

*Promoting Public Education in Astronomy*

# The Fremont Peak Observer

Volume IV No. 2

June 1988

## Mars Goes Public

Late this summer, Mars will be at its closest to earth since August, 1971. The view should be spectacular, and this offers a great opportunity to invite friends to visit the peak.



Three public programs are planned leading up to the Mars opposition. They will be August 20th, September 3rd, and September 17th.

Since it is likely that there will be considerable media attention to this event, the observatory crowds could be large. If you can assist with the programs, call Rick Morales, (408) 623-4255, to sign up.

Before the Mars Watch, there will be several other public programs. The tentative subject for the June 18th program is the Moon, Venus, Uranus, and Neptune. On July 9th, the emphasis will be on selected galaxies and clusters. The July 23rd program will be about the planets, and August 6th will be a Meteor showers program.

The Star-B-Que August 13th will also be a public program, and two more, October 1st and 15th, are scheduled after the Mars Watch. The association needs members to volunteer to help with these programs. Certi-

fied users of the 30" telescope accept an obligation to help at least once a year, but from my experience, talking to visitors about astronomy is far too enjoyable to be considered an obligation. Call Rick Morales to sign up for one of the programs.

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## Annual Star-B-Q August 13th

Mark August 13th on your calendar for the annual FPOA General Membership Meeting. This will be our 3rd annual "no host" barbecue.

The FPOA will provide a free hamburger and soft drink to members and their immediate families. We need member volunteers to bring other goodies, such as salads, brownies, watermelons, etc. If you can bring something, call Rick Morales at (408) 623-4255 to sign up.

The observatory will be open from 1PM on for self-guided tours. The barbecue fires will be started around 3 and the food should be ready about 4PM. At dusk, another showing of the silent film, "The Making of Fremont Peak Observatory" will be offered. The evening will continue with a star party featuring the 30" reflector.

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## First Photo of Pluto with 30"

*See Page two for  
Picture and Story*

## Certification Class Report

After attending a certification class, one thing that struck me was the planning that went into the observatory, and the many details that will help insure its safe, enjoyable use.

Kevin Medlock spent about 90 minutes with a small group of us, describing each step in the opening and closing of the observatory, and watching each of us physically unlatch the roof, uncover the mirror, and site the scope. The "hands-on" approach definitely contributed to my confidence that I wouldn't forget an important step when I did it myself.

The only major obligations for using the observatory are to use it carefully, to enter your activity in the log, and to assist with some of the public programs. The only thing missing was a written set of instructions, and Kevin said they would be ready soon. Everyone certified to operate the telescope will receive a copy, and they will be posted at the observatory. If you are interested in attending a certification class, call Kevin at (415) 654-6796 to get scheduling information. It feels nice to have that card in my pocket!

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## Board of Directors Election

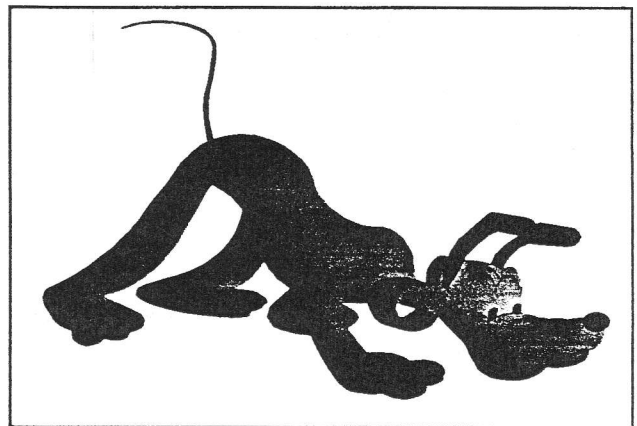
The Association has an ulterior motive for organizing the Star-B-Q each year: It is also the annual meeting. As usual, there will be an election for open positions on the board of directors. This year the positions held by Bob Schalck and Bob Fingerhut expire and thus we will be electing to board members.

If you are interested in being a board member, or would like to suggest someone as a member, contact the Nominating committee: Frank Dibbell, Rick Morales, and Charlie Carlson. The only requirements are that directors must have been a member for one year, and that they be willing to serve. The term of the board members is three years, which will begin January, 1989.

## 30" Scope unleashed on Pluto

The Fremont Peak Observer recently collared an astrophotographer who claimed to have the first photo of Pluto taken with the 30" telescope. Unfortunately, the photographer wishes to remain anonymous. It seems he forgot to fill out the observing log, and is worried Kevin will put his use of the observatory on a tight leash.

The quality of the photo, offered here for your viewing, surprised the photographer since the seeing was so bad that he described it as "furry". The exact date of the photo was also withheld, but he did say it would have been ready for publication about the 1st of April, but our newsletter is only quarterly. It certainly gives one paws...



## Survey Reminder

Most of you recall the questionnaire included in the Newsletter last quarter. Unfortunately only a few people have filled it out and sent it in.

If you haven't done so, take a few minutes, answer the questions, and mail it to:

**Fremont Peak Observatory Survey  
10281 Parlett Place  
Cupertino, CA 95014**

If you don't send them in, how will I ever get to report on the results?

## The Park around us

by Rick Morales

A Volunteer training, sponsored by Fremont Peak park, was held May 21st. About 10 people attended the session led by Kay Schmidt-Robinson, Chief Ranger of the Gavilan District. The program covered the origins and history of the State Department of Parks and Recreation, the history of Fremont Peak State Park, dealing with the public, and techniques for developing public programs.

