

The Fremont Peak **OBSERVER**

Promoting public education in Astronomy

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4th Annual Star-B-Q: the best one yet!

By all accounts, the 4th annual FPOA General Meeting and Star-B-Q was an unqualified success! Over 80 people attended, feasting on Fremont Peak barbecued chicken, a variety of salads, and many delicious home-made desserts under a picture postcard perfect day at the 'Peak. The picnic was also a good time to renew old friendships, and to make new friends. The actual "General Meeting", which is the only formal gathering of the FPOA membership that is held all year, took place right after the barbecue. The meeting is held primarily to announce results of our annual elections, and to recognize certain individuals for their achievements.

This year we only had three candidates running for the three open positions on the FPOA Board. At the general meeting, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to forego voting, and simply install the three candidates as FPOA board members. Two of the three are incumbents running for re-election (John Gleason and Charlie Carlson), and the third is "new to the Board" Dave Ambrose. Dave replaces Charles "Skip" Whitworth, who is retiring from the Board. The Board thanks Skip for his efforts over the past three years.

We had several "firsts" this year: our first door prize drawings, and our first Personal Awards in Creativity. The door prizes were a big hit; finding a winner was difficult, however, due to the fact that we sent the tickets out with the invitations. Of course, our ticket hopper was full of tickets from the people who didn't show. This, compounded by the fact that many who did come left their invitations and tickets at home, made it exceedingly difficult to find a winner. I think we averaged 5 or 6 draws for each prize! Next year I promise it will be different - we will hand the door prize tickets out to people as they arrive. Many thanks to all who suggested this!

The "Personal Awards in Creativity" was my favorite, though. The awards are designed to either highlight a particularly embarrassing moment of an individual's "career" at the 'Peak, or to accentuate a certain aspect of an individual's personality. Anyone may receive an award; the categories are limited only by the imagination. Someone may nominate you, or you may nominate someone who you feel deserves such an award. Award nominees will be presented with their certificates at subsequent annual meetings. This year's awards, and recipients were:

"No One's Gonna Believe Me But..." award to John Gleason, for claiming to see details on Jupiter's moons. Actually, there was a runner-up to this award: Jay Freeman for claiming to see Stephan's Quintet in a 90mm Fluorite.

"Innovative Solar Furnace" award to Ranger Rick Morales, for burning a hole in the observatory carpet. Rick was positioning the 30-inch scope during daylight with the roof open and the optical surfaces uncovered. The resulting 30-inch, f4.8 "magnifying glass" seared a 12-inch arc in the carpeting.

"The Frozen Finger" award to Rob Toebe, for observing on a night so cold that the observatory roof literally froze in the open position.

"Working a Mine Without a Claim" award to Earl Watts, to reward him for his archeological work on the ground south of the observatory.

"Best Balancing Act Under Duress" award to Jack Zeiders, for weathering an earthquake while perched atop the 30-inch's 8-foot ladder.

"At First You Don't Succeed" award to Dr. Dana Backman, for coming back to the 'Peak. Dana was our guest speaker from NASA, and gave an excellent talk on infra-red evidence for planetary systems

around nearby stars. Dana had actually come up to give the same talk on Astronomy Day, but it was so cold and foggy that only about a dozen hardy souls attended.

This should give you a "flavor" of what the award is about. If you know of a "deserving" individual, forward your nomination to the FPOA board. If you have difficulty coming up with a category, let the creative minds of the FPOA board assist you!

After the general meeting and awards ceremony, we retreated to the east side of the observatory, where Dr. Dana Backman from NASA gave an excellent presentation on "Planets Around Nearby Stars: the Evidence from Infra-red Astronomy". Over 80 people attended the talk, which was followed by short question and answer session. Finally, the 30-inch was opened, and the remaining members and guests filed in to the observatory to view the wonders of the heavens into the wee hours of the morning.

1990 FPOA Officers Appointed

As you may or may not know, FPOA board members are elected for three year terms. Any person can run for a position on the Board if they have been a member of the Association for one year prior to the date of election, and if they present their name to the nominating committee. Association officers are appointed from the elected Board members at the first board meeting following the annual membership meeting, and serve for the succeeding calendar year. Sound complicated enough? Put another way, board members serve for three years, and officers serve for one year (though the officers are a subset of the board members).

To make a long story short, the Board appointed the following members to be officers for the 1990 calendar year:

Frank Dibbell, *President*
Dave Ambrose, *Vice-president*
Rick Morales, *Executive Secretary*
Denni Medlock, *Treasurer*

Let's wish them well in the coming year!

"For the world is hollow, and I have touched the sky."

Hydrogen Alpha Filter: FPOA Daylight Program

This summer a special fund was established to acquire an h-alpha solar filter for the 30-inch. This remarkable piece of equipment will allow us to view solar prominences, and will become the cornerstone of an active daytime program at the Observatory. The fiscal goal of this fund is \$2,400.00. To date, we have raised \$1,400.00, primarily through donations by FPOA members; many thanks to those who have contributed! Obviously, however, more needs to be raised. If you have ever experienced seeing the sun in h-alpha light, you know what a joy it can be. If you have fund-raising ideas, or would like to donate yourself, please call Rick Morales at 408-623-4255. And thank you all for your support!

-Denni Medlock

Looking For Projects: Photoelectric Photometers

The FPOA is also looking at the feasibility of funding the purchase of a photoelectric photometer. Before purchasing such a specialized piece of equipment, however, we need to get an idea of who would be interested in using it, and for what type of program.

Consequently, if you have a project you would like to do that would make use of a photoelectric photometer on the 30-inch, please forward an outline of your project to the FPOA Board. Once we get a sense of how much such an instrument would be used, we will make plans to obtain it.

