



The FREMONT PEAK **OBSERVER**

Editor: Donn Mukensable

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Star-B-Que 2K Memories

by Jane Houston Jones

The annual FPOA/AANC Star-B-Que was held this year on a new moon weekend night - July 29th. This was my third Star-B-Que and each one brings with it some great memories. The party started with sizzling burgers and hotdogs. Friends got together. Before it got too hectic (and late) I walked around up to Coulter Row and to the Southwest Parking lot to see how many scopes were set up.

Mojo and I decided to set up our own telescopes up at SW on this night. We wanted to see the impact of the new radio towers on the peak. From SW it wasn't too obtrusive, not any more than the old lights. That darn peak cut into my favorite southern view and that had nothing to do with the towers or lights.

During my three walks I counted about 50 to 60 telescopes or mounted binoculars set up in these areas. There was at least one additional scope set up in front of the observatory, too! I'm sure my count isn't exact, as I was counting in the dark. And I stopped and talked to the scope owners and looked through the scopes while counting too.

The events of the day continued. Mike Maiman of the San Mateo County Astronomical Society won the Astronomical Gastronomical competition with a spiral galaxy confection. He called it M-112! It was mm mm good, I can tell you that! This barely won over SJAA's Akkana Peck's creation, Barnard Brownies, which were complete with dust lanes and powdered sugar star-clouds. All entries tasted great! (burp)

Twenty young people - from 4 year olds to teenagers - entered the Create a Constellation contest. There were too many great ones to pick one winner, so the panel of judges (Mike Koop, last year's winner Amy Dynneson, and yours truly) selected 7 winners. Each contestant was given a piece of paper with the stars of Ursa Major on it. From this bunch of dots, magical constellations and asterisms appeared. The winners were: Carmen Morales (Calla Lily), Kirsten Reis (The Horse), Danielle Armstrong (Toys in a Toy Box), Cassie Brice (Raccoon) I've seen that one on Fremont Peak, in my car!, Danny Avalos (A dragon), Joey -I don't know Joey's last name- (Mountains and Clouds), and Dan Dynneson (Teddy Bear). The brother-sister team of Amy and Dan Dynneson collaborated on one entry - winning a constellation prize! The prizes ranged from space origami to moon muck to glow-in-the-dark stars.

Mike Koop deserves a special prize for drawing Ursa Major - the great bear - for us! It looked a little like a fat weasel to me!

Mike Maiman also won the Trivia contest, and the runners up were the team of Akkana Peck and Morris Jones. There were dozens of entrants. Nearly everyone was stumped by the question of which state capital is also the name of a constellation. NOT our winners, tho'!

AANC awards had been given out at the annual AANC symposium earlier in the year. But Mike Ryan from the SCMAS was there at the picnic so we recreated his presentation for Amateur Astronomer of the year. Jim Badura of Rainbow Optics won the Commercial Award, Dr. Alex Filippenko

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(Star-B-Que Memories, continued)

won the Professional Astronomer award and the EAS Rachel Restoration Team was given the Special Award. At our AANC Symposium in March, Kevin Medlock gave an impromptu talk about the Rachel team work. It was one of the highlights of the event. Rachel is now sparkling with polished brass and gleaming paint in her new dome at the New Chabot Science Center in Oakland. Don't miss it!

FPOA handed out some awards too! Robert Hoyle was given an award for his "Photographic Elan". Don't miss some of Robert's astrophotos in the observatory classroom. These photos were all taken through the FPOA 30-inch Challenger, by the way. Morris Jones received the "Volunteer of the Year" Award. Nice work, guys!

Mike Maiman and Mark Taylor seemed to walk up to the winners table more often than anyone else during the raffle. Thanks to all members and organizations who donated gifts. When an HB Astro-Atlas was raffled off, I looked around for Crazy Ed. He wasn't there this year! I hope he was having a good time at his new dark sky home-stead in Pearce, Arizona! We all miss you, Ed!

