



The *FREMONT PEAK* OBSERVER

Promoting public education in astronomy

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Patrick Donnelly

Well it's finally over. The Fremont Peak Observatory Association has a new five (5) year contract with the California Department of Parks and Recreation. It has been a very long and sometimes trying 18 months to get this contract completed. All in all I believe that FPOA has fared pretty well considering where the contract started. I would like to thank all those members, who helped with the contract, and give a special thanks to Doug Brown. Doug was able to keep his cool and finalize the contract. FPOA should be good to go for the next five (5) years.

It seems that as astronomy goes these are some pretty exciting times. Right now (end of May 2004) there are two (2) fairly bright comets in our skies in the evening. There are two (2) robots operating on the surface of Mars, and the Cassini Space Probe will be meeting Saturn in a few short weeks. So, there should be much exciting news about our Solar System in the next few weeks. To add to this excitement, the planet Venus will transit the Sun on June 8. The transit won't be visible here, but I'm sure there will be live broadcasts on the web. Since I have planning to see this event since 1959, I shall be in Luxor, Egypt to view and photograph the entire event. In July and August, I plan to give a presentation about the transit for a public program. I'll announce it ahead of time, so that if you are interested you can attend that program.

Speaking of programs, the FPOA could use additional help with the Public Programs. We could help both giving a program and running the telescope. Also, mark July 17 on your calendar. That date is our Star-B-Que. We should have a good time this year with all that is going on.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the members of FPOA, who have made monetary contributions this year. Special thanks goes out to Rob Hawley for his generous contributions. As a result of these contributions Rob has been made a life member.

Hope to see you at the Peak soon.

FPOA Work Party

May 15, 2004

By Rick Morales

We were on site ready to go to work at 10:00 am. We had a list of items to fix that included repairing the telephone line that had its sheathing ripped when pulled through the 1 ¼ conduit. Loren Dynneson worked with Mark Levine on that project. A cabinet was installed on the wall of the east side restroom for storage of paper products and cleaning supplies. FPOA is now responsible to maintain the restrooms as part of the new contract with DPR. Rick Morales and Pat Donnelly handled that chore. Tony Morales brought a weed eater and Pat used it to knock down weeds until the fuel was all gone. Jack Murphy installed new levered door handles that comply with the American with Disabilities Act. Greg Bosler, Marko Sillanpaa, David Samuels, Donn Mukensnoble and Rick Morales built a redwood cover over the exposed spring and cable system of the roll down door. It is actually a roll up garage door that was installed upside-down and inside-out leaving the door's operating system exposed to the elements and the varmints (human type). Ron Dammann kept busy organizing the stuff inside and beneath the observatory. He and Mark readied the unused and weather beaten steel roof sections for removal from the observatory by cutting them down to manageable sized sections that can be hauled from the site in the back of a pickup. Pat brought donuts and bagels for the crew and Rick brought a coffee grinder, coffee maker and coffee beans although he was the only one who actually drank any coffee. Some addictions will never be beaten. We nearly completed all the items on Loren's List. And I think we all felt a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day and just in time for the board meeting. One of the Weber kettles was filled with charcoal and hamburger patties, hot dogs and even someone's steak were grilled to perfection. No one left hungry.

Star-B-Que July 17.

Mark this date on your calendar, and look for a special insert with the Star-B-Que events, and schedule. Don't forget to RSVP by calling (408) 623-2465. We should have a good time this year with all that is going on.

A NOTE FROM THE V.P.

by Bob Black

Thanks to Doug Brown for his work on the lengthy and difficult negotiations required to revise the boilerplate contract that DPR wanted us to sign. FPOA and the DPR started out so far apart that it seemed to be the end of FPOA. On several occasions Doug successfully negotiated important points that the rest of the FPOA Board was certain DPR would never concede. Thanks also to Callie Hurd from DPR who encouraged us, responded promptly to our submissions, and helped bring the contract to completion.

Elections

At the Star-B-Que, the most important event for the future of the FPOA is the election FPOA Board members. A candidate must have been a member for at least one year to be eligible. Submit names of willing candidates to the Board to arrive by June 19 by e-mail to the Board Secretary, Rick Morales (rickmorales@charter.net) or by mail to: FPOA Secretary, P.O. Box 1376, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045.

Public Programs for 2004

Our first Evening Public Program for 2004 on April 10th started the season with great hopes for good springtime observing weather. Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter provided visitors with excellent views of the planets. Dry air with heavy low fog below in the valleys made for some unbelievable views of M51 and other deep sky objects for our visitors later in the evening. Paul Bradshaw manned the Challenger telescope and Ron Dammann did a presentation on the objects of interest for the evening.

The next public night on April 17th dashed any hopes of even opening the roof for observing. Fog, wind and 42 F temperatures only allowed a presentation on what visitors might have seen had the weather been better.

April 24th was also a Board meeting Saturday, so the Public program was well staffed with Pat Donnelly doing a presentation on Atmospheric Phenomenon and Donn Mukensnabe and Paul Bradshaw operating the Challenger telescope. Views of the crescent moon, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter provided visitors with unforgettable memories. Later in the evening M13, M65 and 66, M104 and M3 dazzled visitors. The weather was dry and the temperature at midnight was 54 F. The skyglow from surrounding cities was prominent because of the lack of fog in the valleys.

