



The Fremont Peak **OBSERVER**

Promoting public education in Astronomy

March 1991

Volume VII No. 1

Second Quarter 1991

April		May		June	
6	Public Program (TBA)	4	Public Program (TBA)	1	Public Program (TBA)
13	Certification Class (Advance Registration Required) FPOA Board Meeting 1:00PM, Fremont Peak Observatory	11	Certification Class (Advance Registration Required) FPOA Board Meeting 1:00PM, Fremont Peak Observatory	8	Certification Class (Advance Registration Required) FPOA Board Meeting 1:00PM, Fremont Peak Observatory
20	Trails Day Astronomy Day	18	Public Program (TBA)	15	Public Program (TBA)
27		25		22	
				29	

30-inch Status

As several users of the 30-inch have noted, images produced by the big mirror were not as crisp as they could be (Holy Hubbell, Batman!). Thanks to the efforts of several Association members, the primary mirror was removed, tested, and refigured to 1/4 wave.

Initial testing of the mirror revealed it to be undercorrected. FPOA member Dave Barosso spent an entire week at the Peak refiguring and testing the primary. After his efforts, the test results yielded the following information on the 30-inch: 50% zone, 1/6 wave; 70% zone 1/8 wave; 80-90% zone 1/12 wave. Plans are underway to have the mirror aluminized and overcoated the weekend of March 16th. The scope will operational again by April 6th.

A Solar Program

Association member John Luman has offered his services as our "solar champion". The FPOA has recently ordered a full aperture solar filter for our C-90, which will allow the visiting public to view sunspots. An h-alpha solar prominence filter will also be purchased for the Association's 4-inch refractor. John will use this equipment, plus our sundial, for a series of solar programs that he will put together. Initially, programs will be run during the afternoon of public program evenings.

John is also looking to put together a solar system "nature walk" with an accompanying written guide. The walk will follow a series of 4x4 posts in the ground beginning at the base of the road by the observatory sign. Each post will have a symbol of the sun or one of the planets, and they will be placed at relative distances apart.

These programs were made possible by the many members who donated to the FPOA's Solar Observing fund.

Astronomy Day falls on April 20th this year. If you want to help out with the Astronomy Day program, contact Rick Morales.

April 20th is also Trails Day. Fremont Peak State Park needs volunteers to help clear and mark the trails in the Park. Why not make a whole day of it? Come up and help clear the trails during the day, and help out with the Astronomy Day program in the evening! The FPOA will provide refreshments to volunteers.

So You Want To Be Certified...

...or, We Need Volunteers!

As you may or may not know, certified 30-inch telescope users have an obligation to assist at public programs. These programs are the primary reason for the FPOA's existence. We stage about 13 public programs during a season (May through October), and attendance by the public has been increasing over the years as we get more well-known. At a very minimum we need 3 volunteers for each public program. An ideal number is 5 (one speaker, 2 telescope operators, 2 ushers). In the past, the FPOA has been a bit lax in following up on the volunteer obligations of our certified members. Because of the increase in the numbers of the visiting public, and the requirement to stage more professional-looking programs, the FPOA will begin enforcing the guidelines it originally established for 30-inch telescope certification.

Beginning this year you will need to be recertified to use the 30-inch scope. Certification classes will be held on the Saturday evening closest to the new moon. You must sign up in advance for a given class. A summer schedule of public programs will be available at class time, and you will be expected to sign up to assist for at least one program. Members who gave a minimum of two programs during 1990 are exempt from recertification, but are expected to volunteer for at least one program this year to maintain their certification status.

Certification Class dates for the next three months are: April 13th, May 11th, and June 8th. Call Rick Morales at 408-623-4255 to sign up for a class.

Some questions and answers...

What types of assistance can I give at a public program? There are several: (1) you can volunteer to be the featured speaker and give the program, (2) you can help run the telescope, (3) you can act as an usher. If you wish to be the featured speaker, you can give a presentation that you already have, or you can use one of the FPOA's "packaged" programs. If you have no training in running a program, we will train you. The telescope operators will locate the objects to be viewed in the 30-inch, and assist the public in viewing through the instrument. Ushers will be stationed near the main doors, and be available to answer any questions the public may have.

What if I can't make it the night I signed up to volunteer? If you know you will not be able to make it, try to find someone to take your place. Your absence places a hardship on those who were depending on you to be there to help. Furthermore, your certification is suspended until such time you assist at a future public program.

If my certification is suspended, how can I get it back? As soon as you have finished helping at a public program, your certification is reinstated.

Can I "drop in" at a certification class? No. Class size is limited to 5, so it is necessary to call and reserve a spot in a class. If demand is extraordinarily high, we will schedule additional classes.

Who do I see about signing up to volunteer? Rick Morales, our executive secretary (408-623-4255).

Former FPOA Board Member Howard A. Medlock passed away on January 23, 1991, after a short illness.

Howard gained his interest in Astronomy through his son, Kevin, becoming over the years a supporter of activities at the Peak. After the initial proposal was made in 1985 to place an observatory at Fremont Peak, Howard was a frequent attendee of planning meetings at the District office in San Juan Bautista. Wishing to see the facility through to completion, Howard then took a position on the original nine member FPOA Board of Directors. He also became a Charter Life Member of the Association.

A graduate of Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo and a long-time electrical and corrosion research engineer with Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Howard is perhaps best remembered at the Peak for single-handedly wiring the observatory building and arranging with PG&E for power lines to be run to the site free of charge.

Howard took pride in what had been accomplished at Fremont Peak and often gave lectures and slide shows on the Observatory at engineering meetings throughout Northern California.

He is survived by his wife Lorraine, a daughter Robin, a son Kevin, and grandchildren Megan and Paul.