



The FREMONT PEAK **OBSERVER**

Editor: Donn Mukensable

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March 2000

Volunteer Training Planned

by Cameron Bowers

Date and Time: March 4, 2000 from 9 am to 5 pm

Location: San Juan Bautista State Historic Park
(probably Plaza Hall)

Topics to be covered:

- Welcome: Introduction of presenters and motive for training (1/2 hr.)
- State Park Mission and Structure, Safety, Objectives and other issues (1.5 hrs.)
- Paperwork, forms and Q & A. (1.5 hrs.)
- FPOA - what it is and why (1/2 hr.)
- Interpretive techniques and learning styles (types of audiences) (3 hrs.)

Please call the Fremont Peak State Park office at (831) 623-4255 to sign up for training.

Anyone giving a public program at the Observatory **must** become a State Park Volunteer. In order to become a State Park Volunteer a person must complete the following.

- * Sign up and be accepted as a State Park Volunteer (completing the necessary paperwork).
- * Complete at least 8 hours of volunteer training per year. (if using the FPOA 30" scope another 2 hours of telescope certification training is required).
- * Volunteer to present at least one public program or authorized volunteer activity per year; this is required of all volunteers to remain active. FP Ranger may authorize other activities in place of public astronomy program upon request.

New Online Tools for FPOA

by MoJo

FPOA has a collection of new tools for communicating online. We're proud to announce our new domain name, FPOA.net, and along with it a new web address and email list for members.

The web address www.fpoa.net will direct net surfers to the FPOA web page with current information about public Fremont Peak Observatory programs and activities.

The email list, members@fpoa.net, is exclusively for members of FPOA. Email addressed to members@fpoa.net will be distributed to all FPOA members and volunteers who wish to be on the list. Our intention is that the email list be high value and low noise. Postings are encouraged on these topics:

- Announcements of scheduled events and work parties
- Updates on rules and procedures for using the observatory
- Tips and hints from experienced volunteers on using the telescopes and conducting public programs at the Peak.
- Asking questions about telescope and observatory operations
- Condition and equipment reports about the 30" telescope and observatory
- Informal log reports from observing nights and public programs

To join the members@fpoa.net email list, you must be a current member of FPOA (is it time to renew?) and send an email from yourself to members-request@fpoa.net with the word "subscribe" in the body of the email.

[FPOA.net is hosted by member and volunteer Morris Jones, mojo@whiteoaks.com]

Support Your State Parks - Vote this March 7th

by Bob Black, Vice President

Proposition 12 "The Safe Neighborhood, Park, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000"

We are all keenly aware of how the Fremont Peak Observatory Association and California State Parks depend on each other. FPOA built the observatory and provides you members as State Park volunteers to operate the Challenger telescope and to conduct interpretive programs on astronomy for Park visitors. California State Parks provides FPOA with a site for locating the Challenger telescope, the support of a ranger, and many other amenities.

California State Parks is in obvious need of capital improvements and maintenance. Ballot measure Proposition 12 addresses that need. Proposition 12 includes much needed funding for dilapidated state and local parks and other agencies that protect open space and recreational resources. Funds will also be available for habitat restoration, coastal protection, and for improvements to playgrounds, zoos and soccer fields.

The FPOA board of directors has endorsed Proposition 12 as being in the interest of both FPOA and California State Parks. The board urges you to study the measure and to support it. Be sure to vote on Tuesday, March 7.

[Also, please support Prop.13 too! Ed.]

Solar Program ready for 2K

Jack Murphy will again contribute his time and skills and bring the Sun down to earth for daytime visitors to the park. His program, using the Solaris 'scope and DayStar hydrogen-alpha filter, along with the Celestron visual instrument, will be held on the first public program day of each month during the season. He's also looking for a few helpers this year!

