

# THE FREMONT PEAK OBSERVER

Vol. I No. 1

June 1985

---

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Call For Volunteers

The *FPOA* will be starting construction on the 30 inch Observatory very soon. We are in dire need of volunteers to help with the construction. We especially need individuals with pickup trucks, who can donate some of their time to help transport materials up to the site.

We also need construction materials. If you have a line on lumber, nails, concrete, etc., let us know! John Stewart is co-ordinating this, so if you can help out, give him a call at (415) 527-7036.

### Board Meeting & Star Party

The next *FPOA* Board Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, June 15th, at Fremont Peak State Park in the Coulter Camp Group Picnic Area. The major topic for discussion will be the disposition of our windfall from Celestron (see Denni's feature article).

We will be having a "no-host" barbecue around 4 PM (we supply the fire, you supply your own food). The business part of the meeting will start around 6 PM, and will be followed by a Star Party. Everyone is welcome to attend!

### FPOA Purpose & Goals

The purpose of the *Fremont Peak Observatory Association* is to provide *educational* and *interpretive* services to the public. The purpose of the *FPOA* should not be confused with that of local Astronomy Clubs, who provide their members services, such as subscriptions to magazines, reduced prices on astronomical publications, organized monthly meetings with featured speakers, instruction on the construction and use of telescopes and related equipment, etc.

Membership in the *FPOA* is a vote to bring public programs on Astronomy to the Peak for public benefit. It is complementary to, not competitive with, your local Astronomy Club.

---

## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

by Frank Dibbell

The *Fremont Peak Observatory Association* now has fifty active members!

The Board wishes to extend a special recognition to the following people who joined the *Association* as Sustaining members:

Brian Day  
Howard Kuhlman  
Harry Leitner  
Edward McGuire  
Carter Roberts  
Don Stone

The Board also wishes to recognize those who joined as Lifetime members, and thank them for their additional support:

Dr. Jack Marling  
David Roemer  
J. Douglas Wells  
Charles Thompson

---

## FPOA PROGRESS REPORT

by the *FPOA* Board

### The *FPOA* Newsletter

Here it is at last! Our *official* newsletter! We plan to publish the newsletter on a quarterly basis, but it may be published more frequently during this phase of our existence due to the rapid pace of events, and our desire to keep *Association* members informed of our progress.

If you have articles, letters, comments you would like to see published, please send them to me, Frank Dibbell, at the address listed in the closing credits of this newsletter. Suggestions for the name of the newsletter, etc should be sent to me as well.

### The "Paper Mill"

The paper mill grinds slowly but relentlessly... We have received our "Blue Letter" from the State Franchise Tax Board, so California recognizes us now as a tax-exempt corporation.

Our federal paperwork has been checked and conditionally approved; it has now been submitted to the IRS (we needed the State's "Blue Letter"), and we should have our Federal exemption and IRS ID number in three to four weeks.

### **Observatory Status**

The preliminary architectural drawings for the 30 inch Observatory are complete, and were reviewed by the Board at the June 1st Board Meeting. They have been given to Harry Batlin of the California State Park Service for approval.

As mentioned before, the 30 inch Observatory will be a sliding roof building, twenty feet on a side, with a partially enclosed deck on the north side. Ground-breaking is tentatively scheduled for the July-August time frame.

The 22 inch Observatory will be of similar construction. Planning on it will commence when the 30 inch building is complete.

### **The 30 inch Scope**

The 30 inch scope is a dual purpose telescope designed to be either an f4.8 Newtonian or f14.6 Cassegrain. It will be installed initially with only the Newtonian focus operational; the Cassegrain focus will be added on at a later date. The 30 inch will be equatorially mounted on an English Cross-axis mounting.

Some of the following status information has been mentioned before, but I think it bears repeating:

- The tube assembly is complete
- The primary mirror is complete (unaluminized)
- The secondary mirror support is under construction
- The primary mirror cell is complete
- The northern polar axis bearing is under construction
- The southern polar axis bearing is complete
- The declination bearing housing is complete
- The 24 inch R.A. drive gear has been cut

The vacuum tank necessary to aluminize the big mirrors is nearing completion. The scope is approximately 70% complete, with an expected completion date around mid-September.

### **The 22 inch Scope**

The 22 inch scope is set up as an f4.5 Newtonian. It will be equatorially mounted on a standard fork mounting.

