

# THE FREMONT PEAK OBSERVER

Vol. I No. 3

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Call For Volunteers

We are still looking for volunteers to help in construction of the 30 inch Observatory. If you can help, please call John Stewart at (415) 527-7036.

### AANC Conference & Star Party

The FPOA will be co-sponsoring a barbecue and Star Party with the The Astronomical Association of Northern California, on Saturday September 14th at Fremont Peak State Park. In addition to the barbecue and Star party, there will be a swap meet and a raffle for a 4.5" reflecting telescope. For more information, call Don Warren at (415) 369-0414.

### Quarterly Newsletter?

You may have noticed two things about this Newsletter. One, it is announced as a quarterly publication. Two, it seems to arrive monthly! The reason is quite simple, really. Since we are still in our formative stages, and events are happening quickly, we (the Board) feel it is important to keep our membership as informed as possible of the status of our *Association* and the progress of our Observatory.

Once things "settle down", so to speak, publication of this Newsletter will retreat to its quarterly status.

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## PROGRESS REPORT

*by the FPOA Board*

### The "Paper Mill"

Our contract with the State of California has been written, signed by *Association* officers, and submitted to the State. This completes the last major piece of paperwork that needs to be done before we can begin construction.

### Observatory Status

The big news, of course, is that with the success of our *Celestron* telescope sale, we now have the funds necessary to purchase the

materials required for the Observatory building. The architect is currently drawing up the detailed drawings for the 30" Observatory. Once these plans are complete, we can start building! Construction of the Observatory building is expected to begin in September.

Also, we would like to thank Dr. Jack Marling of *LUMICON* for donating a set of aluminum wheels for the sliding roof of the observatory.

### The 30" 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.

All of the scopes major sub-assemblies are now complete, with the exception of the declination shaft and some minor welding. In a few weeks Kevin Medlock will be putting all these sub-assemblies together to make the complete scope in order to "shake it down". Additionally, the Newtonian secondary mirror has arrived from Coulter Optical, and the Cassegraine secondary is in the fine grinding stage.

### The 22" Scope

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

The problem with a "depression" at the center of the primary has been fixed by using a larger diagonal mirror. All the 22" needs now is the clock drive to be complete!

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## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

*by Frank Dibbell*

The Board wishes to extend a special recognition to the following people who either joined the *Association* as Life members, or upgraded their memberships to Life status:

Jay Freeman  
Bob Fingerhut  
William Merkel  
Harry Leitner  
Howard Medlock  
William Smith

One question I am frequently asked is, "When does my membership expire?" Memberships in the *FPOA* run the duration of the calendar year, from January 1st through December 31st. This means that in December you will be receiving your membership renewal notice for the 1986 calendar year.

Since the basic membership rate (\$10.00 for a general member) is relatively small, we decided against establishing a pro rata table for individuals who join mid-year. This greatly simplifies our accounting procedures and reduces the amount of time we spend on administrative activities, thereby allowing us to devote the majority of our collective energies to tasks relating to our primary purpose, namely the development of public programs in Astronomy!

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## CELESTRON SCOPE SALE

*by Frank Dibbell*

**CELESTRON INTERNATIONAL** donated a large supply of small refracting telescopes to the *FPOA* late last May to help us in our goal of building an observatory in Fremont Peak State Park. Our goal is now one step closer to reality due to the tremendous success of the Telescope Sale the *FPOA* held on Saturday, August 10th.

Preparation for the Sale actually began Friday afternoon. All the scopes had been previously moved up to Ranger Rick's house via pickup truck and van caravan; now the time had come to actually assemble them. *Association* members present on Friday included Charles "Skip" Whitworth, John Gleason, Bob Fingerhut, Rick Morales and Kevin Medlock. Scope assembly was hectic, as was the process of matching item numbers with our master inventory list to verify the prices.

We stopped at 5:00 PM for a trip to a local restaurant in town for dinner and margaritas,

then it was back up the hill for more telescope assembly. By 3:00 AM all the scopes had been assembled, matched, and priced - so it was off to bed for a few hours of sleep before the onslaught on Saturday.

