

Summer's Totality Summarality

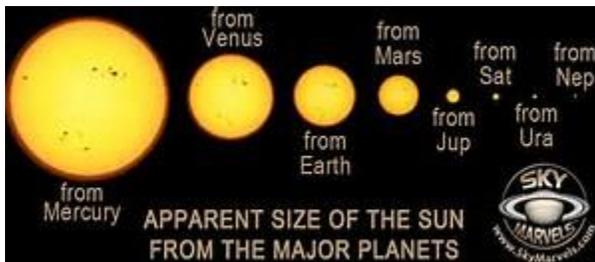
By Gary Jensen

The sky on the morning of August 21, 2017 was bright blue and free of haze. In the few hours leading up to the actual beginning of the eclipse the question was bandied about among us as to why we weren't able to locate the Moon on its final march toward the Sun. It only occurred to me after the fact that in order for the Moon to obscure the Sun it must be a "New" Moon for the reason the Sun wouldn't be able reflect off of that portion of the Moon that was directly facing away from it. Our very first view of the Moon that day appeared at 9:05 am through our eclipse glasses (henceforth, glasses) as only a silhouette where it began "biting into" the Sun at its upper right (1: o'clock) sector and furthered its progress over the remaining 70 minute journey across the Sun toward *totality*. Through our glasses the encroaching arc of the Moon's perimeter appeared crisp on its leading edge where it increasingly overrode the surface of the Sun. Over the entire course of that 70 minute journey, the intensity level of the Sun itself *appeared* the same to the *naked* eye, even though the surrounding countryside dimmed increasingly to an eerie hue as the Sun approached totality. We reached for our sweaters as the air temperature dropped a few degrees. By 10:10 our glasses allowed us to notice the Sun's perimeter had diminished to an arc that was as narrow as a line drawn by a fine-point pen, even though as we glanced at it with the *naked* eye it continued to *appear* as a round blazing sphere that remained as bright as before. It was this phenomenon that surprised me most of all during the eclipse event. Indeed, it was only when this thin arc-line shortened down to absolutely nothing (10:16) that the sky suddenly darkened to the equivalent of night time. No wonder it is necessary to be entirely within the 60 mile-wide path of the eclipse shadow in order to experience totality! In place of the fiery surface of the Sun we immediately witnessed it as a black disk surrounded by feathery white wispy clouds of radiation shooting outward from its surface. Interestingly this radiating atmosphere known as the Sun's corona is much hotter than either the core or the actual surface of the Sun. During that two minutes of darkness we saw that the planet Venus (under normal circumstances never visible in the middle of the day) was glowing brightly down from directly above us. Then the darkness abruptly ended as the surface of the Sun peeked out from behind the Moon to resume its brilliance at the very spot where the Moon had first begun to cover the Sun. Within a few minutes the sky progressively brightened following a flash in the form of a diamond occurring where the Sun reappeared. At this moment it was essential to put our glasses back on again. It was only after we again gazed at the Sun through them that we had any celestial reminder that an additional 70 minutes would be required before the final portion of Sun would expose itself to the earth again.

The actual *totality* seemed to have taken place so quickly that others in the crowd must have wondered, just as I certainly did, whether what we had just perceived was actually real? Indeed it was! At the same time there was no doubt at all that the clogged freeway that would take us back to Portland, which we were soon to face, was equally real!



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