FPOA Public Schedule 2000

March

04 Volunteer Training
11 Board Meeting

April

08 Board Meeting, Work Party (10 am),
Solar, Public Programs*
29 Public Program*

May

06 Board Meeting, Solar, Public Programs
27 Public Program

June

03 Board Meeting, Solar, Public Programs
10 Public Program
24 Public Program

July

01 Solar, Public Programs
08 Board Meeting, Public Program
22 Public Program
29 Public Program, **Star-B-Que**

August

05 Solar, Public Programs
19 Public Program
26 Public Program, (Board Mtg if needed*)

September

02 Solar, Public Programs
09 **FPOA Member Appreciation Night**
23 Board Meeting, Public Program
30 Public Program

October

07 Solar, Public Programs
21 Work Party (10 am), Public Program*
28 Board Meeting, Public Program*

November

18 Board Meeting (offsite, TBD)
* - Call FPOA Hotline 831-623-2465
beforehand to verify program schedule

To volunteer for a public night, you must have completed the docent training course. Contact Cameron at 831-623-4255 to reserve dates; ideally one month but at least two weeks prior to the date desired.

President's Message

by Ron Dammann

This is the first issue of the new year and a good time to introduce myself to those of you who I haven't met yet. My name is Ron Dammann and this is my second year as President of FPOA.

I joined the FPOA in July of 1995 after attending a Public Program on the night of June 30th of that year. Kurt Bomke was kind enough to show me, after the Public Program that night, the universe visible thru the Challenger telescope. The member running the telescope that night handed off to Kurt after the Public Program ended at midnight. Kurt continued on until about 3am showing myself and others the objects beyond the light grasp of our smaller telescopes.

I attended other Public Programs during the summer and started coming to Board Meetings (they are open to anyone) starting in February of 1996. Rob Toebe ran me thru the telescope certification class in March of 1996. He warned me of how the Peak makes it's own weather (a statement that has proved itself true on more than one night), explained the warning signs that the telescope optics will start "dewing up" (the South Observing room sill wets with dew first), the best season for observing and many more bits of information from a veteran of many nights at the Peak that proved useful in the coming years. All I had to do was listen!

I have worked with our members on the repair of the Observatory after the Storm of '98 (Feb. 2nd). Kevin Medlock and his partner, Vance, had arrived at the Observatory with myself and Rick Morales arriving a close second after phone calls from Ranger Mike Stadler to Rob Toebe, who phone tree'd us. The Observing Room was in sad shape. Thanks to the many individual and group (SJAA) donations, the Observatory has been refurbished by volunteer effort and has a new metal roof on the Observing room section and a new heat sealed roof.

Thanks to Loren Dynneson, Rick Morales, Greg Nausin and Jack Murphy for the present metal and flat roofs and all the volunteers who participated in our first attempt at installation of a metal roof. Donn Mukensnoble was the President thru these times and thanks to his leadership and the Board's, the FPOA continues on into the year 2000.

The challenges we are facing this year are in the area of presenting Public Programs and making the park useful for campers, day-use people and at night- the amateur astronomers- a group that has always considered this park their home. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has had problems around the state with liability issues. This problem has increased in recent years due to the increased population pressure on the parks. Since the DPR comes into contact with more of the general public because of the nature of the department (camping, tours, etc.) , they also have the highest liability rate. Public Programs at the Peak are a potential trouble area in this respect, so we (FPOA and DPR) are reviewing our operations and making changes to reduce potential liability problems for our members, state park volunteers and the DPR. We have had a clean record in our 15 years of operation and need to continue that record for the next 15 years.

Our next Board meetings are March 11th and April 8th; usually at 2 pm at the Observatory. The Board would like to have more feedback on FPOA policies and operations. The Board meetings are open to anyone with an interest in astronomy and Fremont Peak State Park. New ideas are welcome. I won't repeat what Kevin Medlock said in response to my idea of motorizing the Observing room roof at the first Board meeting I attended back in 1996!

Don't forget about the Training Class for State Park Volunteers on March 4th at 9 am in San Juan Bautista Historic Park. All members planning on presenting public programs this year must take a Volunteer Training class.