Saturday morning we were joined by more *Association* members: Jay Freeman, Jack Zeiders, Howard Medlock, John Stewart, Earl Watts and Bill Smith. We got together and carried all the scopes outside, and lined them up in three very long rows. About all we could do now was hone our sales skills (...and here we have a nice little scope used by a grandmother only on Sundays to look at the moon!) and hope for success.

By 1:00 PM a small but orderly crowd began to gather at the entrance to the sale, while our sales force answered questions and volunteered information to the crowd. At 2:00 the sales force took positions amongst the forest of scopes (I was videotaping the event for posterity!), the ropes were dropped, and about 80 prospective buyers descended upon us!

To say the sale was a success would be an understatement. The buying crowd was extremely well-behaved, and everything proceeded smoothly. At the end of the day a quick tally showed that we had made just a bit over \$17,000.00! A total of 110 to 120 people actually showed up for the sale, and roughly 70 telescopes were sold. We still have approximately 25 small Cometron (40 and 60mm) Refractors, which will be available for purchase during any *FPOA*-sponsored Fremont Peak Star Party.

In addition to the Main Event, the *East Bay Astronomical Society* ran a refreshment stand, selling soft drinks and brownies. *Association* member Earl Watts ran an accessories booth, where one could pick up items such as "red" flashlights for map reading at night, and Astronomical literature, such as Star Maps and books on Comet Halley were provided by Norm Sperling. Finally, an information table containing literature on the *Fremont Peak Observatory Association* and local Astronomy Clubs was located at the entrance to the sales

area.

Because of the overwhelming success of our scope sale, Fremont Peak Observatory has moved from a dream to a reality! Thank you to all who have helped in this endeavor.

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## A NIGHT AT MIRA

by Chris Pratt

*(Association Board Member Kevin Medlock, accompanied by SJAA Board Member Chris Pratt, visited the Monterey Institute for Research in Astronomy for an evening of viewing through their 36" telescope. Chris wrote an article detailing his experience at MIRA, which appeared in full in the SJAA EPHEMERIS for the month of August. The article appears here, in condensed form, to give FPOA Association members an idea of what it will be like to view the heavens through the FPOA 30" currently under construction - ED)*

Upon arrival at MIRA we were treated to a cook's tour of the telescope and observatory support equipment by caretaker and chief electronics wizard Mike Simmons. I was surprised at the level of self-sufficiency that had been designed into the facility: everything is run off batteries which are recharged by a wind generator. Of course, there is a motor generator for backup in case of battery failure!

The seeing that night was good, with stability and transparency equal to that of a good night at Fremont Peak. The first object to be viewed was M51, because as Mike Simmons put it, "I want to blow your socks off with the best object for the 36"!". We viewed M51 with a 40mm Televue Plossl, which yielded a magnification of 228 on the 36" f10 system (about the lowest power we could get!!!).

M51 proudly filled half the field of view! We plainly saw the spiral structure, with star clouds connecting the arms to each other. The bridge to the companion was obvious, and there were bright clumps in the arms. It looked just like the photograph I purchased at Lick Observatory!

Needless to say, Kevin and I were suitably impressed. Next we looked at NGC4565, an edge-on spiral galaxy, only to discover that it would not fit in the field of view! Other

objects, such as M8 and the Veil Nebula required extensive scanning to see a large portion of the detail visible.

By the time we got to Lyra, we were getting a little crazy. Kevin wanted to boost the power to see the central star in the ring. Soon he had the 36" cranked up to a little over 3000X, at which magnification the central star appeared as a large fuzzy blob, the second star was plainly visible, and the third star was suspected. Also, only the inner fringes of the ring were visible at the edge of the eyepiece field!

After a full night of viewing planets, galaxies, and nebulae through the 36", we reluctantly turned in, but only after nearing a state of complete physical exhaustion! It was a night I shall remember for years to come.