- The tube assembly is complete
- The primary mirror is complete (unaluminized)
- The primary mirror cell is complete
- The secondary mirror and support is complete
- The mounting is complete
- The R.A. drive gear needs to be cut.

The scope is approximately 90% complete, with an expected completion date around mid-June.

---

## **A RIVERSIDE EXPERIENCE**

*by Denni Medlock*

What started out to be a typical Riverside Telescope Makers' Conference turned into a windfall of good fortune for the *FPOA*. On Saturday evening of the annual Memorial Day weekend gathering at Big Bear City, Kevin Ritschel of Celestron International approached Kevin Medlock and myself and presented us an offer we literally could not refuse! Parked at the Celestron booth was a moving van half-full of factory seconds and returned equipment. Sitting at the Celestron factory in Torrance was another half a van load waiting to be picked up. Kevin Ritschel told us that if we (the *FPOA*) could get it home, it was ours. Celestron had heard of the *FPOA*, and was impressed enough with what we were doing to donate an estimated \$60,000 (factory cost) worth of telescopes, mounts, tripods, etc to our Association!

Stunned, Kevin (Medlock) and I stammered around for awhile under the impact, overjoyed at the prospect but only beginning to realize the problem at hand: how to get the hundreds of items back to the Bay Area? Every vehicle belonging to an *FPOA* member was already packed to the roof with personal telescopes and camping equipment. There was barely room for one extra scope, let alone dozens.

"May we borrow the Celestron van?" we asked Kevin Ritschel hopefully. "Sure," he replied

knowingly. "Just get it back by Monday." That left us two days in which to drive 1300 miles! Even Kevin and I, veterans of many a long distance drive, were not looking forward to such a marathon, especially since we had our 18 month old daughter Megan with us!

We quickly gathered *FPOA* forces and polled members for gas money (the van only gets 6 MPG!), and volunteers to drive. New member Charles Thompson volunteered to drive not only back to the Bay Area, but also to make the solo return trip to Torrance to return the empty van by Monday. It was unanimously agreed that the most practical alternative to getting Charles back from the Southland was to fly him home Monday night.

This decided, off we went to Torrance Sunday noon, Kevin Medlock driving the van, Charles and I following in the Medlock Jimmy. Memorial Day Sunday found the Celestron Factory deserted. Kevin Ritschel met us there, let us in the warehouse, and we began loading. And loading. And LOADING! Box after box of astronomical goodies were stacked into the van: C-8's, C-90's, refractors and reflectors, plus unopened boxes of who-knows-what! We were like kids in a candy store; an amateur astronomers dream come true!

Still in awe of the gold rush we had just witnessed and helped pack, off we went for cheese enchiladas at the local Mexican Restaurant. After lunch, we bid Kevin Ritschel a hearty "Thank You" and "Goodbye", then started the long journey from LA to Oakland via Highway 101 (Scenery much nicer than I-5; on a trip like this you don't want to be bored!).

Stopping every two hours for gas (gulp) we landed in Atascadero at 10 PM. While drinking coffee at the Jack in the Box, Kevin called his father Howard to tell him we had a van load of equipment could we store it at his place for awhile? (Sure, we'll just move the cars and the boat and the dogs out ...)

I remember commenting that when we started our annual RMTC trip to Big Bear early Friday the last place I thought I'd be at 10 PM Sunday was in the Jack in the Box in Atascadero! (Look at a map - they are light-years apart).

Heavy eyes set in at King City, where we pulled over to change drivers. Adrenelin kept

us going until we reached Charles' place in San Jose at 2:30 AM. By 3:30 AM we were parked in front of Howard's garage, and by 4 Kevin and I hit the bed (kersplash), and were out (zzzzzz).

A change in plans in which Howard volunteered to drive back to LA with Kevin and the van, then fly back, released Charles from continuing on as a member of this mobile torture chamber. After cramming the garage and one bedroom to the ceiling with equipment, Kevin and Howard headed back to Torrance. The next time I saw Kevin it was 2 AM Tuesday, and he was muttering something about "white line fever", telescopes, and airports.

Many thanks to Charles Thompson, Howard Medlock, Bob Fingerhut, John Gleason, Bob Schalck, Jeff Walker, and of course, Kevin Ritschel for helping without complaint to quickly organize, fund, drive, and keep sane during this unexpected good fortune.