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(President's Message, continued)

Private use of the Challenger telescope, as always, depends on working on the Pubic Programs.

Anyone with experience setting up web cams for monitoring weather and sky conditions, please contact me at ron.dammann@lmco.com or (408) 255-1863 at home.

Clear (and DARK) Skies,
Ron Dammann

CAL Notes

by Mary Pass

As the century begins (or ends as some view the beginning of 2000) there are many new challenges and visions on the horizon.

Over the past year the state has focused staff time evaluating operations at Fremont Peak State Park. A group initially of management, specialist and sector staff got together last spring to brainstorm ideas related to facilities, public safety, interpretation, resource management, user groups, recreational activities, future development, visitor satisfaction surveys, staff and budget.

Fremont Peak S.P. offers some unique recreational opportunities for such a relatively small park unit. Positive comments on the visitor satisfaction surveys included the value of the park for an isolated rustic camping experience, the scenic views from a mountaintop, and the value of the dark skies for astronomy.

This past month FPOA and the State met for a one-day workshop to clarify the role of the Association, Volunteers and the State. The goal of the meeting was to bring individuals together to establish a foundation for the upcoming contract negotiations with the FPOA and with our new Volunteer training program. The Superintendent of Cooperating Associations, John Mott, presented an overview of the history, legal foundation, function, and liabilities of associations. Monterey District Staff were present to help define their role in relationship to FPOA and the Volunteers. In addition, Interim Superintendent Ken Gray gave a brief presentation of the result of our focused

entrance and roadway improvement plan drafted by Landscape Architect's Bellinger Foster Steinmetz.

I have been working in the Gavilan Sector, which includes supervising Visitor Services operations for Fremont Peak State Park, for approximately a year and a half. I believe we are fortunate to have a well qualified and committed person like Ranger Cameron Bowers assigned to the Peak. I believe there are some very talented FPOA members and volunteers who have shared a lot of time to help benefit the visitor's experience at the Peak. Thank you to all who have been helping with programs, construction and work projects throughout the year. I am looking forward to the opportunities that will be available in this and future years.

Board Minutes, October 1999

Meeting held at Fremont Peak Observatory on 11 Oct 99, starting at 2:30pm. Board attending were Ron Dammann, Ernie Piini, Denni Medlock, Rob Toebe, Pat Donnelly, Doug Padrick, Rick Morales, and Bob Black. Also present were Mary Pass (CAL) and Robert Hoyle.

Instrumentation - Damaged 'top' focuser repaired and will be installed. Everything else seems to be OK.

Facilities - Loren working on acquiring metal-clad door to replace the water-damaged east meeting room door. Interior work to be done on 6-Nov.

Membership - 179 total members for 1999, including 49 Life Members.

Solar Program - Jack Murphy found no power at the utility pole he usually uses to hook up the Solaris. Supply may have been shut off at the old residence.

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(Board Minutes from Oct'99 continued)

Meteor Program - Rick reported that cases containing the image intensifier and cameras used for recording meteor trails are missing.

CDPR - Mary Pass suggested we inventory the equipment in the observatory.

Discussion was held about the proposed deck, and location (west of the present building).

Discussion regarding the Observing Pads along the approach road. Mary asked for a proposal, with specifics, and whether these would be for public access. Size of the pads investigated: 5x5 ft. is too small while 10x10 is too large.

There is also a need for clear procedures regarding telescope usage around the shop and observatory.

FPOA Officers for 2000 were elected: Ron Dammann - President; Bob Black - Vice President; Denni Medlock - Treasurer; and Rick Morales - Secretary.

Meeting adjourned at 4:37pm

Board Minutes, February 2000

Board Meeting called to order February 12, 2000 at 4:30 pm. Board Members present were Donn Mukensnabe, Doug Padrick, Pat Donnelly, Kevin Medlock, Ernie Piini, Bob Black and Rick Morales. Also present were Ranger Mary Pass, Jodie and Robert Hoyle, Morris Jones (Mojo) and Jane Houston Jones.

