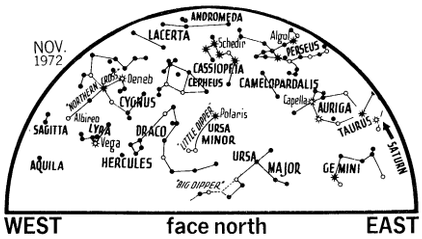

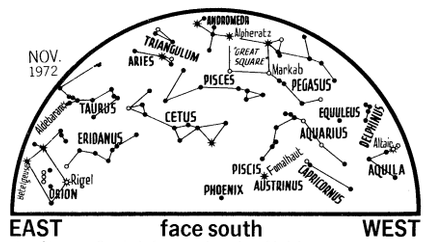

☼ ✸ ○ ● Symbols for stars in order of brightness

BRAHE'S SUPERNOVA

by James Stokley

Nov. 24 will be the 400th anniversary of an important event in the history of astronomy. Tycho Brahe was then a 26-year-old Danish nobleman. On the evening of Nov. 11, 1572 (Old Style), as he was returning to his home for supper, he looked up at the sky. In a book published the following year he described what happened:

"I was contemplating the stars in a clear sky, [when] I noticed that a new and unusual star, surpassing the other stars in brilliance, was shining almost directly above my head."

The star, about as bright as Venus, appeared in Cassiopeia (at about the top of the second S in the name on our northern sky map. Though it faded, it remained visible until March 1574. It was a supernova.

During the last thousand years only three supernovas have appeared in our local star system, the Milky Way galaxy. There was one in 1054, recorded in Chinese annals, and another in 1604, which was observed by another great astronomer, Johann Kepler, who had become Tycho's assistant.

The 1572 supernova was important because it changed current ideas about the stability and immutability of the heavens.

Jupiter, brighter of two planets in the November evening sky, shines low in the southwest as darkness falls. It's in the constellation Sagittarius and sets about three hours after sunset.

This is before the times for which our maps are drawn (10:00 p. m., your own kind of standard time on the first; an hour earlier at mid-month and two hours earlier at the end). Thus, Jupiter isn't shown but you'll have no difficulty finding it because of its brilliance.

Saturn, the other evening planet, is shown. It appears in Taurus, in the east, and rises about the time Jupiter sets in the west. Although Saturn is less than a fifth as bright as Jupiter, it equals the brightest star now visible. This is Vega, which is toward the northwest in Lyra. □

CELESTIAL TIMETABLE

Nov.	EST.	
2	6:00 p.m.	Moon passes south of Venus
4	6:00 a.m.	Moon passes south of Mars
5	5:00 a.m.	Mercury farthest east of sun
	8:21 p.m.	New moon
7	8:00 a.m.	Moon farthest, distance 406,400 kilometers (252,600 miles)
10	8:00 a.m.	Moon passes south of Jupiter
14	12:01 a.m.	Moon in first quarter
17	1:10 a.m.	Algol (variable star in Perseus) at minimum brightness
19	9:50 p.m.	Algol at minimum
20	6:07 p.m.	Full moon
	7:00 p.m.	Moon nearest, distance 356,300 kilometers (221,500 miles)
22	2:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Saturn
	6:40 p.m.	Algol at minimum
25	11:00 p.m.	Mercury between earth and sun
27	12:45 p.m.	Moon in last quarter