

The Fremont Peak Observer

— Bringing Astronomy to the Public —

Vol. 41, No. 1

Spring 2024

President's Message



Pat Donnelly

Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of the FPOA Observer newsletter.

As I write this message, it is raining outside. Today's weather is a mixed bag with areas of essentially clear weather and other areas of showers. I know this because I can get both the local weather and satellite picture from the "[Members Page](#)" on the FPOA website. On the Members Page are several interesting sites to get an up to the minute status of the weather. My favorite site is the [CalFire webcam picture](#). The camera is located on the KSBW Tower, and most of the time the webcam is pointed at the observatory. The picture is updated approximately every 25 seconds. Thus, one can get real time picture of the weather conditions at the observatory. If one wishes to get a regional view, there is also a 360° picture, which updates on an irregular schedule. Do not be discouraged, if the pictures are blank. It most likely means that the webcam is in the clouds. The other site I frequently visit is the [GOES Satellite West view](#). I get to see the cloud cover picture from California to Hawaii. There are also other websites to visit, including [Rob Hawley's weather website](#). Visit this site and get your fill of both local and national weather. Everyone should check out these websites on a regular basis.



2024 Program Dates

Saturday Evening Programs

April	13, 27	August	3, 10, 31
May	4, 11	Sept.	7, 21, 28
June	1, 8, 15, 29	October	5, 12, 26
July	6, 13, 27		

Solar Programs

April	13	August	31
May	4	September	28
June	1, 29	October	26
July	27		

Board Meetings (Zoom, 1pm)

April	20	August	17*
May	11	September	21
June	8	October	19
July	6	November	16

* Rescheduled for SBQ August 24th

Please check our web [Schedule](#) and [status](#) for updates before heading up.

The 2024 observing season will begin on April 13. It is starting late due to the total solar eclipse. This should be an interesting observing season. There are, in general, no bright planets visible until September. This will allow us to concentrate on deep sky objects during the public programs. Also, the Sun is near solar maximum in the sunspot cycle. This means that there should be a lot of activity on the Sun to observe. If you can volunteer for one or more of our public programs, it would be greatly appreciated.

I would like to announce that Loren Dynneson has been made board member emeritus. Loren has been an FPOA Board member since 2012. Loren was the project leader for many of the major projects at the observatory. These include the east deck/ramp upgrade, the installation of the observatory bench, and the replacement of the west deck. All of these projects have greatly enhanced the functionality and esthetics of the observatory. Loren will continue providing expert facilities consultation.

Finally, I must report that board members [Lenore Edman and Windell Oskay have moved to New York](#). They will now be living in Peekskill, New York, a city I am quite familiar with. Both Lenore and Windell will stay on as board members until their terms expire. Their presence on the board, attendance at most of the public programs, and help with the observatory maintenance will be missed.

In Memoriam



Pat Donnelly, Eric Eglund

John Parker

It is with much sadness that I must report the passing of John Parker. John joined the FPOA Board in 2012 and he served as president in 2016 and 2017. John left the board in 2017, but stayed connected to the FPOA until 2020. During his time at the FPOA, John was very helpful and participated in most of the organization's activities. He was in charge of getting all of the west deck wood painted and helped with the deck's installation. He will be missed. Rest in peace John.

Please visit the [Facebook obituary](#) his family posted on John's page.

Bob Fies

Bob Fies was a longtime friend of FPOA, attending our SBQ events and contributing donations. Many fellow astronomers contributed [memories](#) at [cloudynights.com](#) including a copy of the original [floppy disk html](#) he used to hand out for free to fellow telescope and mirror enthusiasts (courtesy of 'pierce', Cloudy Nights ATM, Optics, and DIY forum).

Bob Fies passed away on December 19, 2023, and his email is being forwarded to his executor.

George Robert Fies was born in 1939 in Dallas, Texas, he moved with his family to California as a teenager and lived in San Carlos for the rest of his life.

He was a graduate of Carlmont High School in Belmont. He attended some college, then went to work as an airline mechanic for Pan American Airlines where he worked for more than 25 years and retired when Pan-Am went out of business. He subsequently worked in retail hardware and founded his business, Aluminum Coating, for optics and telescope mirrors. In 2008, he started working for Lick Observatory as a laser spotter, taking shifts regularly until mid-2023. He had also worked on Mt. Hamilton in the 1950's, in the construction of the [Shane dome](#) at the observatory.

