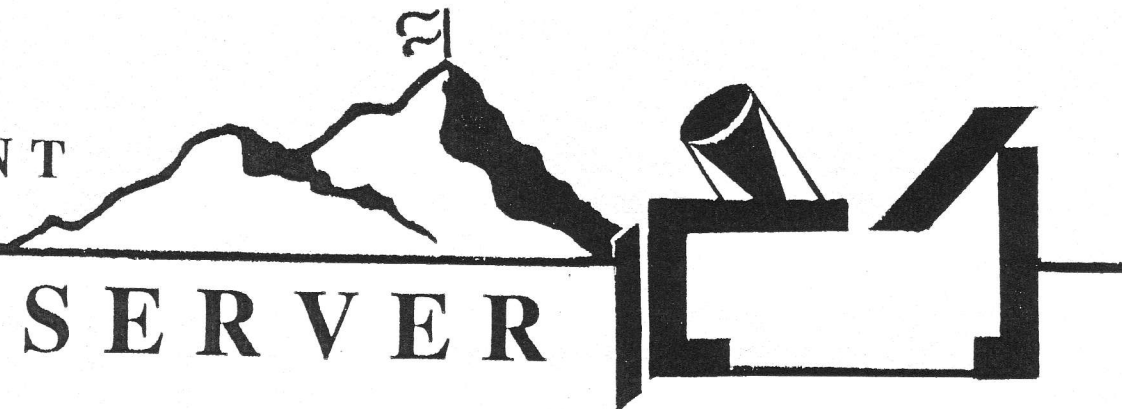


THE
FREMONT
PEAK

OBSERVER



Volume Ten

Number Four

December 1994

Editor - Danni Medlock

WINTER INVADES THE PEAK

What happened to Autumn? That is probably the battle call of amateur astronomers throughout Northern California at the moment. A wonderfully warm and clear summer season had lulled us into expecting a normal fall weather pattern - clear, warm and super steady skies. With temperatures in the 80's on Hallowe'en night who would have guessed the very next day would see us shivering in our T-shirts.

It appears *El Niño* has struck again. Perhaps the fickle infant spotted a telescope somewhere along its journey across the Pacific and has had a long time to plot its tricks. The weather certainly has it out for we observers so far this season. When it's not raining, it's cloudy. When it's not cloudy, it's freezing!

Rick Morales reports the following statistics for November atop Fremont Peak:

Rainfall from October 1st: 6.68"

November average daily temperatures:

	1994	1993
high	52°F	63°F
low	37°	52°
lowest	27°	

Rick says November was the coldest recorded at the Peak since 1880.

I wonder what Winter is going to be like?

RENEWAL TIME

Membership in the Fremont Peak Observatory Association runs January 1st to December 31st. This means it is now time to renew your membership (and give a membership as a holiday gift!).

A membership form is located on the back page of the newsletter.

continued on page 2

Remember, dues is now \$20.00 a year, with no first-time membership fee for those newly entering.

What do you get for your \$20.00? A fantastic bargain for this day and age! The FPOA yearly sees more than five thousand visitors to our observatory, people who marvel at the sights through the 30" telescope and learn the lure and love of astronomy from our great volunteers. Annually, we sponsor two to three special programs covering the extra-ordinary astronomical events like comets, meteor showers and planetary collisions. Boy and girl scout troops, grade school kids, college classes and just plain campers come to learn from us what is so special about Fremont Peak. Every year the membership is treated to a day at the observatory just for them during the Star-B-Q. Where else can you get access to such a large telescope without having to travel to Hawaii or rent a night at Lick Observatory (for \$250!) See, membership in the FPOA is a great bargain. Join or renew now and help support the program for 1995.

NEW ADDRESS FOR FREMONT PEAK

What? Did Fremont Peak State Park move? No, actually the post office in San Juan Bautista is moving to bigger facilities near the Windmill and many of the box numbers are changing. So, the Park's new address is P.O. Box 787, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045.

NEW RULES FOR OBSERVING BY RANGER'S HOUSE

Rick Morales and the FPOA have asked that new rules be placed into effect for using the space around the ranger's house and outside the observatory building. Ten years of operation by the FPOA have noticed certain patterns concerning parking and area usage emerging, some good, some detrimental to the benefit of those who use the park. The new rules are as such:

1) **NO SMOKING!**

Under no circumstances is smoking allowed in the park.