April 30th was a Special Program for the San Justo Middle School in Hollister. Teacher Susan Michaelson and students arrived for a presentation on why Venus and the Moon go through phases and the Venus transit on June 8th. Afterward, observing the Moon, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter and M13 and M3 made for a full evening. Pointing out constellations with the green 5mw laser pointers also was a

great hit with the students.

May 8th Public Program again showed visitors the planets and more "M" objects although the temperature was a bit colder with 39 F at midnight. Paul Bradshaw and Paul Peterson ran the Challenger. Comet Neat was observed in the SW sky.

May 15th was the triple event Saturday with the Spring Work Party, Board Meeting and Public Program in the evening. President Patrick Donnelly did a presentation on Atmospheric Phenomenon with his excellent slides. Donn Mukensnabe, Loren Dynneson, and Pat Donnelly manned the Challenger treating visitors to views of the planets, Comet Neat and deep sky objects. FPOA members John Hiles, Robert Armstrong, David Samuels, Marko Sillanpaa, Rob Griffin and David Kingsley set up near the Observatory and also provided visitors with great views of the night sky through their telescopes.

May 21st was a Special Program for DPR (Department of Parks and Recreation). Rick Morales did a presentation on the history of the San Juan area in early California, park history and objects in the sky that might be visible if the fog clears. It did for about 20 minutes and long enough for views of Jupiter.

May 22nd made us feel like Snoopy sitting on his dog house typing "It was a cold and stormy night". A total of 8 visitors braved the weather to listen to an astronomy presentation. As Rick Morales says "The Peak makes its own weather" and that was certainly true that evening.

The 29th of May was another very nice evening at the Peak with Rick doing the presentation and Kenneth Frank and Paul Bradshaw running the Challenger telescope. We had the FPOA 16-inch dobsonian on the pad along with the FPOA 10-inch Newtonian. Ron Dammann and Loren Dynneson tending those telescopes along with Robert Armstrong and his 20-inch Obsession telescope. Teacher and FPOA member Virginia Rush was also in attendance.

Evening Program Dates for the remainder of 2004

June 12, 19, 26

July 10, 17, 24

August 7, 14, 21

September 4, 11, 18

October 2, 9, 16, 23

Solar Programs

FPOA conducted three Public Solar Programs so far this year. Jack Murphy conducted all of these and we are especially appreciative of his effort and service. These were all conducted on Saturday afternoons using the FPOA telescope with the solar filter and the special solar telescope with the hydrogen alpha filter. The telescope with the solar filter is useful for showing sun spots. The special solar telescope with the hydrogen alpha filter is useful for showing prominences on the rim of the sun. Most park visitors are aware of sun spots. But few of them have ever seen prominences as you can with the special solar telescope

with the hydrogen alpha filter. Jack really wowed them with that.

Solar Program dates for the remainder of 2004

Solar observing is offered at the observatory during the afternoon on these dates.

June 12

July 10

August 7

September 4

Let's have broader FPOA Member support of Public Programs. FPOA members should remember that if they would like to help out with showing visitors the night sky on a Public Night, or to conduct or assist with the solar programs, they do not need the special "Observer" class if they reserve a location two days in advance near the Observatory and use either their own telescope or the FPOA telescopes. Help in the observatory for Public Programs is always welcome. There are many dates still open for presentations and Challenger telescope operation or in assisting in many different ways. Challenger telescope operation and solar telescope operation both require the member to be on the certified users list.

Important Changes for FPOA Members

NEW PROCEDURES

First of all, FPOA must be able to fulfill its contractual requirements with DPR. Secondly, FPOA also needs to protect itself from excessive liability. Thirdly, FPOA intends to utilize the FPOA Premises to benefit the public as stated in the FPOA Bylaws, to benefit the FPOA membership, and, to the extent possible, to benefit the amateur astronomy community at large. The FPOA Board has established a number of procedures to satisfy these three requirements. We will operate under these procedures for a while in order to test them for the effectiveness and practicality. It's inevitable that some of them will not really satisfy their intended purpose and others will be found to be too difficult to implement and still others will be found unworkable or unfair. Please bear with us while we go through this shakedown time. The FPOA Board also asks for your input so that we can correct the procedures.

NEW MEMBERSHIP TYPES

FPOA has established several new membership types:

1. An **Observer** is an FPOA member who has completed an Observer Supplement, who has a completed liability waiver on file, and who can has completed orientation for an Observer.
2. An **Astronomy Interpreter** is a member of FPOA who has completed the astronomy interpretation training and orientation and who has a valid liability waiver on file.

3. A **Certified Telescope Operator** is a member of FPOA who has completed certification training and orientation for the 30-in. Challenger Telescope and the Solar Telescopes under the direction of the Director of Instruments and who has a valid liability waiver on file.