Bob was an avid amateur astronomer who worked with the late John Dobson as well as amateur and commercial astronomers across the U.S. and Canada. He was well known for his expertise coating telescope mirrors. He worked at this craft almost until the end, with his last mirror shipped off to the customer in fall 2023.

He is predeceased by his parents, John and Gladys (nee Bowman) Fies, and his

brother, William John Fies, Jr. He never married and is survived by his nephews and nieces. He will be interred at Sky Lawn Memorial Park in a private ceremony.

Memorial gifts may be made to Camp Okizu, <https://okizu.org/>.

Community



Eric Eglund

The California Rangeland Trust and partners secured an easement on the 9,418-acre Silacci Ranch which lies directly south of the



observatory. (see [Article](#))

In addition to maintaining the balance of natural resources, the easement helps preserve our dark sky.

(click the map for a hyperlink)

Looking Back



Pat Donnelly with foreword by Eric

We found a letter in the wooden cabinet and posted here for the first time or maybe again, is Pat's letter from his Sept. 1989 visit to [University of Illinois Observatory](#).

Last September I had the honor of being invited back to the University of Illinois for the dedication of the university observatory as a national historic landmark. It was quite an affair. The president of the university was there along with the chancellor and the entire staff and faculty from the astronomy department. A dedication ceremony was held at the observatory with Under-secretary of the Interior Harry Butowsky awarding the plaque to the university.



I *had* to go back for the ceremony. My first really spectacular view of Saturn was from that telescope. On winter evenings, with early sunsets, I observed the planets and bright double stars.

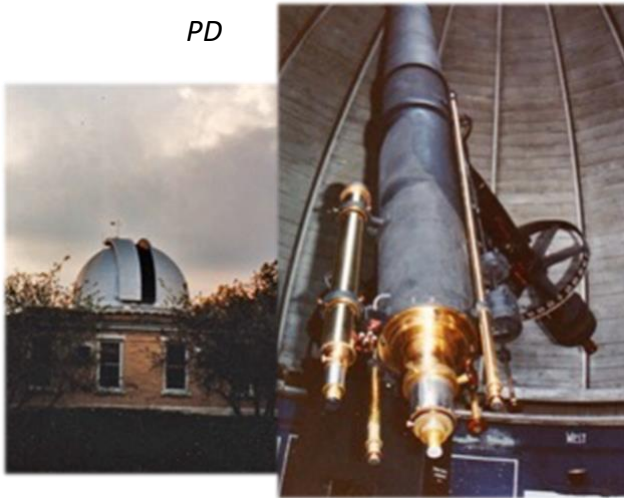
The telescope, built in 1896, is a 12" F15 refractor. I'm not sure who did the optics, but the mount is a Warner & Swasey type. The telescope has three eyepiece holders and two 16" setting circles for the Dec. and R.A. axes. The circles allow a pointing accuracy of 2 arc minutes. The observing room is painted blue and the stars of the sky are superimposed on the walls.

The reason the university observatory was made a national landmark is that in 1908, the observatory director, Joel Stebbins, invented photoelectric photometry. The story goes that he was trying to use a mechanical photometer, but he got so frustrated that he put the old photo-meter in a box on the shelf and went out and

developed the selenium photoelectric cell. This photoelectric cell went on to make television possible, as well as revolutionizing astronomical photometry.

Before I left, I managed to observe Mars, Saturn, and M15. A trip well worth the effort.

PD



Facilities



Eric Eglund

It was a dark and stormy night, and also the following night. That night, a tornado passed through the area and it may have stopped at our building, out by the sundial, and torn off a shutter guard. One of the new shutter guards I spend so many minutes, maybe an hour, building.

I opened one of my architecture books on wind in architectural design – the section on vorticity around building edges, corners, and over different roof designs. With a southeast prevailing wind exerting a load of ~50 lb/ft² at 100 mph (Rangers' reported wind speed), vortices could form at the building corner. Wind acting on the cup shaped guard facing SE, a 2x8 and 2x6 redwood screwed together in a rabbet and bolted to the bench and upper beltline, would be like two of our heavier members jumping up and down on the guard side-

ways. The difference in guard profile exposed to the wind may explain why one guard tore off and the other was left only slightly pulled. I've removed both pending a redesign, an improved assembly, wind bracing, some longer bolts, and repairs to the smashed vertical sundial gnomon.

ETE

Support



Thanks to those who renewed. FPOA receives most of its income from our memberships. Most annual members are now Observers. We still need your support. Contributions cover publications, phone, insurance, rent, etc.

