



# The FREMONT PEAK **OBSERVER**

Editor: Donn Mukensnoble

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## **Star-B-Que hosts a crowd!**

The fifteenth annual Star-B-Que was held on August 18<sup>th</sup> this year, and the event was one of the most successful in recent times. Over one hundred fifty people were feted and participated in many different activities on an absolutely perfect day.

FPOA's annual election was also held, and this year current president Pat Donnelly, editor Donn Mukensnoble, and board member Ernie Piini were re-elected to three year terms. Also joining the board was life member Jack Murphy, who will complete the term of Rob Toebe. Jack, as you may know, also hosts the Solar Observing program at the peak the first program Saturday of the month.

Several astronomically inclined (36°45'36.54" for current location) chefs entered their creations in a Gastronomical Dessert contest. Rhonda Dennison (FPOA) contributed Moon Rock brownies, Erica Klein (FPOA) spun up an amazing Saturn, and Rick of the San Mateo Astronomical Society provided his Ballistic Beans (hmm - a dessert?). As good as these were, they were bested by the superbly detailed Ariceibo Observatory cake created by Ashley Jones of the FPOA. The judges had a difficult time choosing, so multiple tastings were required. Mm-mm- good!

Returning with his Astro-Triva Quiz was Pat Donnelly (who also celebrated his 53rd birthday on the 18<sup>th</sup>) with a variety of puzzlers on subjects ranging from space history to constellation lore to local events. Triumphant this year was Jerry Yost.

The barbeque portion of the gathering drew upon an experienced team of burger-flippers joined again by Mark Thein, who all hustled to serve

what seemed to be a never-ending line of hungry diners that stretched on into the late afternoon!

After dinner, Lynn Rhodes, the Monterey District Superintendent, spoke on the contribution the FPOA has made to the Fremont Peak State Park and the community at large over the years.

As twilight fell upon the peak, the raffle of astronomy related goodies was held by Rick Morales and the results of the election and trival contest announced. Then it was time for the evening's speaker to take the podium (er, picnic table).

Erik Bailey, a professional with an MS degree in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering, traveled from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena to give an excellent presentation on the areography of Mars and the history of robotic exploration of the red planet (with his subject gleaming in the south sky). Erik is deeply involved in the upcoming 2003 rover mission to study Mars and shared with the audience many of the planned scientific experiments. His enthusiastic talk was briefly interrupted at 9:15 by a spectacular overhead pass by the International Space Station (with the shuttle still docked). Much thanks, Erik.

Guests wishing to take a peek at Mars and other splendors of the summer sky made their way up Observatory Hill where the 30" Challenger Telescope, along with other member instruments, were available for public viewing. The night was shirt-sleeve warm, moonless, and very transparent. Guests observed many objects, including Comet LINEAR, Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, multiple star systems, and the glories of the summer Milky Way well until the onset of morning twilight. Finishing the night was the season's first look at the glorious Orion Nebula (M42). What a great Star-B-Que!

## Ranger's Eye View

by Paula J. Peterson,  
Chief Ranger - Monterey District

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I am very pleased to announce that our Supervising Ranger position for Gavilan Sector (Fremont Peak SP and San Juan Bautista SHP) has been approved at the higher level of State Park Superintendent. A review process occurred over the past six months, statewide, that evaluated factors such as program variety, personnel management including volunteer programs, fiscal responsibility, public safety, contract management, and other significant management indicators.

The significance of this upgrade is that we will be placing a manager on site at San Juan Bautista with overall responsibility for the maintenance, administrative, and visitor services daily operation of SJBSHP and FPSP. We expect to conduct the interviews sometime mid September. Meanwhile we have also re-filled two of now four Ranger positions and a full time Maintenance Worker position. Next time you are at either park and see new people in State Park uniforms, please introduce yourself. Our two newest Rangers are Alexandra Ott and Brett Reid. Our new Maintenance Worker is Rob McManaman.

Last night (August 18) was the annual Star-B-Que, and what a great night it was. If you weren't able to attend you missed delicious food including Gastronomical desserts, an outstanding guest speaker with all the latest photos and enthralling information on Mars, a warm pleasant evening, great comradery, astro-trivia to challenge the most knowledgable, raffle items to delight, and clear, dark skies. You probably **were** there because the Park was packed!