2) No open fires, not even in hibachis or Weber kettles.

3) After unloading telescopes at the observatory for use there, vehicles must be parked down in the gravel area. They cannot obstruct vehicular movement in any area.

We have been very fortunate to be able to use the space behind the ranger's house - let's not abuse it.

Ranger Rick has the authority to begin ticketing offenders. Don't ruin your star party experience by ignoring simple and common sense rules.

Sign seen by the tool shed (done perfectly in State Parks Department brown and white lettering):

"\$1.00 charge for additional motorized scopes"

METEOR OBSERVING SUCCESS

During the 1993-94 observing seasons several members of the FPOA joined with the Dutch Meteor Society in setting up a meteor observing program at Fremont Peak. This program, based on setting up several camera "stations" at thirty miles distances provided the necessary triangulation needed to both trace trajectory and speed of incoming meteors.

Members Duncan MacNeal, Frank Dibbell and Rick Morales have been very active over the past year and have set up their stations during the Perseids and Leonids. On November 16 the Meteor Watch Society had 5 stations worldwide - one at Fremont Peak with 8 cameras - for observing the Leonids. The Peak played its usual bad weather trick on our local group but evidently other stations were successful in capturing on film the allusive burning dust particles.

A second attempt was made during the Geminids, with Rick managing to take some exposures shortly before clouds interfered.

The Perseids on August 12/13 were also captured by Duncan, making Fremont Peak one of several sites in Northern California which experienced success.

A write-up containing several photos of the FPO group has recently appeared in the Journal of the Dutch Meteor Society *Radiant*. Any interested in reading about this should contact Rick.

Rick also announces that there will be a try at observing the Ursids on December 22nd. This quick bursting shower will be visible between sunset and 10 PM local time. If interested in helping man one of the several camera platform available contact Rick Morales at (408) 623-4255.

DOCENT PROGRAM CONTINUING

The Department of Parks and Recreation's Docent training program will continue in 1995. Last year the FPOA benefitted enormously from having many of our lecturers go through the training session which covers how to interface with the public and how to interpret the current program at Fremont Peak to its maximum affect.

Rick Morales will be announcing the 1995 session dates in a future *OBSERVER* and he urges all certified FPOA members to consider taking the class.

CONCERNS OVER FPOA/STATE 1995 CONTRACT

The 1995 contract which must be signed by every cooperating association and the State Parks and Recreation Department (DPR) has raised several concerns. The League of California State Parks Non-Profit Organizations (LCSPNO), a blanket organization of cooperating associations of which

continued on page 4

FPOA is a member of, has recommended that all cooperating associations not sign the 1995 contract until these concerns are voiced to Sacramento and rectified to a common agreement.

The areas of concern are:

(Section 13) Cooperating Associations Program Manual, reads:

The Cooperating Associations Program Manual will be incorporated into the contract by reference and made a part of the contract.

Reason for concern is that up until now the Manual was considered to be only a general guideline and not legally binding.

(Section 2) Role of Cooperating Associations, reads:

A. The association may sponsor, publish, purchase and distribute or sell appropriate (interpretive) materials.

B. The association may acquire and display (interpretive) materials.

C. The association may fund docent programs, educational activities, seminars, lectures and other activities that contribute to the state's education and interpretive programs.

D. The association may plan, organize and implement fund-raising programs to acquire contributions to support the interpretive and educational activities of the unit.

Reason for concern is that nowhere does it state that the association can operate the interpretive program at its park. The contract relegates the association to fund-raising only.

The LCSPNO is also concerned that all

funds raised by the association go to the DPR, not to the park for which they were raised. Also there is concern about the methods of conflict resolution having very little in recourse for the association.

The LCSPNO has asked that member organizations review the contract and voice concerns to it so it may put these forward in a meeting in January with the DPR. Currently, for the FPOA Donn Mukensnoble and myself are looking into this process.

