

Promoting Public Education in Astronomy

The Fremont Peak Observer

Volume V No. 1

March 1989

1989 Observatory Schedule

The FPOA board of directors has set the schedule of events for the year. As a key to reading the list, Public Night means a program will be presented and advertised. This means people with flashlights may well be walking through the parking lot until 11:00pm or so. Star Party means the observatory will be open for viewing, but no program will be presented. Those in attendance are far more likely to be educated in the ways of astrophotographers!

✓ April 21	Certification Class
May 6	Open house for astronomy clubs
May 13	Public Program - Astronomy Day
✓ May 20	Certification Class
May 27	Public Program
June 3	Star Party
June 10	Public Program
✓ June 17	Certification Class
June 24	Public Program
July 1	Star Party
July 8	Public Program
✓ July 15	Certification Class
July 22	Public Program
July 29	Star B Que - Annual meeting
August 5	Public Program
✓ August 12	Certification Class
August 26	Public Program - Neptune
September 2	Star Party
September 9	Public Program
September 23	Public Program
September 30	Star Party
October 7	Public Program
October 21	Public Program
October 28	Star Party

The Public Nights require members of our group to present the program, to run the telescope, and to answer questions from our visitors. As I hope you recall, use of the telescope carries with it a commitment to help with at least one public program. Call John Gleason at (415) 792-8248 to sign up for one of them.

Board Meeting Notes

Board meetings are open to all FPOA members, however few members make use of this right. In an effort to make attendance by the membership easier, the board has taken the drastic step of planning ahead!

The board meetings between now and the June newsletter will all be held at the peak. Here is the schedule:

March 11th	3pm
April 8th	3pm
May 6th	3pm
June 10th	3pm

These dates all correspond with times the moon will not interfere with observation. Come up to the peak a little early, and see your board in action.

Recently, the board has been working to improve the appearance of the observatory, and to make the "warming room" more suitable for giving programs. Blinds have been ordered to allow programs to be given without disturbing observers outside. Money has been set aside for both free-standing cabinets and wall-mounted display cabinets. The latter will provide places to put information about the FPOA and to display photographs taken with the 30" telescope. A committee has been formed to design the room layout and purchase the needed articles.

Another important action of the board has been to plan and schedule a series of Certification Classes throughout the spring and summer. As you know, members must attend a certification class before they may use the 30" scope. Certificates must be renewed regularly.

These classes absolutely require prior reservations! Call John Gleason to reserve space. If you sign up for a class and cannot come, call John. See the schedule on the right for class days. These are full moon weekends.

Asterisms and Other Things

by Charlie Carlson

Most of us that love the stuff in the night sky live in families where we are the only ones that are really into this crazy hobby, and the rest of the family are sort of ho-hum about it. Oh sure, they come out and look at a few things in the backyard scope during the summer, but where are they when it's 4am and 32 degrees up at the Peak in December?

Converting your whole family over is kind of like missionaries converting natives on an island. The "training" should be simple, in small doses at first, and repetitive (fun too!).

Get the kids or your spouse out there some night and ask them to point out anything that reminds them of something here on earth. Whatever they recognize first will become their special Asterism. They will find it easy to remember, and you'll find them asking to see it again - probably six months later when it isn't visible. That, of course, gives you a chance to talk about the tilt of the earth and the cause of the seasons. Don't get too technical, instead, invite them to find another "look-alike" object in the sky.

The biggest well-known Asterism is the big dipper. Show your kids how it's getting so tilted this time of year that all the water keeps pouring out. That's why we're having all this rain, right? (right??)

I'd be interested to hear of strange Asterisms in the sky that other people have seen. The first one I ever saw was "the Airplane". The airplane is to me what other people see as Cygnus the Swan. If that constellation were renamed today, it sure wouldn't be a swan!

Other things that are interesting to point out and remember are lines, curves, arcs, and circles in the sky. After showing a novice the Arc to Arcturus, look straight overhead and notice a giant 50 degree arc that starts at Castor, goes through Pollux, over through Procyon, and then over to Sirius. It's a great arc, twice the size of the entire Big Dipper - kind of a super asterism!

An asterism formed by the temporary location of a bright planet is unique - and can be watched stretching out of shape or contracting into nothing. The ever changing triangle formed by Jupiter, Pleiades, and Hyades is an ongoing example of this.

So get out there and find some asterisms of your own. Before you know it, everyone in the family will have a few favorite ones and will actually want to go out and see them! Happy hunting!