More trainings are planned in the future. Call Rick Morales for more information. The Observatory Association has one program at the moment, developed by John Gleason. It is excellent, and received a number of positive comments when presented the evening of May 21st, but we could easily use more such programs.

On the more mundane side of park business, the contracts have gone out for construction of restrooms near the maintenance buildings below the observatory. We should have flush toilets for the Star-B-Q!

Come and visit the park during the day this summer too. Enjoy the trails, the flowers, and the wildlife. You don't have to be looking up all the time!

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## Future Articles

The next issue of the Fremont Peak Observer will be published September 1st. If you have articles that should go in, or if you have topics you would like to see discussed, the deadline will be Mid-August (just about Star-B-Q time).

One article that is planned will be called "From the Log". Many of the comments in the log at the observatory deserve publication. (Have you heard about the cat that got on the mirror?).

## Observatory News Items

Certification Manuals are complete and will be sent to everyone certified to use the observatory. If you have not received one by the middle of June, and you have been certified, contact Denni Medlock, (415) 654-6796, to arrange for one.

Our Stained glass window is installed! The window was built by Bonnie Calmann, and installed by Charlie Carlson and Donn Mukensnoble. The main theme of the window is the planet Saturn, which was the first object viewed through the 30" telescope.

The second focuser has now been colimated, and a third one installed. Work is progressing slowly on the declination circles and they should be complete by the end of the summer.

There are a number of work projects planned for the summer. The largest is the deck, which will be started late in June. If you want to help with a work party, contact Charlie Carlson, (408) 923-7592.

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## Fundraising

At the board's request, Donn Mukensnoble and Charlie Carlson are heading a committee to approach various corporations and to solicit donations for the FPOA and the observatory. At this point, they are trying to find the "correct" path into the larger corporations such as IBM, Hewlett Packard, Apple, etc. to officially request donations or grants.

If any of you have suggestions of companies that may be willing to donate to our educational efforts, please contact Donn or Charlie. They would be especially appreciative if you can offer a contact inside the company and information about the way the company processes such requests.

## Public Night Mindset

Approximately every other Saturday night through the warmer months, the observatory is opened for a public program. Since these events are well publicized, we can expect quite a few people coming who will be new to Fremont Peak and often to astronomy. If you set up your scope at the peak on one of those nights, remember: we invited these people.

Especially if you set up near the observatory, expect to make your personal view of the sky available to the people that come by. You may be asked by the person in charge of the program to setup on a particular view. The crowds are typically thin by 11pm and gone by midnite, so you can you'll have some time for photography later on.

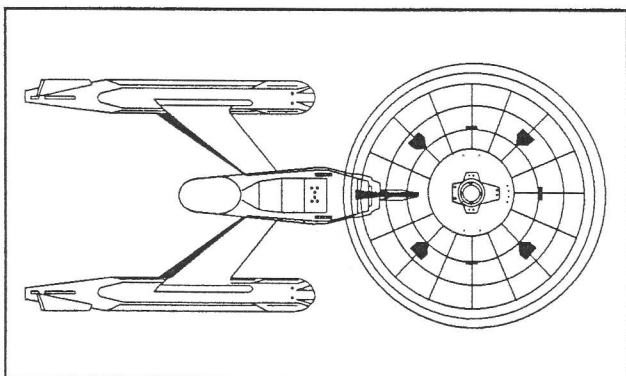
Remember that our organization exists to promote public education in Astronomy. Come, share your knowledge and your view for a few hours on these public nights.

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## Space Junk ruins Photo

Several otherwise great astrophotos have been ruined recently by airplanes, satellites, or miscellaneous space junk streaking through the field of view.

One photographer was able to enlarge the item that ruined his photo. He is making inquiries as to the owner, with the intention of having the operator's license revoked.



## Notes from the Board

The organization will be going into the summer with about \$6000 in the checking account and a similar amount in the savings account. The major expenses for the summer will be chairs for the observatory (on order) and the deck on the west side.

The planning for the public programs is receiving a lot of attention. Although an excellent presentation has been prepared, the problems of moving a large number of people through the observatory have yet to be solved. There will probably be experimentation for the first several public nights to find the best mechanism.

### FPOA Officers and Directors

<b>President</b>	Frank Dibbell	(408) 746-6493
<b>Vice Pres</b>	Kevin Medlock	(415) 654-6796
<b>Exec Secy</b>	Rick Morales	(408) 623-4255
<b>Treasurer</b>	Denni Medlock	(415) 654-6796

#### Directors

Charlie Carlson	(408) 923-7592
John Gleason	(415) 792-8248
Charles Whitworth	(408) 977-0805
Bob Fingerhut	(408) 263-4455
Bob Schalck	(415) 782-1887

The FREMONT PEAK OBSERVER is published quarterly and is the official publication of the Fremont Peak Observatory Association. The Association is a tax-exempt, not for profit organization dedicated to providing public education and interpretive services in Astronomy using the resources available at Fremont Peak State Park.

Basic membership in the Association is \$10.00 per year, plus a one-time \$10.00 initiation fee. Membership in the Association runs the calendar year. There is no pro-rationing of dues. For further information, contact any Board Member.