



Promoting Public Education in Astronomy

The Fremont Peak Observer

Volume V No. 2 June 1989

1989 Annual Star-B-Que

The 3rd Annual Members Star-B-Que will be held July 29th. This activity-packed event is open to all FPOA members and their families free of charge. Beginning at 2:00pm, the barbeques will be cooking up a storm of goodies - this year barbequed chicken will be the main fare. As always, there will be green salad. We ask that members contribute their own specialty side dish that others may enjoy.

The Star-B-Que is also the FPOA General Meeting, the major component of which is board elections. Voting will be continuous throughout the afternoon. Stop in at the information table for your ballot. (See Election Information elsewhere in this newsletter.)

We will have door prizes, observatory tours, and our first ever "Creativity" Awards (what's that, you ask? Come and find out!)

Following the barbeque we will have a guest lecturer from NASA / Ames Research Center. Dr. Dana Backman will talk to the group about the existence of planetary systems around nearby stars. Public viewing through the 30" will cap the evening (prayers to the clear weather / fog dieties are encouraged).

Already in this 1989 season the FPO has experienced some great observing, and gratifying public and private responses. As always, our members are who make this observatory work. The General Meeting / Star-B-Que is the FPOA's way of saying "thank you" for an effort well done, and a method of celebrating the observing season ahead of us. So come on up to the Peak on July 29th and enjoy the company of other members, see the improvements made to the observatory over the winter, hear a good speaker, and feast on great food!

RSVP, please, by calling Rick or Deborah at (408) 623-4255 by July 24th.

Board Elections

The Fremont Peak Observatory Association is governed by a Board of Directors who are elected from the general membership. The board is composed of eight association members and one representative from the California State Department of Parks and Recreation who is appointed. The eight elected board members serve three year terms on a rotating basis.

This year, the terms of John Gleason, Skip Whitworth, and Charlie Carlson expire. Skip has indicated he will retire from the board, and the association owes him thanks for his service. John and Charlie will be running for re-election. Dave Ambrose has also been nominated.

All Association members who will have been an active member for one year by July 29th, 1989 are eligible to vote and to run for office. If you wish to nominate someone (or yourself), call Bob Fingerhut, (408) 263-4455, the chair of the nominating committee.

The election will take place at the General Meeting - the Star-B-Que on July 29th. The polls will be open all afternoon. Elected officers will begin their terms on January 1, 1990.

Call for Volunteers

We still need volunteers to help with the Public Stargazing nights. Remember: certification on the 30-inch telescope carries with it an obligation to help out during our public programs.

To sign up, call John Gleason at (415) 792-8248 (John works nights, so leave a message on his answering machine and he'll return your call).

Showing off the sky and answering questions for our guests can be a very rewarding experience. Give it a try soon.

Changes at the Peak

Many would think that the winter, normally a time of cold, rainy weather and no scheduled public programs at Fremont Peak, would keep the activities around the observatory at a low. Quite the contrary seems to occur. FPOAers are a hardy group of people. One glance at the log shows many nights in which the telescope saw some use, and many observers, like the intrepid Robert Toebe and John Gleason, spend long hours at the eyepiece. Freezing hours, yes, but rewarding ones all the same.

During the winter a new activity takes place at the FPO: Work Parties. This group activity has its origins in the building of the observatory itself, when forty or so enthusiastic volunteers gathered every weekend and saw the dream through to a completed facility.

But no facility is ever complete - at least not ours. The 30" mirror was realuminized and overcoated, stronger motors were installed on the clock drive. The observing ladder now has rails and a platform at the top. Music tapes are available for your listening pleasure.

In the meeting room, check out the great black and white photographs by John Gleason which adorn the northern wall. Each is a museum quality work of art and is accompanied by a graphic description of the object displayed. These are certain to be an attraction for the public programs.

Other changes in the meeting room include vertical blinds on the western and northern windows, allowing not only the room to be darkened for slide shows and films, but eliminating the problem of light escaping at night and disturbing telescope users outside the building on the downhill side.

Certainly the biggest, and probably the heaviest, change to the meeting room has been the recent installation of two cabinets, an addition long planned and awaited. Now the FPOA will have the capacity to display and/or sell items such as books and related astronomical goods.

The interior was not the only area at the observatory slated for improvements. One of the biggest complaints (and hazards) had been the lack of lighting by the east steps. Now you don't have to watch out for that long first step. The stairs are backlit from underneath with red lights. Other electrical miracles which have occurred are outlets on the outside of the building, under the shutters, and an outlet box across the road.

Speaking of shutters, a new and improved set were installed earlier this winter. They are lighter, more weather-proofed, and better looking. So far they have not been painted and the question remains as to whether they should be the same blue as the doors. Signs were put on the doors, and a trundle drawer placed under the interior stairs. Hey, we're beginning to look real good!

Astronomy Day '89

Our Astronomy Day program (May 13th) at Fremont Peak was not very well attended. The chilling cold, the wind, and the fog may have had something to do with that! Those hardy souls who did attend, however, were treated to a fascinating talk by Dr. Dana Backman about the infrared evidence for the existence of planetary systems around nearby stars.

By the end of the talk, the wind had subsided, and the fog was lapping at the hillside about 50 feet below the Observatory. We opened the roof, and spent the next several hours looking at the Moon, Jupiter, M13, etc. The seeing was by no means perfect, but it was good enough to impress Dr. Backman, who expressed a lot of enthusiasm for the work we have done at the 'Peak, and a desire to come back to talk to the Association. He will be the guest speaker at our annual Star-B-Que on July 29th.