Please consider volunteering, it's great fun and a service to our community. Please see the [back page](#) for details.

Please send Spring 2024 Observer articles to the [editor](#) by March 1st.

Membership Renewal



To join or renew, please select from the list of options on our [Membership page](#) and pay via PayPal or mail a check to:

FPOA Membership
c/o Rob Hawley
1233 Hillcrest Dr.
San Jose, CA 95120

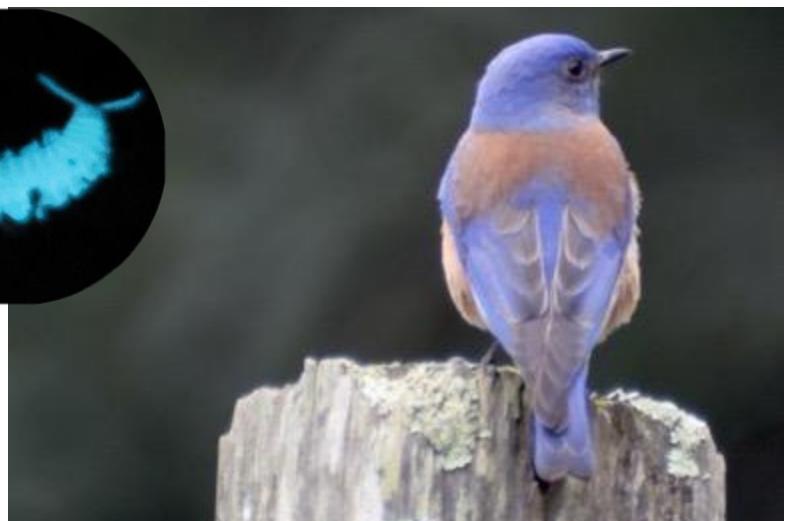


A loveliness of ladybugs in the morning sun

Gallery



From Upper Left: Storm damaged shutter guard, bent sundial gnomon, and weather transmitter 1; Moon over building; Orion Nebula through the 30" with an iPhone; Whirlpool Galaxy M101 courtesy of Michael Kieran from the Mojave; painted ladder base; reflective marbles; sundial gnomon straightened & improved; Pacific Hound's Tongue; almost green flash; fluorescent millipede (Motyxia?) in leaf litter; Western Blue Bird





Lunar penumbral eclipse with umbra passing lower right

Fremont Peak Observatory Association

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Inquiries *info at fpoa.net*

Schedule *schedule at fpoa.net*
 Membership *membership at fpoa.net*
 Editor *editor at fpoa.net*
 Treasurer *treasurer at fpoa.net*

Website: fpoa.net
 Facebook: [fpoa.observatory](https://www.facebook.com/fpoa.observatory)
 X (Twitter): [fpoa_info](https://twitter.com/fpoa_info)

Observatory: (831) 623-2465

Observing Reservations

Please send the following information
48 hours in advance to:

schedule at fpoa.net

- Member name
- Reservation date
- Estimated arrival time
- Duration of stay
- Number in party
- Vehicle description and license plate
- Specific observing site request (pad)

**Reminder – 48-hour notice for Observer
 Access is non-negotiable**

Please, No ‘last minute’ requests

We lease access to the FPOA area from the State. Our agreements with the State require we give 48 hours’ notice for all visitors. Observer members agree to the 48-hour notice per the liability contract.

Public Program Volunteers

- Complete the updated [2023 liability waiver](#) and return to *membership at fpoa.net*.
- Also, please email name, vehicle, and the program date to *schedule at fpoa.net*.

Officers and Directors 2024

President	Pat Donnelly
Vice President, IT	Windell Oskay
Instruments	Ron Dammann
Treasurer, IT	Rob Hawley
Secretary, Editor, Social	Eric Egland
Facilities	Eric Egland
	Lenore Edman
	Chris Angelos
	Tom Kellogg
	Jeff Shapiro
	Alt. Rick Mazzarella
Instruments, Schedule	Ron Dammann
Membership, Distribution	Rob Hawley
Website	Rob Hawley Windell Oskay
Directors Emeritus	Kevin Medlock Denni Medlock Loren Dynnesson

Dates and Delivery

Members, The Observer is now sent by email and posted on our website at FPOA.Observer.online
 Please send email updates to *membership at fpoa.net*.

The *Fremont Peak Observer* publishes four times a year following Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. We welcome articles and photos from our members. Please email those to *editor at fpoa.net* by Mar. 1, June. 1, Sept. 1 and Dec. 1 in plain text or Word format.