The talk at sunset was given by Mike Koop and your correspondent. We were presenting a talk on the NASA Multi-Aircraft Campaign to study the Leonid Storm of November 1999. Dr. Peter Jenniskens had returned from Europe the previous day, but came for the talk. He ably assisted us with our talk, adding fascinating details to an already interesting topic. A presentation about meteors (Leonid 101), was followed by the official NASA video of the mission, which was followed by actual film of the meteor storm as we observed it 30,000 feet above the Mediterranean Sea. While the storm played itself out, we talked about our experiences and answered questions. A good crowd stayed to listen, partly because of the interesting topic and also partly because the sky overhead was quite cloudy! But as we finished, the stars came out!

As darkness grew, the clouds disappeared. But not for long. It was time to clean up, open the observatory. I wandered over to my telescopes on the SW Lot. The cloudy dusk had dampened our observing spirits, and we were to be content with a binocular night. Dr. Peter Jenniskens, who wandered over with me, really wanted to see Comet Linear. Luckily about 5 scopes were set up in that lot, balancing out our bins. Mojo had prepared a star chart for the comet so we did know exactly where to look. We "borrowed" the 6 inch reflector telescope from a great couple we've met at SJAA meetings and together we found the comet for Dr. Peter. Then he found the comet himself in another 6-incher at the southwest lot.

This is the memory I'll remember from this Star-B-Que. Dr. Peter Jenniskens in his NASA flight suit finding comet Linear!

Peter and I then walked over to the Coulter Row area to visit with another meteor volunteer friend. She happened to be showing off the asteroid Vesta in her 14.5 inch reflector. Peter found Vesta in binoculars and the telescope. As we walked among the many scopes, we overheard kids pointing out sucker holes to their parents at the telescope control. One man with a voice activated SCT was "telling" his scope to go to Uranus. I took a look, and the telescope had obeyed! It had turned into a sucker hole night.

Despite the clouds, it had been a fun day and night on Fremont Peak!

Work Party Cleans House

On June 17th, an industrious crew of volunteers gave the Observatory some much-needed 'spring' cleaning prior to the Star-B-Que. Kevin Medlock and Rob Toebe worked on the declination clamp after everyone pitched in to remove the 30" tube from the mount. Paint was touched up in the observing room and meeting room ceiling, while a new hanger for the binocular mounts was installed. Thanks to Gary Cervo, Bob Fingerhut, Loren Dynneson, Al Quan, Cam Bowers, and everyone else who pitched in!

Park Management Meets with Astronomers at Houge Park

by Bob Black

On Saturday, May 13, 2000, astronomers and Fremont Peak park staff and management held a meeting at Houge Park multipurpose room in San Jose. I attended as an unofficial representative of Fremont Peak Observatory Association. Here are my best recollections of the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, Mary Pass had given me a copy of the plan for proposed improvements to the southwest parking lot. She requested that I compile responses to the plan from the FPOA Board of Directors. I asked for responses from the board and also from the amateur astronomers who use Fremont Peak State Park. I submitted the compiled comments to Mary Pass prior to the meeting.

This meeting was convened at the request of Rich Neuschaefer, who arranged a meeting place for us (Thank You, Rich). Fourteen astronomers and five park staff attended. Park staff included Lynn Rhodes, Monterey District Superintendent; Paula Peterson, Chief Ranger; Ken Gray, Research Planner; Mary Pass, Supervising Ranger; and Cameron Bowers, Ranger.

The major part of the meeting was devoted to establishing the background of state parks in general and Fremont Peak State Park in particular. The topics the park staff covered included state park mission, Fremont Peak State Park purpose values and challenges, importance of astronomy, park partnerships including contractual relationship with FPOA, and special events and group use.

Topics that related specifically to Fremont Peak State Park (FPSP) included volunteer training, observatory operations, and areas for setting up telescopes for viewing. Other topics that related to FPSP included the landscape plans for the two parking lots and for the park entry. Park staff invited comments from astronomers following the presentation of each topic.

Ken Gray thanked the astronomers for their comments on the proposed landscape plans for the SW parking lot. He plans to revise the landscape plan and submit it to the FPOA for additional comments.