NEW POSITIONS

FPOA has established several positions:

1. **Scheduler**. The Scheduler staffs the public programs and schedules and the use of the premises by Program Presenters, Observers, and Astronomy Interpreters.
2. **Program Presenter**. A Program Presenter is an Astronomy Interpreter who is responsible for design and conduct of a schedule evening public program.
3. **Program Assistant**. A Program Assistant is a member of FPOA who assists the Program Presenter in conducting the evening public program and who has a valid liability waiver on file. A Program Assistant does not need to have a Supplemental Observer Membership.

ASTRONOMICAL USE OF THE FPOA PREMISES

FPOA is responsible for policing and maintaining the FPOA Premises and adjacent restrooms. FPOA also wishes to assure the Department of Parks and Recreation that it is adhering to its principles of serving the public and park visitors through astronomical interpretation, and that the non astronomer public will be treated with courtesy and respect. For these reasons only an FPOA member who is an bserver will be allowed to set up a telescope within the FPOA Premises. The FPOA Premises is the area that extends from the east side of the workshop to the fence just east of the Observatory. On public program nights, only FPOA members who are assisting the public program (that is, Program Assistants) will be allowed to set up telescopes on the telescope pads or patio area adjacent to the observatory. An Observer must submit a request to use the FPOA Premises to the FPOA Scheduler at least 48 hours in advance. The Observer will also give the names of any guests at the time of reserving space on the FPOA Premises.

On public program nights, only FPOA members who are assisting the public program will be allowed to set up telescopes on the telescope pads or patio area adjacent to the observatory. At other times these areas will be treated the same as the area to the east of the workshop. An Observer must submit a request to use the FPOA Premises to the FPOA Scheduler at least one week in advance. The Observer will give the name of the guest (if any) at the time of reserving space on the FPOA Premises.

NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORMS

FPOA now has new membership application forms. You should find them with this edition of the "FPOA Observer". You will note that the rates for General, Student, and Life

Memberships have increased about 50%. We have had to increase these membership rates due to the additional costs we are incurring as a consequence of assuming the role of concessionaire. We have also established two new categories of membership: Supporting Membership at \$40 per calendar year, and Family Membership at \$50 per calendar year. In addition, we have created a new class of membership which is supplemental to the other memberships. It is the Supplemental FPOA Observer Membership at \$30 per calendar year. That membership is intended for those amateur astronomers who wish to set up their telescopes within the FPOA Premises.

The FPOA Board struggled to a considerable degree before arriving at these increased membership rates and the new membership classes. The Board realizes that FPOA may lose members who are unable to renew at the new rates. The Board also realizes that many members are not active and do not attend the FPOA programs or make use of FPOA facilities at Fremont Peak State Park, but wish to retain their membership as a form of support. However, this is the first increase in membership rates since our founding 18 years ago. And we have found that our basic membership rate is comparable to that of other similar organizations.

Fremont Peak Observer

The Fremont Peak Observer is published four times a year by the Fremont Peak Observatory Association, on or near the first of February, April, July, and October. The submission deadline for each issue is the 15th of the preceding month, i.e., January 15, March 15, June 15, and September 15. Please submit all articles in plain text format (no word processor files please!) by email to editor@fpoa.net.

GET YOUR "FPOA OBSERVER" BY E-MAIL

In the very near future the "FPOA Observer" will be available online. We will publish three forms of the "FPOA Observer": as a printed copy to be mailed to members, as a simple text edition to be e-mailed to those members who so request, and as an augmented PDF file (possibly including colored photographs) which would be available at the FPOA web site in the Membership Section. Members can select any or all of these as methods to receive the "FPOA Observer". Naturally, publishing costs will be reduced by those members can elect to use only the online versions of the "FPOA Observer". Members will receive the printed version unless they select another option.

FPOA by Internet and Telephone

Home page: <http://www.fpoa.net>

Observatory reservation and event calendar:
<http://members.fpoa.net/ical.html>

Members email list signup:
http://www.fpoa.net/mailman/listinfo/fpoa_members

Observatory scheduling: (Email) schedule@fpoa.net

FPOA Premises Access: (Email) schedule@fpoa.net

Observatory telephone:
 (831) 623-2465

Fremont Peak Observatory Association Officers and Directors		
President	Pat Donnelly <i>KUNGFUGINA@aol.com</i>	408-778-2741
Vice-President	Bob Black <i>bob-black@comcast.net</i>	650-592-2166
Secretary	Rick Morales <i>rickmorales@charter.net</i>	831-623-4081
Treasurer	Denni Medlock <i>DMedlock@ChabotSpace.org</i>	510-339-9224
Director of Instruments	Ron Dammann <i>ron.dammann@lmco.com</i>	408-255-1863
Director	Donn Mukensnabe <i>dmuk@attbi.com</i>	925-462-4602
Director	Loren Dynneson <i>dynneson@hollinet.com</i>	831-636-3062
Director	Jack Murphy <i>jsmurphy@sbcglobal.net</i>	831-636-2772
Director	Doug Brown <i>dnabrown@ix.netcom.com</i>	408-223-0615
Dir. Emeritus	Kevin Medlock <i>epoch@majornet.net</i>	510-339-9224
Newsletter	Chris Angelos <i>christopher_a_95067@frys.com</i>	831-458-7650
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