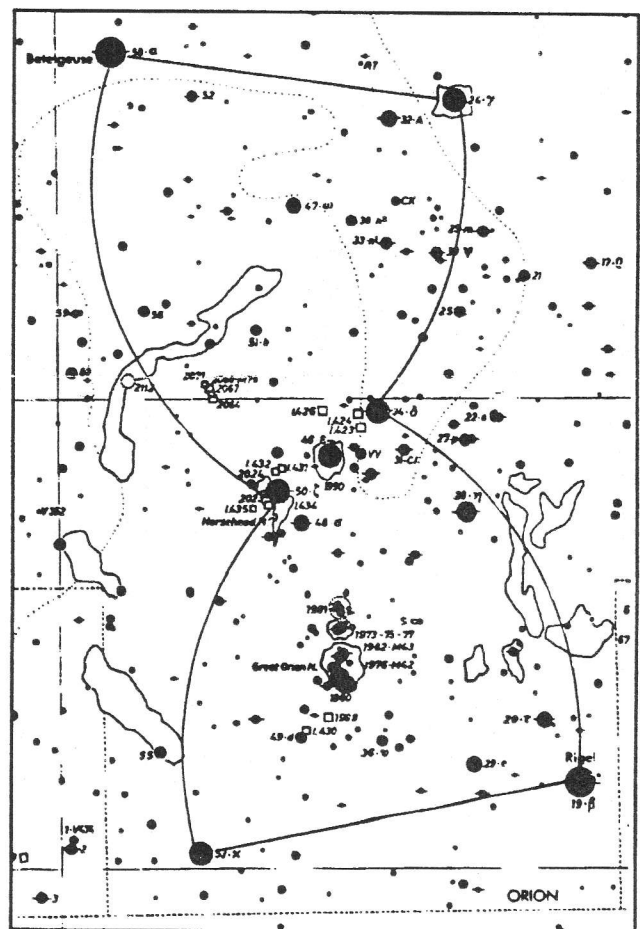
A Contest and an Entry...

by Pete Jacobsen

Of course as newsletter editor, I got to read Charlie's Asterism article first. It certainly rings a bell for me - I'm always trying to get my family interested. I took his suggestion, and tricked my family into the back yard at night (they've gotten wary over the years!). I was surprised that this nighttime equivalent of cloud watching worked so well. I got a number of suggestions - sometimes faster than I could identify what they were talking about.

I propose a contest. Take your family, your friends, or yourself out at night and look up. Pick the best Asterism you come up with, sketch it on a piece of white paper three inches wide (just under the width of these columns), identify the section of the sky (in case your sketching skills are no better than mine!), and send it to me at 442 Oxford Way, Santa Cruz, 95060 before the June newsletter. I'll pick a winner and publish it.

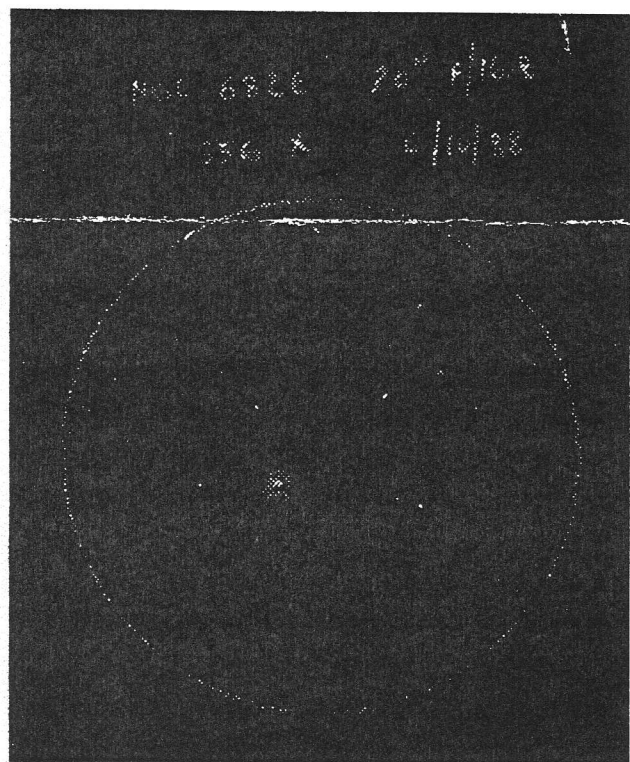
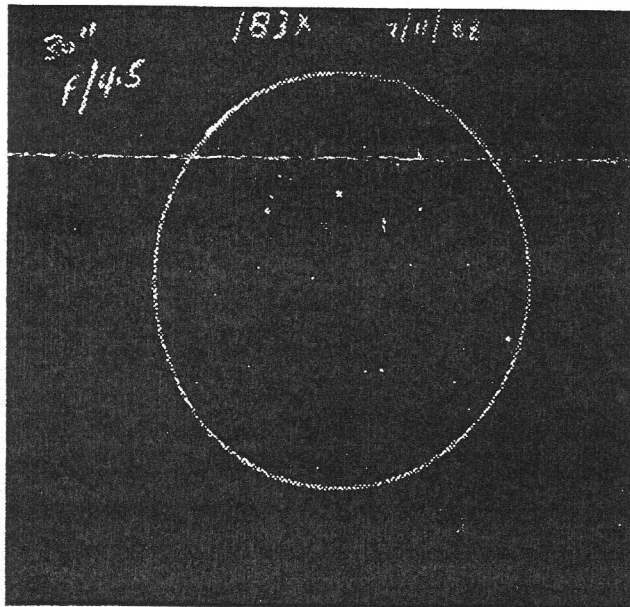
Here is the winner (and only entry) for the March newsletter. Looking south this time of year, the Hourglass should be easily visible - you don't have to be a hunter to find it. The careful observer will notice sand pouring through the narrow neck of the hourglass - well, sword of.