The current policy governing the use period for FPSP is given in District Superintendent's Order No. DSO 720-97-002(A) dated June 1, 1997. (This is posted on the bulletin board at the lower parking lot.) It isn't clear to me how this policy relates to the individual astronomer. State park management is in the process of developing a revised draft policy clarifying the use of the park by individual astronomers and astronomy clubs. This revised draft will be made available to the FPOA for comment.

All state park staff emphasized their support of astronomy at FPSP. They all told us that they want the park to be astronomer friendly. All changes to the park, both physical and policy, will take into consideration the interests of astronomers. But they did emphasize that the park is for all people, not just astronomers.

I volunteered to distribute any proposed plans which are made available to FPOA to the amateur astronomy community and also any other organizations that I learn have an interest in FPSP.

If you have any concerns relating to park management, park operations, park changes, etc., let your concerns be known. Write them out and give them to Cameron Bowers or Mary Pass.

Now is the time.

Board Minutes, June 2000

Meeting called to order on 3 June 2000 at 2:39pm by President Ron Dammann. Board members attending were Rick Morales, Bob Black, and Donn Mukensnabe. Thus there was no quorum.

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(Board Minutes from Jun'00 continued)

Also attending were CAL Mary Pass, Jane Houston Jones and Mojo.

Minutes from May meeting were read and accepted with minor corrections.

Denni Medlock not present, so no Treasurer's Report.

Bob Black reported very few changes to the membership roster, with the notable exception of a new Life member: Jane Houston Jones. Welcome, and thanks!

Rob Toebe not present, Ron noted the declination clamp is still broken. Planned to be repaired during work party on the 17th.

Donn announced that the deadline for articles in the September newsletter was Aug. 15th. Ron said he would write up something.

Solar Program is on hold, following the departure of Jack Murphy as presenter. An inverter was purchased to run the Solaris off battery power.

No new news on Meteor Program. Peter Jenniskens is out of the country.

Mary Pass has some newsletter items, brought up the contract with the CDPR is up for renewal for another 3-year term. She mentioned that an extension to the present agreement, with no changes, was suggested. Board members present agreed; a telephone vote was arranged to expedite acceptance. Bob Black will coordinate. Mary said that there is a new logo for the state and the old bear-logo was not to be used on any documents.

Bob reported on the meeting between CDPR and TAC at Houge Park. He said it cleared up a lot of rumors, and the 'scuttlebutt' he had heard afterward was positive.

Work party items were discussed, along with what materials were necessary to bring.

Star-B-Que planning was discussed, with the ever-popular question of guest speakers under discussion. Jane will try to find someone. Bob will invite some VIP guests from the State Parks and local government. Initial schedule, activities were discussed. Slate of board members up for election: Denni Medlock, Doug Padrick, Rick Morales. Doug has decided to not seek re-election, so Donn will head the nominating committee.

Ron emphasized the need for FPOA to take a continuing active role in controlling light pollution in the nearby communities. Speaking to the politicians is not enough; personal time commitments are also needed.

Mary noted that there is a webcam on the new KSBW tower and suggested we look into getting the URL. The state put up a 'cam at Ano Nuevo; since this is public service maybe someone would be willing to donate the equipment.

Meeting adjourned 5:07pm

Board Minutes, July 2000

Meeting called to order on 8 July 2000 at 2:37pm by President Ron Dammann. Board members attending were Rick Morales, Bob Black, Denni Medlock, Doug Padrick, Pat Donnelly, and Donn Mukensnabe. Also attending were CAL Mary Pass, camp host Randy Kelley, and several guests.

Minutes from May and June meetings were read and accepted with minor corrections.

Denni Medlock reported a checking account balance of \$6342.24, with some deposits to post. CD balance in excess of \$18,000 though she missed the June rollover/deposit time.

Bob Black reported there are 161 members, including life members.

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(Board Minutes from Jul'00 continued)

Rob Toebe not present, Ron reported on work party results where Dec. clamp was fixed and much repair performed. Al Quan coaxed the PC in the meeting room to recognize its CD, though he was unable to fix the display.

Solar Program is on hold, following the departure of Jack Murphy as docent. A call for volunteers was made.

Meteor Program is effectively defunct...