30-inch Coming Down in October

The present method of supporting the 30-inch mirror introduces a certain amount of astigmatism to the optics. On October 29th the mirror and its cell will be removed from the scope for approximately 6 to 8 weeks to correct this problem. Kevin will be drilling a six-inch hole in the center of the mirror, in order to provide central support for the mirror. In addition to correcting the astigmatism, the hole will also provide us with a cassegrain focus.

Since the Observatory's primary instrument will be out of action for roughly 2 months, Kevin will make either of his 18-inch Newtonian, or his 8-inch refractor, available as Association instruments until the 30-inch is operational.

From The Log...

12/26/88

Opened observatory at 6:30. cold evening with snow around observatory. M42, 2392, 2261 incredible. COOOOOLD night. Floor of observatory is icing up! Scope is icing up! Had to have Rick Morales help me close the roof of the observatory. Snow on the roof made opening and closing the roof one heck of a workout. Can barely feel my feet, still incredible view of deep space objects make it worth it.

-R. Toebe

1/5/89

Arrived about 5PM and so did the snow. Opened observatory and quickly put on thermals and cold clothes. I set up the seventeen and by the time I was done it promptly clouded over. So I ate dinner....

...about 11:30 it cleared. I pulled the tarp off the 17 and observed Jupiter. Then it clouded over. Took a nap. At 1:30 it cleared again. Made 50 written observations.

-David C. Barosso

4/7/89

Friday night. Beautiful night after a beautiful holiday. Astronomy Club of Milpitas High watched until 2 AM. So many good objects: M3, M64, "Blackeye" was easily seen, M104, several others. Good night for galaxy hunting. We were less successful with M68 (I know it's there), but darned if it could be found! Tried to wait up for Saturn but the Sandman got the best of us. All in all, a very good Spring night.

-Larry Parmeter

5/6/89

Rob Toebe and Donn Mukensnoble opened observatory with Kevin. Showed Moon, M3, M5, M104, M66, 4361, 3242. Closed observatory at 11:45 due to increasing clouds. Good enthusiastic group from West Valley College.

-R. Toebe

5/6/89

Reopened the observatory at 1:30 AM. Observed M17, M8, M20, IC1297, Abell 55, Abell 39, Abell 72, NGC6804, M28, M22, M51, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune. WOW! Closed at dawn, night is too short!!

-R. Toebe

NOTICE

The next meeting of the FPOA Board is scheduled for October 28th, at 4:00 PM in the Observatory meeting room. The Board meeting originally scheduled for September 23rd has been cancelled.

The FPOA Board is considering the possibility of increasing the frequency of publication of the *Observer*. We think we can do it without raising membership dues. We would like to hear your comments.

- The Board

Report From the Field

The Medlock's report from Mt. Lassen: Kevin, Denni and family visited the campgrounds at Mt. Lassen over the Labor Day weekend, ostensibly to do some plain old simple vacationing. However Kevin, the true amateur he is, struck up a conversation with one of the park rangers, and before long was giving an impromptu presentation on the sky with the aid of the Park's 5-inch Celestron.

Kevin's only comment was that while the sky was nice and clear up there, it was really no better than the sky at Fremont Peak after the fog has rolled in to cover San Jose! Denni was heard to mutter something about "bears in the campground".

Kurt Bomke reports from White Mountain: "last night with my 18-inch scope at 11,000 feet, I had an astronomer's paradise... it was very cold - in the 20's and 30's, but the views of the deep sky objects were totally indescribable! The Trifid was a rich crimson, the dark lanes were jet black; the Lagoon was a vast bright pink cloud, with jet black lanes and globules! Seeing was a definite 10. Fantastic is the only way to describe the spiral arms of galaxies like M51, M101, etc."

Kurt also mentions that the daytime views are nothing short of spectacular, as well. One can view 250 miles of High Sierra from Sonora Pass to 60 miles south of Mt. Whitney. He expects to spend much time up here next summer with his new 25-inch scope!

If you have been traveling somewhere out of the way, or are one of our more distant (geographically, that is) members, and have an interesting astronomical story to tell, we'd like to publish it in the newsletter. We are really interested in hearing about what some of our own members are doing away from Fremont Peak! Articles can be handwritten or typed (or ideally on a 3.5-inch floppy in MacWrite format!!!), and should be sent to the address in the box on the last page of this newsletter.

-Frank Dibbell

The Gavilan District needs to have a distinctive logo. Each of the co-operative associations in the units of the District, Pine Ridge Association at Coe, the San Juan Bautista Volunteer Association and the Fremont Peak Observatory Association have their own logos. There are times when a unifying symbol is desirable.

I would like to have the benefit of the ideas of anyone interested in the Units of the District to come up with a design for a logo.

The name for the District originated from the Gavilan Mountain Range. The District now has units in both the Gavilan Range and the Diablo Range. Gavilan mean Sparrow Hawk (*Falco spaverius*) in Spanish.

I would like to have the logo imprinted on the new training manuals which are being developed.

Please have your ideas and designs back to the District office by October 16, so they can be considered.

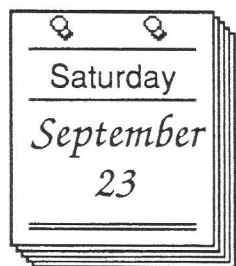
I would be happy to discuss the logo with you if you wish.

(signed)
Harry Batlin

The following memo was sent to me by Harry Batlin, Gavilan District Superintendent. If you would like to submit an entry, call Rick Morales at 623-4255 before October 16th.

-Frank Dibbell

The Next FPOA Public Program



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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 runs for the calendar year; there is no pro-rationing of dues. For more information, write to:

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