



The FREMONT PEAK **OBSERVER**

Editor: Donn Mukensable

Volume 16, No. 3

September 1999

Welcome, Cameron Bowers

Fremont Peak has a new Ranger in residence. Cameron has relocated, with his wife and family, here from the Four Rivers State Park facility. Many of the FPOA members have already had the opportunity to meet him at the Star-B-Que on July 10th or during public nights through the latter part of the summer. If you have not yet done so, stop by and say "Hi" to Cameron.

Star-B-Que Extravagaza!

On July 10th, the Star-B-Que was host to a throng of over 120 avid astronomers, trivia buffs, and gastronomes under clear blue skies and pleasant temperatures. Presented as a joint event between the FPOA and AANC, this 14th annual picnic and star party brought together amateurs from all over the Bay Area as well as around the world. Due to the upcoming Solar eclipse, this year's event was held earlier than our traditional mid-August date, but that did not seem to deter the crowds that descended upon the Peak.

Arriving early, guests had the opportunity to view the Sun in hydrogen-alpha light through the Solaris telescope and take turns trying to spot Venus in the daytime.

Towards evening the sights and sounds of a picnic dinner drew folks to the tables, where several 'Astronomical Desserts' had been submitted for judging by an expert panel of telescope makers, deep sky and planetary observers, along with a few who just liked their sweets! Dobsonian cookies were a favorite, while a moon pie and comet brownies took the heavenly theme to new meanings.

Jane Houston held a 'Name Your Own Asterism' contest and Pat Donnelly reprised the Trivia Challenge with a set of puzzlers so deviously difficult that the winner only answered 30% of them correctly.

Raffle tickets were presented to each voting FPOA member and could also be purchased prior to the drawing. Prized were donated by the AANC, Orion telescopes, Crazy Ed Optical, Lew Epstein, and several other generous contributors. This is a very popular event and this year was no different. Due to the strange luck of the draw, a few folks always seemed to be walking up to claim their winnings, which included an HB atlas, T-shirts, posters, messier mugs, red lights, and an excellent pair of binoculars.

Awards were presented as part of the program by Dennis LeClert of AANC and Ron Dammann of the FPOA, who recognized Loren Dynneson as our Volunteer of the Year for his tireless commitment to keeping a roof on the observatory despite Nature's best efforts to the contrary.

The annual election of FPOA Board members was held, with Ron Dammann, Bob Black, and Rob Toebebeing re-elected to 3-year terms.

Towards evening, as twilight stalked across the mountain and Venus shone brilliantly in the sky, Robert Garfinkle gave an excellent talk on the nomenclature and history of the many maps of Lunar features produced over the years.

Guests then had the opportunity to observe a nice, dark, summer sky through the 30" Challenger telescope as well as several of the member's personal optics which were set up in front of the observatory. Hardy observers who remained awake well into the early hours were rewarded with outstanding views of Jupiter and Saturn. It was a wonderful night!

(continued next column)

Restitution on Roof Goof

The seemingly endless saga of the observatory roof was finally put to rest on August 21st with the installation of new panels and flashing by Loren Dynneson, Ron Dammann, and Robert Hoyle.

An earlier installation succumbed to intense winds in a winter storm in February 1998; it was later discovered that the incorrect length screws had been supplied, leading to the failure. With the able help of the FPOA counsel, Duncan McNeil, an understanding was reached with the supplier and new materials were furnished without additional cost to the Association.

Other maintenance performed during the summer included painting the lecture room, installation of new baseboards in the observing room, and replacement of the lecture room doors, which were showing signs of water damage. Much thanks to everyone who pitched in to help, especially Paul Mahany who, with Loren, served as our experts in the construction arts.

Membership at a New High

With a total of 160+ members, including the Life category, FPOA support is at its highest level ever. Thanks to everyone who has joined the Association to help promote Public Education in Astronomy.

Member Appreciation Night

Friday night, September 10th, has been reserved for FPOA members and their guests to attend a special bar-be-cue and observing session in recognition of your support of the Association over the past years. Autumn has typically been a time of very steady seeing and with five planets to choose from this could be a good opportunity to observe those objects.

The Year of the Leonids?

Every 33 years, the orbits of the Earth and the main body of the meteor stream intersect, which can pro-

(continued next column)

duce a 'storm' of thousands of meteors an hour, far greater than the usual number seen in the annual showers. The last storm was in 1966; so '99 looks to have great potential during the night of November 13-14. FPOA observers will again assist Peter Jenniskens of NASA in obtaining photographs of the meteor trails to help him determine their speed and path through the atmosphere.

New Policy for Auto Access

In order to better recognize and manage the number of cars that enter the area behind the ranger's residence, Ranger Cameron Bowers has instituted a new policy, effective immediately:

Upon entering the gate leading to the residence and observatory, sign the 'visitor log' located inside a small box. Note the date, time, your name, and vehicle license number. Lock the gate behind you if it was locked when you arrived.

When leaving, remember to sign yourself out. That's all!

Fremont Peak Observatory Association Officers and Directors

President	Ron Dammann 408-255-1863 <i>ron.dammann@lmco.com</i>
Vice-President	Bob Black 650-592-2166 <i>Bob.Black@worldnet.att.net</i>
Secretary	Rick Morales 831-623-4081 <i>oreosfam@hollinet.com</i>
Treasurer	Denni Medlock 510-339-9224 <i>epoch@majornet.com</i>
Dir. of Instr.	Rob Toebe 707-426-2935 <i>fpniteowl@jps.net</i>
Director, Editor	Donn Mukensnoble 925-462-4602 <i>dmuk@home.com</i>
Director	Doug Padrick 831-637-6936 <i>dpadrick@hollinet.com</i>
Director	Ernie Piini 408-252-3609 <i>ewpiini@aol.com</i>
Director	Pat Donnelly 408-778-2741 <i>pat.m.donnelly@nspco.com</i>
Dir. Emeritus	Kevin Medlock 510-339-9224 <i>epoch@majornet.com</i>
CAL	Mary Pass 831-623-0610 <i>sjbshp@hollinet.com</i>

The **Fremont Peak Observer** is published quarterly by the Fremont Peak Observatory Association; a non-profit cooperating association. For more information, contact any Board Member or write to FPOA, P.O. Box 787, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