So, what do we have? We aren't quite sure. A Board Meeting was held Saturday morning (June 1st) to discuss the disposition of the equipment. It seems that the first thing we have to do is inventory everything and price it for tax purposes. Another Board meeting will be held to discuss methods of selling the equipment to raise funds for the Observatory.

After the dust settles, so to speak, the proceeds from the sale of the equipment donated by Celestron will probably be enough to cover our expenses on the 30" telescope's Observatory. Plain "thanks" just doesn't quite seem enough. From all of us on the *Fremont Peak Observatory Association's* Board of Directors,

**THANK YOU, CELESTRON!!!**

*(Editor's Postscript)*

A Physical Inventory of the equipment has been scheduled for June 9th. On that date we will count, price, and tag missing items. Nothing can be sold until receipt of our IRS Letter, which will give us our I.D. number. We expect the letter within the next three to four weeks. We'll keep you posted!

---

## THE BLUE WHALE

by Frank Dibbell

Late last year our illustrious treasurer, John Stewart, happened to have come across a 17 foot telescope dome. The dome, which was being stored at Digger Pines Campground (somewhere between Patterson and Mt. Hamilton), had been donated to the FPOA by some individual or club, I forget which. Anyhow, this is the story of how we moved the dome from Digger Pines to Fremont Peak.

The dome - disassembled - consists of nine separate pieces: four for the skirt which supports the dome, four for the dome itself, and one for the dome shutter. Each piece (except the shutter) weighs in at roughly 350 pounds.

We decided at an earlier Board meeting that the best time to move it would be over a Star Party weekend, when we would have many bodies available for the effort. So the weekend of March 24-25 was chosen. We were organized into two teams: one at Digger Pines who would do the loading, and one at Fremont Peak who would do the unloading. John got us a truck and driver (an 18 wheeler flat-bed!).

Early Sunday morning the truck arrived at Digger Pines. Since I was part of the Fremont Peak unloading team, I could only imagine how things were going at Digger Pines that morning. My concern was more immediate: an immense fog bank was making its way up from Monterey Bay towards the Peak. And it was heavy! By 10 AM one could barely see 10 feet! And wet? It was like literally being in a cold steam bath!

So being the civilized creatures that we were, we sat around inside Rick's house (the Park Ranger's house at the Peak), drank coffee, and told "war stories" of Star Parties gone by.

Around 2 PM the advance guard arrived, informing us that the truck and dome would arrive within the hour. Sure enough. It arrived pretty much on time, but all we could do was gasp in awe at this mass of steel and aluminum resting on the bed of the truck. It looked very much like the rind from a

sectioned orange, only it was painted sky blue!!!

The truck was unable to drive up to the observatory site, so we had to unload the sections in the upper parking lot, then ferry them one at a time on the back of a pickup truck up to the observing site. It was really a comical sight - each dome piece literally dwarfed the pickup. By 3:30 PM the dome was resting in its new temporary storage spot.

As we looked at it lying in the tall, wet grass in the fog, someone commented, "It looks like a big blue whale!" So now the dome has a nickname: The *Blue Whale*. Others of us thought about taking its picture, and sending it to the *Enquirer* claiming that it was a downed space craft!

Anyhow, it will need some work, but ultimately should provide a haven for a future scope at the Peak. Thanks to all who assisted on the project!

---

The purpose of the *Fremont Peak Observatory Association* is to provide educational and interpretive services of astronomically related topics to visitors of Fremont Peak State Park. The *Fremont Peak Observer* is published quarterly, and is the official publication of the *Fremont Peak Observatory Association*. Articles and other items for publication should be sent to:

Frank Dibbell, FPOA  
710 Georgia Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

Deadline for articles is the 15th of the month preceding the month of publication.

### FPOA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President:	Robert Fingerhut	(408) 263-4455
Vice Pres:	Robert Schalck	(415) 276-1894
Exec Sec.:	Rick Morales	(408) 623-4255
Admn Sec.:	Denni Medlock	(415) 654-6796
Treasurer:	John Stewart	(415) 527-7036
Directors:	Frank Dibbell	(408) 746-6493
	John Gleason	(415) 790-9250
	Kevin Medlock	(415) 654-6796
	Howard Medlock	(415) 276-2753