Treasurer - Denni Medlock, not present, printed 1999 Income/expenses statement and 2000 Budget. Checking account balance at 12/31/99 was \$5,580.46. Savings balance (CD) is \$18,906.15. Membership - Bob Black said there are exactly 50 life members. Regular membership renewal

notices will go out with the March 2000 newsletter along with a stamped self addressed envelope to 1999 members as encouragement to renew their memberships.

Instrumentation - Rob Toebe was not present but Kevin reported there are some minor problems; the declination clamp is functioning poorly, otherwise all is OK. A new 7 inch, 10th wave diagonal will be installed sometime this spring. The telescope will be down for several weeks for the installation and repairs to the dec clamp, prior to the start of the public programs.

Facilities - the tar and gravel roof over the meeting was replaced with a melted-on rubberoid roof. It currently does not leak. Lead by Loren Dynneson, Ron Dammann, Greg Nausin, Jack Murphy and Rick Morales stripped off the old roof and put down the melt on roof in mid-October. Loren replaced the meeting room's east door with a new metal clad door in November.

Newsletter - Donn asked for information for the March newsletter due out before the 1st of March. Bob will send address labels to Donn who also said, following the method of previous editor, Frank Dibbell, that he will pay for all costs associated with printing and mailing the newsletter. Thanks to both Frank and Donn.

Programs

Solar - Jack Murphy said he will continue setting up both the Solaris and the C-90 once each month on the first Saturday of the month that there is an evening public astronomy program in the Observatory. He would also like for FPOA to acquire a power inverter to operate the telescopes because the AC power in the lot is not always available. Kevin said that he can get us a UPS.

Meteor - Rick said that after speaking with Mike Koop about the disappearance of the photographing systems, that they were probably stolen. Peter Jenniskens invited several amateur meteor observers to join him in a flying campaign to

(continued next page)

(Board Minutes from Feb'00 continued)

photograph meteors. Also, KQED-FM interviewed amateur meteor observers out near Mt. Hamilton.

State Park stuff - Mary Pass suggested that we include the Monterey District office on our news-letter mailing list. She asked for feedback on the meeting held earlier with state park staff regarding the distinction between FPOA members and state park volunteers. Generally the meeting was re-garded as thought provoking and it clearly defined our roles as FPOA members and state park volun-teers. Almost everything we do at the observatory or in the park is done as a state park volunteer and we receive the benefit of liability protection when we work as state park volunteers.

Coulter camp observing site - the FPOA may decide to reserve Coulter for open amateur as-tronomers' use on certain weekends. FPOA would possibly pay state parks to have the area reserved. Discussion will continue next meeting.

New business - Board set meeting, public program dates for the 2000 year. The Star-B-Que will be held July 29. FPOA member appreciation night is planned for September 9.

A motion that FPOA will lend its name in support of March 7 election Propositions 12 and 13 and announce our support in the march newsletter. msp/Black

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

EXTRA == EXTRA == EXTRA == EXTRA

Dues are Due !!

Have you remembered to send in your 1999-2000 renewal yet? If not, use the handy stamped return envelope enclosed with this issue to mail back your tax-deductible payment today!

Thank You

Jane Joins Jenniskens' Leonid Jaunt

Last November, when many ground-based ob-servers staked out their favorite dark sky site and turned their eyes skyward to glimpse the predicted major Leonid meteor shower, they might have chanced to see the navigation lights of a high-flying research aircraft overhead. On board were FPOA members Jane Houston-Jones and Mike Koop, who were taking part in scientific observa-tions of the storm as part of a team assembled by NASA's meteor expert, Peter Jenniskens. Ever wonderered what it was like to journey far above the clouds and stalk the wily Leonids?

Point your Internet Web browser to URL <http://www.whiteoaks.com/mojo/jhmac/index.html> for Jane's report and scrapbook of her adventures in those November skies or attend her talk at the upcoming SJAA meeting on 18 March 2000!

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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