

# Eclipse watchers urged to protect eyes

By Vonn Jones

Warning: Watching a solar eclipse can be hazardous to your eyesight.

Officials from the National Society to Prevent Blindness said they want to stress this point as they prepare for Wednesday's solar eclipse, with

the hope that damaged eyesight can be avoided.

The Nebraska affiliate of the Society to Prevent Blindness said it is urging people to use extreme caution and good sense if they plan to watch the eclipse.

Barbara Allen, executive director of Nebraska's society, said prospective

sun-gazers "homemade" methods used to watch the eclipse probably are dangerous and could result in permanent damage to eyesight if not blindness itself, Allen said.

Dark sunglasses, special sun filters for telescopes and even welding goggles will not block out harmful rays of the sun nor will they prevent permanently impaired vision, Allen said. Looking at the sun for just a few seconds, she said, even through these devices, can cause eye damage.

"When you look at the sun, your eye's lens focuses the intense light on the retina — the layer of cells at the back of your eye that send visual images to the brain," Allen said. "The retina does not feel pain. You don't know it is being burned. But it can be, at the very center of your field of vision."

Once the sun burns the retina, there is no known method to restore proper vision, Allen said.

The society also warns against the use of cameras and telescopes to view the eclipse. These devices only intensify the sun's light making it just that much more dangerous, according to the society.

The society recommends three safe ways to watch the eclipse:

- Watch the eclipse on television.
- Watch it at an observatory.
- Use two pieces of cardboard and a straight-pin. Take two pieces of white cardboard and make a pin hole in the center of one of them. With your back to the sun, hold one sheet of cardboard in each hand, letting the sun shine through the pin hole onto the other sheet of cardboard. Move the two pieces of cardboard in relation to one another to adjust the focus. Once positioned you will have a clear, sharp image of the sun and the eclipse, without damaging your vision.

## Partial solar eclipse to occur Wednesday

By Vonn Jones

The skies will be about 60 percent darker than usual Wednesday morning.

Barring clouds, people will be able to witness a partial, or annular, solar eclipse at about 10 a.m. The eclipse should last about two hours.

The solar eclipse will affect a large portion of Central and North America as the moon passes directly between the sun and the southeastern United States and northern Mexico.

Although it begins at 10 a.m., the full effect of the partial eclipse won't develop until around 11:15 a.m. Then, the moon will block 59 percent of the sun's rays, according to officials at Hyde Observatory.

The Hyde Observatory in Holmes Park will be open during the partial eclipse to provide a safe way to see it. The public can use the observatory for free.

The last time Nebraskans saw a

solar eclipse was in May 1879, when a total eclipse snuffed out the morning rays for a few minutes. The 1984 eclipse is an annular, not a total eclipse. Thus, mid-morning will look more like dusk rather than evening, according to astronomers.

An annular eclipse means the outer ring, or annulus, of the sun's atmosphere remains visible behind the moon's shadow during the entire eclipse.

Less than one-third of the United States will be directly affected by the partial eclipse. At about 11 a.m., the moon's shadow will speed at about 1,400 miles per hour northeast across the Gulf Coast states. The shadow will begin in Louisiana and cover Maryland in less than one hour.

Although the moon's shadow will not envelope the Plains states or destinations west Wednesday morning, the whole country should have a view of the eclipse and experience some loss of sunlight and a slight temperature drop.

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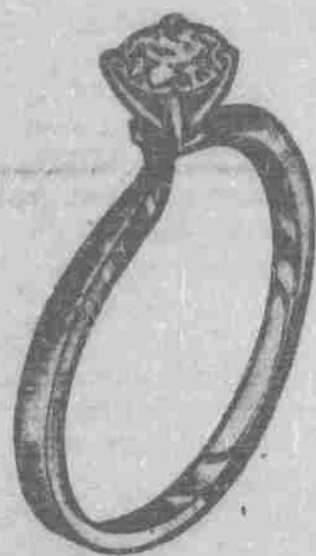
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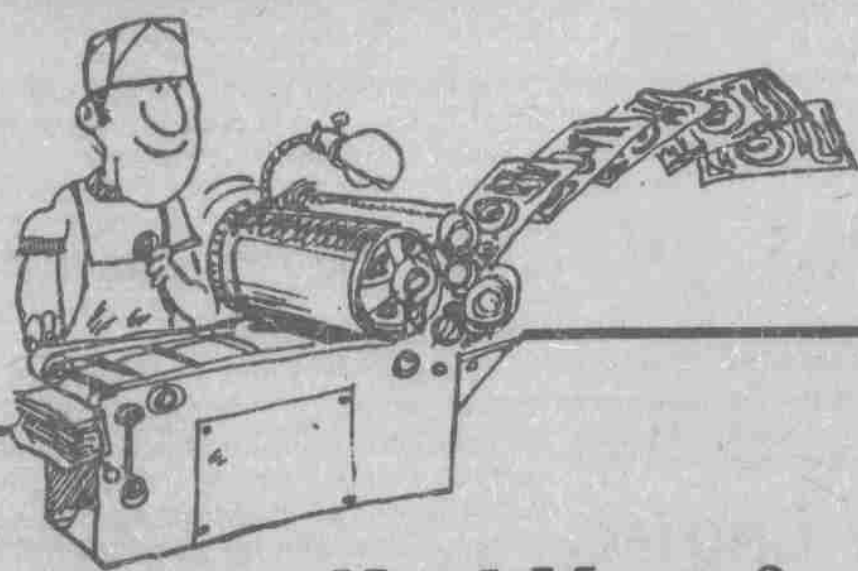
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