Solar Program funds sought

To expand the present public and members program at the observatory to include solar astronomy, a special fund has been set up for those wishing to contribute towards the purchase of an H-alpha filter. This device would allow the viewing of solar prominences, truly phenomenal events which are rarely seen by non-professionals in astronomy. It is hoped the addition of this instrument, along with a spectraheliograph and a sun dial, will help the Fremont Peak Observatory begin an active daytime program in the park.

A goal of \$2,000.00 has been set to acquire an H-alpha filter. If you are interested in contributing to this fund, please send a check or money order to the FPOA, P.O. Box 1110, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045. Make certain to indicate that your donation is specifically for the H-alpha fund. Many, many thanks.

Board Meeting Dates

The next three meetings of the FPOA Board of Directors will be on July 8th, August 19th, and September 23rd. All will be at 4PM at the observatory. All members are welcome.

From the Log

October 14, 1988 - Pat Donnelly

Opened observatory with Rick Morales and set up the 8" refractor. Tonight we are entertaining GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) students from several local schools. 8" refractor is on Saturn and 30" is on M22.

Notice that a bat has taken up residence in the roof on the northwest corner of the observatory. See if he's there tomorrow.

October 15, 1988 - Robert Toebe, Bob Fingerhut, Don M.

Opened observatory for public program. Observed Saturn, Moon, M22, Mars, M57, M27, NGC253, Stephan's Quintet, M1, M42. Seeing very steady, not too dark of a night.

Saw Deimos around Mars at about 10:30 PM near elongation and very faint, glimpsed only with averted vision.

Lots of meteors, fast, rather faint. Radiant appears to be between Belatrix and Aldebaran near 20/hour, in clumps. Closed 12:40 after M42 (wonderful as always, welcome back).

October 22, 1988 - Rick Morales

11:00 AM Comedy of errors. 1) Rolled roof back (open) without lowering the telescope from the resting position. 2) Uncovered mirror but left telescope in a horizontal position. Sunlight reflecting off the mirror burned two places on the carpet. Showed FPO to Troop 777, B.S.A.

October 25, 1988 - John Gleason

Opened about 8PM. Seeing fair. 11PM seeing improves. Mars looks very good. 12AM, seeing 8/10. Mars excellent. Soles Loegas on central meridian. (30" stopped to 10"). 01:11AM Jupiter! Absolutely the Best!

No one is going to believe this, but... observed faint band on one of Jupiter's moons. I do not know what moon this is, however it is huge compared to the others. Seeing 9/10, sometimes 10/10! Jupiter exhibits magnificent structure in bottom polar region. Main equatorial bands are a mass of swirls. Red Spot just on the western (?) limb - moving off. No Film !!!

November 4, 1988 - Kurt Bomke, Rick Morales

Observatory opened at 8PM for Western Chapter of the Sierra Club. About 50 people watched Mars video. They also saw Mars, Jupiter, Ring Nebula, Pleiades, and the Orion Nebula. Seeing was okay, but got worse as night progressed. Orion Nebula was very nice despite cloudiness. Orion Nebula was very grand. Lovely green and pinks!

Telescope Scheduling Rules

- 1) Reservations limited to two nights per calendar month per member.
- 2) Reservations can be made 60 days in advance for individuals, 90 days for institutions.
- 3) Be prepared to give the scheduler a specific date, he will respond yes or no, and help find one close.
- 4) The telescope can be reserved on a last minute basis up to 36 hours in advance. This can be in addition to the normal two days per month.
- 5) While there is no penalty for "no shows", it is very bad manners. Call the scheduler so the scope can be available "on call".
- 6) Public Program volunteers have the use of the scope after the public program concludes.
- 7) Please make a note in the log even if the weather is too bad to open the observatory.
- 8) Remember, our scheduler is a volunteer! He is following rules set down by the Board of Directors.

FPOA Officers and Directors

President	Frank Dibbell	(408) 974-7319
Vice Pres	Kevin Medlock	(415) 654-6796
Exec Secy	Rick Morales	(408) 623-4255
Treasurer	Denni Medlock	(415) 654-6796

Directors

Charlie Carlson	(408) 923-7592
John Gleason	(415) 792-8248
Charles Whitworth	(408) 977-0805
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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.

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Central Coast Region
Gavilan District
P.O. Box 1110
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045



June 12, 1989

To all Amateur Astronomers who frequent Fremont Peak State Park:

Because of recent crowded conditions with telescopes set up outside the Fremont Peak Observatory and the flat paved area by the park's shop, especially during new moon weekends, the following policy has been established:

1. There will be a limit of five telescopes set up at the Observatory. When there are programs at the Observatory, those telescopes will be considered a part of the program and visitors will be invited to view through them. Park all vehicles near the shop after unloading telescopes and equipment.
2. Other telescopes can be set up on the flat paved area by the shop or at the Coulter Group area.
3. All sites are available on a first come, first serve basis.
4. Arrive and set up early in the day. The gate at the entrance to the shop/FPO road will be closed at sunset.
5. If you set up at the Observatory or in the shop area, plan to stay the entire viewing period (all night or until viewing conditions deteriorate because of poor weather or a bright moon).

Thanks for your cooperation.

Rick

Rick Morales
State Park Ranger I
Fremont Peak State Park

OBSERVATORY USERS
AND
ASTRO PHOTOGRAPHERS
TAKE NOTE !