Sketches from Space

Robert Toebe is a frequent user of the 30" telescope, and has made many beautiful sketches of what he sees. It is with considerable trepidation that I attempt to reproduce some of them here. I have been able to print and copy them if I use care. What you see will indicate how careful my local copy shop is!

The originals are on black paper with white ink, about the size shown here. They reveal a surprising amount of detail. Please accept these as an experiment in desktop publishing.



Looking down at Fremont Peak

by Pete Jacobsen

UP is not the only direction at Fremont Peak State Park. The views toward the horizon are among the best in the Bay area. Have you ever sat with a map and tried to identify the mountains, valleys and towns that can be seen?

Down is a nice direction too. Wildflowers are starting to bloom, and a number of animals scurry around. The park can be a delightful place during the day.

I've begun to notice many things about the park since we began work on the manual for Fremont Peak Volunteers. The Department of Parks and Recreation provided us with some more general material, and suggestions for planning the detailed section about Fremont Peak. One important realization that came to me is that they consider the FPOA to be the interpretive group for the whole park, not just the night sky.

As part of the manual-writing effort, Rick has been writing about the Cultural history of the park: John Fremont himself; Fremont Peak day, the longest continuous continuous historical event in San Benito county (since 1906); Mining for barite during World War I; The establishment of the park, and the history of some of it's oldest buildings.

Mary Ambrose has been writing about the Natural history of the park. There are lists of identified flora and fauna living in the park; Geologic information; Weather and climate information.

For me, the writing of this manual has re-awakened an interest in natural history. It is obvious that we have plenty of members interested in public education about astronomy. We should consider to what extent we want the job of daytime interpreter of the park. If our group does not now have members interested in this, we should consider whether we should expand our "scope" in this direction.

At a recent board meeting, we were discussing the question of how to bring more people to the peak for our public programs. One suggestion was to contact interpretive groups from other parks. I am excited about this idea. We can turn their eyes upward at night, and they can remind us to look around ourselves during the day.

As the manual progresses, and efforts to provide broader-based training to volunteers gets under way, I hope those of you who find the park a great place to be during the day will begin to think about sharing your interest with other park visitors.

Renewal ID Program

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IF your envelop held a membership card
THEN you are an active member for 1989
ELSE
  IF you are a life member
  THEN you are an active member for 1989
  ELSE
    IF you mailed in your check
    THEN
      IF you mailed it recently
      THEN don't worry, we're not to fast.
      ELSE Call Rick, somethings wrong.
    ENDIF
  ELSE Mail it! We don't want to lose you!
  ENDIF
ENDIF
ENDIF
ENDIF
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Advantages of Membership

Thanks to the efforts of Richard Pascarelli, an FPOA member, those of you with an interest in electronics as well as astronomy may be able to save some money. Haltek Electronics of Mountain View is offering a 10% discount to members. Simply present your card at time of purchase. The complete address is:

Haltek Electronics
1062 Linda Vista Avenue
Mountain View, Ca. 94043
(415) 969-0510
(408) 744-1333

Another opportunity exists for members interested in subscribing to Astronomy, Odyssey, Deep Sky, or Telescope Making at reduced rates. Five members must apply together to get the savings. If you are interested, and willing to coordinate applications for one of these magazines, contact me at (408) 425-8162. I'll try to put you in touch with one another.

From the Log

January 7, 1989

Removed mirror from 30" telescope for planned maintenance.

Waiting...

Waiting...

Waiting...

Waiting...

FPOA Officers and Directors

President	Frank Dibbell	(408) 746-6493
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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.