HELP WANTED!

by Ranger Rick Morales

This past year our public programs were varied to a greater extent than ever before. We had a larger body of presenters to pull from and each presenter had their own individual program or programs to give. The result was that visitors could come on any of the Saturday nights the observatory was open and see and head a different program. It was wonderful. We would like to expand on that. This spring we will offer our Docent Training program to anyone interested in standing before an audience and orating on some astronomical subject of their choice. The training will follow the same general format as last year's. We'll begin with discussions on interpretation (that is what we do), what kinds of media we use in our presentations (photographic slides, overhead projections, video, sound, flip charts, the inimitable you), how to make some of the media aids and where to acquire others, the use of our own library of

continued on page 5

materials. The second part of the training will be putting the various pieces together with the end result that you will have at least one program at the end of the training that you can present to an audience. If you're interested please call us at (408) 623-2465 and let us know. The training will begin in late February and go for four sessions, each session lasting approximately four hours. Please plan on attending all sessions.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

by Rick Morales

Well, another year has gone by and the FPOA has completed its first decade of service. It began a little more than ten years ago with discussions about pouring a slab of concrete on the ground behind the shop on which Kevin Medlock could park his big new telescope. It would be covered with a tarp during the summer viewing months and in the winter Kevin would haul it back to his home. It seemed like a pretty good idea. Then the idea began to grow. What if we constructed some kind of more permanent shelter for the telescope? A simple one room affair with a small dome or roll-off roof? Maybe the rear section where the roof rolled off to could have a wooden deck? What if we built some kind of wooden structure around the deck? What if we made it a two room building? The ideas began to take form after we established the FPOA as a viable non-profit entity and created a contract with State Parks to provide interpretation and education to the visiting public in the field of astronomy. During the spring of 1985, the FPOA received a windfall donation in equipment from Celestron. The

equipment was then offered for sale at The First Annual Once in a Lifetime Telescope Sale held at Fremont Peak. The association netted about \$20,000 that day and with that money an architect (Morgan Smith) was hired to design the building. The designs were approved by the Park Department and building got started during the spring of 1986 (less than two years from the days of those first discussion about pouring a slab.) By the end of summer the observatory was a functioning reality. We built it!

Since that time thousands of people (I dare say tens of thousands) have been able to view the rings of Saturn, the moons of Jupiter, the red sands of Mars, our own moon, the Milky Way, all the stuff around Sagittarius, the Ring Nebula, the Crab, Orion, bunches of M objects, galaxies, the Virgo Cluster and stuff too faint to see without a whole lot of imagination guiding you. It's been wonderful! It's been great!

And we are still moving on. Digital setting circle, a computer for driving them, perhaps a CCD system are in the near future of our programs. There have been an awful lot of wonderful people who have contributed to our success for the past decade. Too many to name but not too many to forget. In my mind's eye I see the faces of so many friends I have made over the past decade. It's been a wonderful experience for me to have shared this past decade with them/ And I look forward to the future times we'll have. More star parties, more bar-b-ques, more long discussion on a variety of subjects (not all astronomy, new friendships to make, more memories to be made. Thanks for a great decade - but, where in the hell has time gone?

FROM THE LOG

(The following are excerpts from that ever popular journal, the FPO log)

16. July, 1994 Open Landon Noll, Jack Murphy 19:02

50 visitors, close 2:53

(at least 150 visitors!)

Watched impact of Shoemaker-Levy 9 with Jupiter for fragment B&C.

- Saw 2 5 sec flashes around 8PM for B

- Saw 1 3 sec flash around midnight for C

Several people confirmed small white impact site that rotated from the B impact zone.

N ↑



←flash

B impact site white ring with black center

Also saw M57, M13, Saturn 3-4 moons

1994 July 19 (Sun) 14:00 - 15:00 PST Bruce de Graaf

Set up bracket for video camera. Hope to catch something re: S-L9 and Jupiter on Thu.

1994 July 18, Mon. David Rodrigues opened up 8:30 PM to look for guess what?

9:30 Saw G spot on limb about 2-3 Earth diameters w/small white spot in center! White spot about size of small moon shadow! One of the greatest astronomical moments of my life! Peter Lord here. Peter saw white spot first. Tina Baine, photographer with Gilroy Dispatch also saw white spot!

Application For Membership in the Fremont Peak Observatory Association

Name _____

Phone: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Do you wanted to be listed in the FPOA Directory? (Y/N) _____ The Directory is distributed to FPOA members only

Please enroll me as a member in the FREMONT PEAK OBSERVATORY ASSOCIATION under the following category:

_____ General \$20.00 year

_____ Student \$10.00 year

_____ Life \$350 one-time fee (10% discount for applicants over 60)

Is this a renewal? (Y/N) _____

Your tax deductible check may be made out to FPOA. Mail with application to:

FPOA, P.O. Box 787, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045