

STAR GAZERS
SG 1708 - 5M
FEBRUARY 20-26, 2017

"MEET THE ORION FAMILY" (LIKE 1504)

DEAN: HEY THERE STAR GAZERS. I'M DEAN REGAS, ASTRONOMER FOR THE CINCINNATI OBSERVATORY

JAMES: AND I'M JAMES ALBURY, DIRECTOR OF THE KIKI SILVA PLA PLANETARIUM IN GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA. WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY AROUND THE SKY TONIGHT.

DEAN: THIS WEEK WE'RE GOING TO FOCUS ON A GROUP OF WINTER CONSTELLATIONS SURROUNDING ORION THE MIGHTY HUNTER.

JAMES: OFTEN CALLED THE ORION FAMILY, THESE CONSTELLATIONS HAVE SOME OF THE BRIGHTEST STARS IN THE ENTIRE SKY.

DEAN: NOW, THE ANCIENTS WATCHED THE SKY THE SAME WAY WE WATCH TV. GET THIS, WHEN THEY TUNED INTO THE WINTER STARS, THEY SAW A GIANT HUNTER WITH THREE STARS FOR A BELT, BEING TRAMPLED BY A BULL WITH SEVEN WOMEN ON ITS BACK, WHILE TWO HUNTING DOGS WERE CHASING AFTER A UNICORN, AND A BUNNY RABBIT, DOWN BY THE RIVER.

JAMES: YOU MIGHT BE THINKING, HOW CAN ANYONE SEE THAT MUCH INTO THE STARS. DON'T WORRY, WE'LL WALK YOU THROUGH IT AND INTRODUCE YOU TO THE ENTIRE ORION FAMILY.

---(STOP & DROP)

JAMES: OKAY, WE'VE GOT OUR SKIES SET TONIGHT FACING SOUTH. THE CONSTELLATION ORION TAKES CENTER STAGE AND HE'LL PLAY THE CENTRAL ROLE IN OUR WINTER SKY SAGA.

DEAN: THERE ARE A LOT OF BRIGHT STARS IN THIS AREA OF THE SKY, AND WE HAVE AN ANCIENT STORY THAT TIES THEM ALL TOGETHER. ORION'S BRIGHTEST STARS ARE BLUE RIGEL ON HIS LEFT FOOT, AND RUBY-RED BETELGEUSE MARKING HIS, UH, ARMPIT.

JAMES: EW, STINKY! BUT OF COURSE, ORION IS MOST FAMOUS FOR HIS TRADEMARK BELT - THREE STARS ALL LINED UP. NOT ONLY ARE THE BELT STARS YOUR CUE THAT YOU'VE FOUND ORION, THEY'LL ALSO POINT YOU TO SEVERAL OTHER CONSTELLATIONS.

----(STOP) DEAN IN SPACE

DEAN: CONNECT A LINE THROUGH THE BELT-STARS, AND KEEP GOING UP AND TO THE RIGHT. YOU'LL PASS JUST UNDER A BRIGHT ORANGE STAR CALLED ALDEBARAN. LOOK OUT, BECAUSE THIS IS THE MENACING EYE OF TAURUS THE BULL. TAURUS HAS A SMALL V-SHAPE OF FIVE STARS FOR A FACE, AND TWO LONG HORNS. NOW IF YOU CONTINUE PAST THE V OF TAURUS YOU'LL RUN SMACK DAB INTO THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST OPEN STAR CLUSTER IN THE NORTHERN SKY. THESE ARE THE PLEIADES OR SEVEN SISTERS. THE PLEIADES LOOK LIKE A LITTLE CLOUD TO THE NAKED EYE, BUT UPON SECOND GLANCE YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE OUT 5 OR 6 OF THE INDIVIDUAL STARS. IN A GOOD PAIR OF BINOCULARS, THEY ARE JUST AWESOME!

----(STOP) JAMES IN SPACE

JAMES: FORMED FROM THE SAME NEBULA, THE SEVEN SISTERS ARE YOUNG HOT STARS BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS. THESE STARS MAY ONLY LIVE MILLIONS OF YEARS AS OPPOSED TO OUR SUN WHICH HAS A LIFESPAN OF ABOUT 10 BILLION YEARS. BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE THAN SEVEN OF THEM! THE CLUSTER INCLUDES HUNDREDS OF STARS, WITH ONLY THE SEVEN BRIGHTEST VISIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE.

----(STOP) BACK ON THE HORIZON

DEAN: IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, ORION FELL IN LOVE WITH THE SISTERS - ALL SEVEN OF THEM. THE SISTERS, WELL THEY DIDN'T CARE MUCH FOR HIM AT ALL. UP IN THE SKY THE SISTERS ARE SITTING PRETTY ON THE BULL'S BACK WHILE ORION MUST FEND OFF THEIR SWORN PROTECTOR.

JAMES: THE GODS LET ORION BRING HIS FAVORITE TWO HUNTING DOGS UP TO THE SKY WITH HIM. THIS TIME LET THE BELT STARS POINT YOU DOWN AND TO THE LEFT. WHEN YOU KEEP GOING, YOU'LL RUN INTO THE BRIGHTEST STAR IN THE SKY, SIRIUS. ALSO KNOWN AS THE DOG STAR, SIRIUS MARKS THE NOSE OF CANIS MAJOR, THE BIG DOG.

DEAN: FROM SIRIUS, MAKE A 90 DEGREE TURN UP AND TO THE LEFT TO FIND THE LITTLE DOG STAR, PROCYON IN CANIS MINOR. AWW, WHAT A CUTE LITTLE PUPPY.

JAMES: UNFORTUNATELY THE TWO DOGS AREN'T HELPING ORION WITH THE BULL. THEY'RE TOO BUSY CHASING AFTER A UNICORN... (THE CONSTELLATION MONOCEROS) AND A BUNNY RABBIT... (THE CONSTELLATION LEPUS) BY THE BANKS OF THE COSMIC RIVER... (THE CONSTELLATION ERIDANUS).

(STOP)

DEAN: NEXT WEEK YOU SHOULD NOTICE ANOTHER VISITOR PASSING THROUGH THE ORION FAMILY. DAY BY DAY, THE MOON WILL MOVE THROUGH TAURUS AND OVER ORION'S HEAD, WAXING TOWARD FULL MOON, AS WE BEGIN THE MONTH OF MARCH. SO, TONIGHT AFTER SUNSET, GO TO THE HEAVENLY MOVIES AND SEE A GIANT HUNTER...BEING TRAMPLED BY A BULL...WITH SEVEN WOMEN ON ITS BACK...WHILE TWO HUNTING DOGS...CHASE AFTER A UNICORN...AND A BUNNY RABBIT...DOWN BY THE RIVER.

JAMES: WHEW! WHAT A SCENE! THIS IS THE ORION FAMILY OF CONSTELLATIONS AND THEY'RE THE SAME STARS OUR ANCESTORS HAVE MARVELED AT FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. YOU CAN GET TO KNOW THEM ALL THIS MONTH IF YOU...

BOTH: KEEP LOOKING UP!

----(STOP)