Mary Pass said the contract was approved for another 3-year term. There is a park policy being drafted, which addresses such points as lock combination procedure, set-up and parking rules, use of Coulter Row, shop access, etc. Every park is different. Mary suggested setting some goals to guide next year's operations. She noted that an ADA review was being held and providing disabled access would require some changes to the campground and bathrooms. If the ranger is not present, contact CDPR Dispatch at 831-649-2810 for getting things unlocked or to report problems.

There are ~30 folks responding to Star-B-Que phone. More are planned on showing up, which led to a discussion of how supplies would be "adjusted" An inventory of the soft goods in the shed was taken. Jane/Mojo looking for speakers. Denni will not be present at SBQ, Donn to print up ballots; Ron will administer the election and sell raffle tickets. Nominating committee will ask Mark Taylor, Loren Dynesson if they are interested.

Rick suggested that the interest from the CD be used to fund a scholarship. Discussion was held, but not voted on. Other ideas were a kids program or Project ASTRO.

Board voted to replace the 15" monitor in meeting room, approved up to \$200, and the acquisition of a 2.4Ghz remote phone for use at the observatory.

Meeting adjourned 4:53pm

Board Minutes, August 2000

Meeting held on 29 July 2000 at 2:45pm. No quorum; President Ron Dammann and board members attending were Rick Morales, Pat Donnelly, and Donn Mukensnoble. Also present was Barry Brown, from Morrison Planetarium.

Informal discussion was held; no business was transacted or minutes formally taken.

Donn installed new 17" monitor in meeting room and delivered the remote phone. Ron took the unit to work on the charger.

Next meeting will be held on August 26th at 2:00pm; this date was tentative before.

New Park Fee Schedule by Cameron Bowers

Fee Schedule for Fremont Peak State Park:

- 1) Day use is \$1 per vehicle (day use for non-astronomers ends 1/2 hour after sunset astronomers must be actively viewing)
- 2) Camping is \$3 per night
- 3) No fee for dog day use \$1 for dog in campsite
 - Camping fees are required only when occupying a designated campsite
 - Camping is only allowed in designated campsites
 - For astronomers who stay late "Napping" in vehicles is allowed outside the designated campground.
 - Tents are only allowed in campsites.
 - For those setting up at the observatory the \$1

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(Fremont Peak Fee Schedule continued)

day use fee applies unless you are presenting or preparing a public program.

-The area behind the locked gate is not an over-night area (this includes the Observatory) and should not be used as one. If you need to nap before heading down the Mountain this is allowed. Astronomers must leave the area behind the locked gate after their viewing session unless you are involved in volunteer activities or FPOA Board member business during the day.

***INFORMATION*:** AS A COURTESY TO THE ASTRONOMERS THE CAMPHOST HAS BEEN CLOSING THE GATE TO THE S/W LOT AT NIGHT ALLOWING FOR ASTRONOMERS TO VIEW WITHOUT VEHICLES CONSTANTLY DRIVING IN AND OUT.

If anyone has questions regarding use of the Peak for Astronomy please feel free to contact me at (831) 623-4255

Thank you
Cameron Bowers, Peak Ranger

FPOA Public Schedule 2000

September

- 02 Public Program
- 23 Board Meeting, Public Program
- 30 Public Program

October

- 07 Public Program
- 21 Work Party (10 am), Public Program*, FPOA Member Appreciation Night
- 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.

Election Results

At the Star-B-Que the election for FPOA Board Members was held as members cast their ballots for those who will help govern the Association.

Both Denni Medlock and Rick Morales were re-elected to three-year terms, while 1999's Member of the Year Loren Dynneson was elected to his first term on the board. Congratulations to all are in order!

Member Appreciation Night Moved to Oct. 21st

The 2nd annual FPOA Member Appreciation night and Star Party has been rescheduled for the evening of October 21, following the work party. A barbeque starting at 6pm, stimulating conversation, and viewing are on the agenda this year.

Those planning to attend should RSVP to the FPOA phone to ensure enough supplies are ordered.

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	530-757-2529 <i>fprniteowl@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>KungfuGina@aol.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. FPOA Telephone 831-623-2465