Making the hole bigger increases the brightness; making it smaller improves sharpness.

The planets of Mercury, Venus and Mars will be

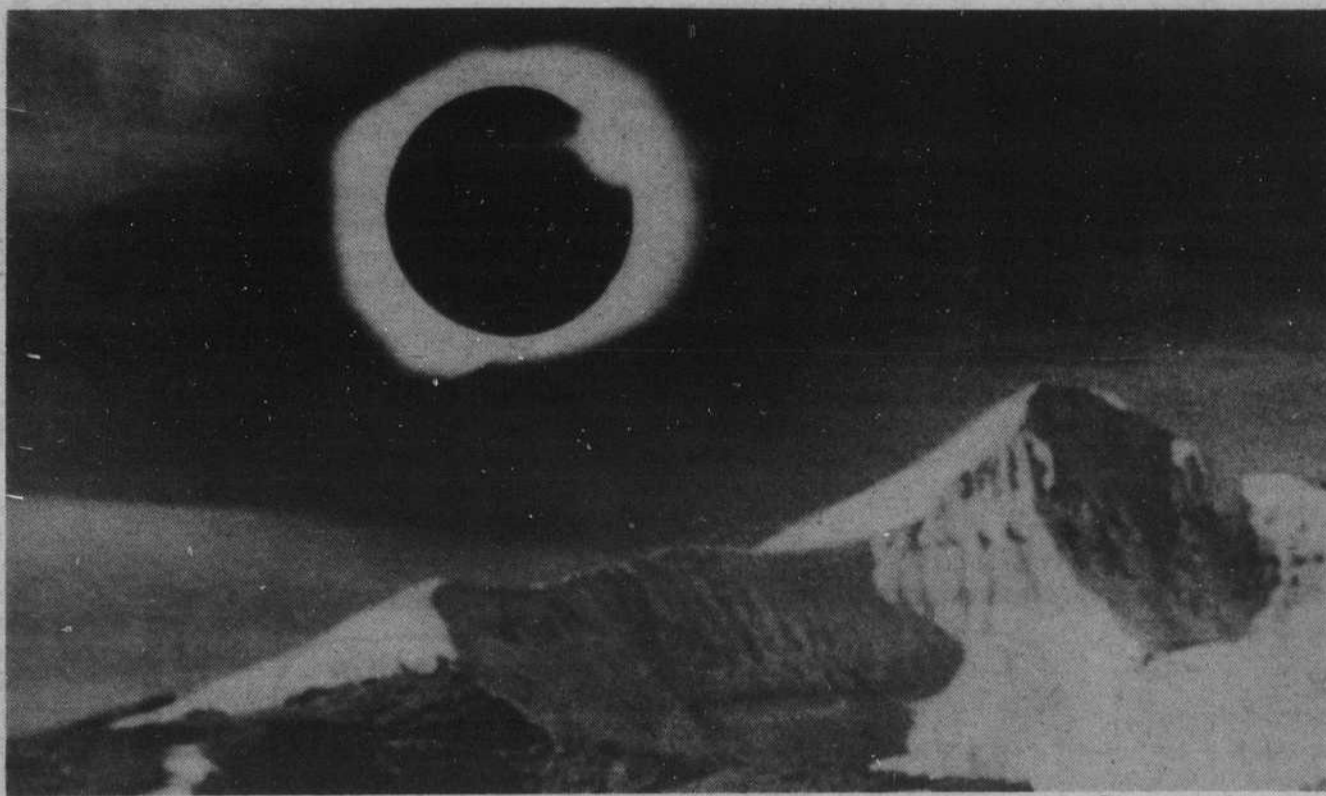


Photo courtesy Boyun USA

While most of North America will experience only a partial eclipse, much of northern Oregon will view

visible flanking the sun during totality.

Venus will be the brightest object in the sky, Greg Boeshaar says, but Mercury will be the most unusual since it is rarely seen because of its closeness to the sun.

Astronomers also will try to prepare for bad weather. Zimmerman plans to be in Eastern Washington where the chances of good weather are much better, while Pat and Greg Boeshaar will be over the clouds in an airplane above Portland. They hope to be able to stay on the ground for better photographs. Pat Boeshaar suggests that the best place to see the eclipse is Goldendale, Wash., on the Columbia River gorge.

"There is an observatory there and plenty of camp

"eclipse totality." Those under the full shadow of the moon will see only the sun's corona.

sites. The man who runs the observatory should be very helpful to anyone wishing to know about the eclipse," she says.

Willamette Valley residents have a 20 percent chance of seeing the sun because of notorious winter weather; and, as Greg Boeshaar put it, predicting the weather is "like asking for a prediction of the end of the world."

To those interested in a better chance of good viewing weather the University's Outdoor Program is offering trips to Montana, Idaho, Eastern Washington, Mt. Hood and the Wallowas in Eastern Oregon.

The Outdoor Program's office is located in Suite 2 of the EMU.

New ALERT boss plans revised program

By TAMARA SWENSON
Of the Emerald

An ASUO program for the handicapped has gained a new director and new staff to help prop up the faltering organization.

Faramarz Akbarinejad, who was hired as ALERT's new director Tuesday, hopes the program will develop into something "worthwhile" for students.

Also named as additions to the ALERT staff were Jeanne Knight, who will act as associate director, and Kelly Jamison, who will be the program's administrative assistant.

Knight and Jamison have been working with Akbarinejad since Monday, writing goals for the program and preparing to take the program back before the Incidental Fee Committee.

The ALERT program had been presumed dead after controversy arose over the performance of both former director Bruce McPhun and the program. On Feb. 1

the IFC rejected the goals of the program and froze its funds, the ASUO later dismissing McPhun.

The program was cited at that time as being ineffective and poorly run, but Akbarinejad hopes he and his new staff can turn that opinion around.

Included in the reorganization are new goals, which Knight said tentatively include support and referral services, intern and employment programs for the handicapped and eventual elimination of architectural barriers for the handicapped.

Akbarinejad, expressing the position of the ALERT staff, said he had a "strong feeling that they (the handicapped) can do anything if we just provide them the way." He added that Eugene, unlike Europe, was not geared for the handicapped and must work for a "fully geared society."

The new ALERT staff also intends to make the program a service for all students, not just the disabled.

For example, Knight said, the program could provide information on disabilities.

Another program emphasis, Knight said, will be on aiding those who are either emotionally or temporarily physically disabled.

But currently, the ALERT staff is focusing on the IFC reconsideration hearings. The fee committee will vote tonight on whether to reconsider the goals of the revived program. If approved, the goals themselves would still have to be approved.

If they fail, the program will have little recourse. And, even gaining reconsideration may be difficult, because the IFC must suspend its rules to take any action on the matter.

Meanwhile the ALERT office will be open for at least 40 hours each week in Suite 1 of the EMU and staff members will be available in crisis situations. The office Akbarinejad said, must be "accessible to the student. Someone will always be available."



Faramarz Akbarinejad

today

Quilapayun celebrates the memory of Victor Jara, symbol of the Chilean people's struggle for freedom, with a full house in the EMU ballroom. Stories on Page 6A.

A coalition of environmental groups is lobbying the Oregon legislature on issues ranging from herbicides to expansion of the river system. See Page 9A.

Eugene Mountain Rescue operates with 50 volunteers, who risk their lives to make the Cascade Mountain safer for mountaineers. The story of a recovery of a light plane begins on Page 1B.