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## DIBBELL & MEDLOCK... ANOTHER NEWMAN & REDFORD?

by Frank Dibbell

While wearing one of my many *Association* hats ("Publicity Chairman" this time), I was beating the bushes to get publicity for our then upcoming Telescope Sale. I had written numerous letters and press releases that were sent to local media outlets, most of which were politely ignored at this end of the Valley (my cohort Rick Morales had better luck with the local Hollister, Salinas, and San Juan Bautista papers).

Not one to be easily deterred, I kept calling around, and got in touch with someone at KNTV Channel 11 in San Jose who dealt with community affairs. I explained to them who we are and what we do, and could they give us some publicity? The person I talked to said "Sure. Be at the studio at 8:00 PM Tuesday night (Jul 30) for the taping. Bring yourself and one more guest to speak."

It seems that KNTV has a little one-half hour community affairs TV show they do every Sunday morning called *DATEBOOK*, and we had just been invited to be on it! Well, of

course I was ecstatic! Finally hit paydirt, thought I.

I had two immediate tasks to complete: one, I had to find another person to share the limelight with me, and two, I had to come up with a list of questions the moderator could ask us. The more I thought about it, the more I realized I really needed two people for the show. Stage fright had begun to set in, and I realized that I probably just wasn't cut out for TV.

Obviously, our *Association* President was the logical choice, so I gave Bob Fingerhut a call. "Darn!", said Bob, "I have to be in Portland that day on business." Well, the President couldn't make it, but no big deal. We still have a few other *Association* officers who could do a good job. As I was about to call Bob Schalck, the Vice President, I had remembered that he was in the process of getting married (some people will do anything to get out of a TV appearance!), and probably wouldn't be available. Administrative Secretary Denni Medlock couldn't do it, either, being around 11 months pregnant.

Well, I called Denni anyway, and asked if perhaps Kevin (her husband and builder of our 30" scope) would do it. "Sure! No problem!" she volunteered. "I'll break the news to him tomorrow!" Seems that there is one individual in this world who is more afraid of TV cameras than myself: Kevin Medlock!

Since I was unsuccessful in finding a second person, and Kevin simply *insisted* that I be there, I decided to go ahead and be on the show anyway.

Tuesday evening arrived much too quickly. Kevin showed up at my door precisely at 7:00 PM, and both of us paced around the living room somewhat nervously. Neither of us knew quite what to expect. At 7:30, we left for the studio in San Jose, getting there promptly at 8:00. There we met the other people who would be on the show. There was a fellow from the Salinas Agribusiness who would be talking about lettuce, two women who were going to talk about an upcoming Car Show, and two people from a camp for asthmatic children.

Kevin and I were to be the last segment, so we got to watch the whole process for the other three. It was interesting to watch the taping process; there were no retakes, so it was essentially a "live" performance. Between the segments during the commercial breaks, everybody was moving rapidly to set things up for the next segment. This included two telescopes we had brought along for "Show and Tell".

By the time our turn came my heart felt like it was wedged in my throat. I looked at Kevin, and he seemed almost as pale as me. I recalled reading an article about the fourteen or so worst fears, and that death was number six. Speaking in front of an audience was, of course, number one! Small consolation to me now.

Lights, Camera, Action. We were on! Then the first question the moderator asks us is, "So you're amateur astronomers, can you tell me my horoscope?" My heart decides to leave my throat for the moon, while the rest of my insides take up residence in my feet. The five minutes, which seemed like an eternity, is over in an instant. The funny part is, my mind is a total blank; I can't recall a word I said. But it didn't matter, it was *over*, and that was the important thing. That, and the fact we swore each other to secrecy, agreeing to tell no one about the show!

The segment aired Sunday morning, August 4th, at 11:30 AM. Somehow, it didn't seem quite so bad just sitting back watching it. I will admit that two weeks after the show I have not received any calls from the major studios with contracts for me to sign, but (sigh) I guess that's show biz.

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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:

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710 Georgia Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

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

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