Monterey District Superintendent Lynn Rhodes shared a few comments and presented statewide annual day-use passes to the FPOA Board members for all their diligent work in running the organization. Thanks to all who helped make the Star-B-Que a successful event.

## Member Appreciation Night set for September 15<sup>th</sup>

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As the year's activities wind down at the end of summer, it's time again to honor the contributions of the members of the Fremont Peak Observatory Association with a hosted barbeque and observing session on Saturday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. The board will prepare burgers and hot dogs, but you are free to bring your own victuals to grill up too.

We're going to try something different this year, and ask that folks arrive in 'astronomically' themed clothing; a prize will be given to the most inspired (almost typed 'insipid') attire along with recognition of the Member of the Year.

September skies are traditionally steady, and so this will be a good opportunity to check in on the giant planets Jupiter and Saturn as they appear for the season. Mars remains placed in the southwest, along with distant planets Uranus and Neptune, while Mercury appears in the evening twilight and spectacularly bright Venus harkens the dawn.

Please RSVP to Bob Black or the FPOA phone no later than the 12th to be included for this event.

## Leonids to Storm in 2001?

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The fall and winter meteor showers look to be especially dramatic this year, with the possibility of a true storm of Leonids occurring right over the Bay Area! Several teams of observers plan to be on the ground in various locations as far west as Guam as well as in the air courtesy of NASA.

Check out the AANC Web Page for details on the upcoming Leonid shower at: <http://www.aanc-astronomy.org/leonids.html>

The Geminids also put in a good appearance on the new moon night of December 13-14 this year, followed by a partial eclipse of the sun! For more information on this annual celestial fireworks display, see the AMS meteor page at URL <http://comets.amsmeteors.org/meteors/showers/geminids.html>

# The time to protect our night skies is: Now!

by Bob Black, Vice President

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All of us who have done star-gazing at Fremont Peak State Park over the years have become aware of the deterioration of the dark skies there due to the growth on both sides of the peak: Monterey County and San Benito County and their member cities, in particular Salinas and Hollister. We have wrung our hands in anguish and decried unfettered development, but that's about all. All of that may be about to change.

On Wednesday evening Mar 21, Rick Morales, Chad Moore, Doug Padrick, Pat Donnelley, and I attended the San Benito County planning commission meeting. (By the way, we all are FPOA members.) Rick Morales and Chad Moore were invited to give a presentation on dark skies.

They presented slides taken over the years to illustrate the problem of diminishing dark skies in general and, in particular, the heightened problem due to the increasing urbanization of San Benito County faced by our observatory at Fremont Peak State Park. I had prepared a written statement that covered example legislation, energy efficiency, etc., which I gave to the planning director. The planning commission directed the planning director to draft a "dark sky ordinance."

After the close of the meeting, several of the commissioners remained and discussed the problem of sky glow with Rick and Chad. They were quite interested in protecting the sky and sympathetic to the problem that the observatory faces. They seemed to be sincere in their desire to see the draft of an ordinance to protect the dark sky.

Furthermore, *The Pinnacles*, the San Benito County weekly newspaper, ran a very favorable front page article about dark skies and the commission's proposed ordinance.

Once the Dark Skies Ordinance is adopted by San Benito County, let's work on Hollister and Monterey

County, then Salinas. Mostly, it is important for a lot of astronomers to show up whenever the issue is presented at a public hearing and when it is up for a vote. But there is also a need for a few credible individuals to introduce the subject with a presentation, as was done by Rick and Chad. Contact me if you are interested in making a difference.

Let yourselves be known!

The rising cost of electricity is providing us astronomers a special opportunity to press for dark skies. Energy efficiency and dark skies go hand-in-hand. Cities and counties are interested in controlling their electric bills. This is a unique situation; protecting the night sky does not cost anybody anything. Everybody wins. All it takes is good planning. Let's not let this opportunity slip by us!

*[Editor's Note - The guidelines in San Benito County passed the planning commission and will come up for a full hearing shortly. Notices will be sent out to the FPOA mailing list when this is scheduled. However, the battle is not over yet; the much larger Monterey Country has yet to consider a like ordinance and as most observers know, rapidly growing Salinas lies to the southwest of Fremont Peak.]*

## IDSO to speak at Chabot

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Nancy Clendon of the International Dark Skies Association (IDSO) will speak at the Illuminating Engineer's Conference held on January 18th 2002 at Chabot Space and Science Center. Tickets at the door are \$5.00 and needless to say, strong support for sensible lighting practices will be appreciated.

For more information as the date approaches, visit the **Chabot web page** at URL

<http://www.chabotspace.org/visit/programs/lecture.asp>

## Breaking News - Stellafane is saved from Prison Lights!

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Astronomical shrine to now have approval of state plans for new construction under land use permit.

See URL <http://www.stellafane.com/>

## FPOA Public Schedule 2001

(only the remaining dates this year are listed)

### September

- 08 Solar, Public Programs
- 15 FPOA Member Appreciation Night
- 22 Public Program

### October

- 06 Solar, Public Programs \*
- 13 Board Meeting, Public Program\*
- 20 (Work Party) Public Program\*

### November

- 17 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 Pat Donnelly at 408-778-2741 to reserve dates; ideally one month but at least two weeks prior to the date desired.

## Member, Docent training to be held on September 15th

There will be a Telescope Certification and Observatory Operations Class held at the peak on the 15th of September starting at 12 noon. Interested members please RSVP to Ron Dammann at 408-255-1863 or email [ron.dammann@lmco.com](mailto:ron.dammann@lmco.com)

In addition there will be a California State Volunteer training held at Mt.Diablo State Park on the same Saturday from noon to about 3:00 pm. Enter by way of the south gate road to the entrance station. RSVP to Ranger Doug Camden at 925-837-6129; Paula Peterson asks that she also be notified at 831-649-2842 if you plan to attend.

## Finding FPOA on the Net

Web Site: <http://www.fpoa.net>

Member Information: Site:

<http://members.fpoa.net>

Userid: xxxxx

Password: xxxxx

## Fall Work Party set for October 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am

You know winter is just around the corner when we start battening down the Observatory for the rains to come. We'll be doing outside preparation and water sealing, as well as working on the redwood ramps and decks that flank the building, as well as the usual painting and tidying.

Plan on arriving by 10 in the morning and working to sunset. Wear old clothes that you won't mind getting painted or water-sealed. After the work is done, the 'scope will remain operational, although plans are to remove the 30" mirror for recoating sometime during the winter, at which time we'll also prime and repaint the tube assembly and the mounting, this time with non-rusting enamel.

Suggestions for a new color scheme are always appreciated, but as usual Kevin has the final say.

### Fremont Peak Observatory Association Officers and Directors

<b>President</b>	Pat Donnelly	408-778-2741 <a href="mailto:KUNGFUGINA@aol.com">KUNGFUGINA@aol.com</a>
<b>Vice-President</b>	Bob Black	650-592-2166 <a href="mailto:Bob-Black@worldnet.att.net">Bob-Black@worldnet.att.net</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Rick Morales	831-623-4081 <a href="mailto:oreosfam@hollinet.net">oreosfam@hollinet.net</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	Denni Medlock	510-339-9224 <a href="mailto:epoch@majornet.net">epoch@majornet.net</a>
<b>Dir. of Instr.</b>	Ron Dammann	408-255-1863 <a href="mailto:ron.dammann@lmco.com">ron.dammann@lmco.com</a>
<b>Director, Editor</b>	Donn Mukensnoble	925-462-4602 <a href="mailto:dmuk@home.com">dmuk@home.com</a>
<b>Director</b>	Ernie Piini	408-252-3609 <a href="mailto:ewpiini@aol.com">ewpiini@aol.com</a>
<b>Director</b>	Loren Dynneson	831-636-3062 <a href="mailto:dynneson@hollinet.com">dynneson@hollinet.com</a>
<b>Director</b>	Jack Murphy	831-636-2772 <a href="mailto:jmurphy@hollinet.com">jmurphy@hollinet.com</a>
<b>Dir. Emeritus</b>	Kevin Medlock	510-339-9224 <a href="mailto:epoch@majornet.net">epoch@majornet.net</a>
<b>CAL</b>	Paula Peterson	831-649-2842 <a href="mailto:ppete@parks.ca.gov">ppete@parks.ca.gov</a>

The *Fremont Peak Observer* is published quarterly by the FPOA, a non-profit cooperating association. For more information, contact any Board Member or write to FPOA, P.O.Box 1376, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045