



The *FREMONT PEAK* OBSERVER

Promoting public education in astronomy

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Patrick Donnelly

Well another summer season has come and gone here at Fremont Peak. There were plenty of visitors at the observatory for each of the public programs. Also, our new management responsibilities for the pad area seem to be working well, too. It has been a memorable year for us getting our new contract and such. Let's hope next year is as successful as this. At this time I wish to thank all of the people, who volunteered to participate in the public programs, and all those members who set up their scopes on the pads or on the amphitheater area to help entertain the public. I look forward to more programs in the future.

I need to announce that our Vice-President, Bob Black has resigned from the FPOA Board. Bob has been on the board for many years and his rather low-keyed, non-emotional, non-confrontational approach to issues will be missed on the board. However, Bob does plan to stay on as our Membership Chairperson. Since Bob has departed from the board, we have a vacancy on the FPOA Board of Directors. Anyone wishing to fill Bob's position should contact anyone on the board, and we shall take it from there. I guess if you want to influence FPOA policy, rules, and programs or you want to make sure your ideas are heard, this would be a golden opportunity for you to make a difference. I look forward to working with any new board member.

I was almost able to generate this message on the Autumnal Equinox, but I missed by one day. Since this is September, now would be a good time to visit the peak. The sunset is almost two hours earlier, which gives one a couple of more hours early in the evening to observe. One of my favorite things to do in September is to observe the constellation Grus, the crane. Grus is found in the far south this time of the year, and has several binocular double stars that make great viewing. Grus can be found under Capricorn, which says a lot about how far south it really is. The

only bad part of observing this constellation is that one has only about two (2) hours of good observing before Grus sets. If you like Grus, you can next observe the constellation Phoenix, which takes the place of Grus after it sets.

As a last thought you might want to be at the peak to observe Geo-stationary Satellites. This is the time of the year to look for them, because the geometry of the situation favors a strong reflection. I have seen some of these satellites as bright as magnitude 2. To find Geo-stationary Satellites look up in the sky around declination -5.7 degrees south. Use your binoculars, and see if you see any stars appearing to wander through the star field. That will be one of these satellites. As they used to say on TV, "Try it... you'll like it."

Perseid Night at the Peak

By Ron Dammann

The promise of an excellent night at the Peak was fulfilled on Wednesday, August 11, 2004. The weather was warm and clear and the low marine layer at sunset was sure to bring in that lovely Monterey Bay fog that makes driving Hwy. 101 challenging, but also covers up the light pollution from Salinas and surrounding cities.

Set up to the west of the observatory were veteran meteor researcher Peter Jenniskins along with Mike Koop and a group of assistants manning the three spectrographs, two intensified cameras and an all-sky intensified system. The observing pads were occupied by Mike Connelly, Ron Dammann, and Denni and Kevin Medlock. Joseph Liu was setup on the Lower Premises near the shop.

As the sky darkened we were treated to some bright sporadic meteors in advance of the main Perseid event after midnight. These received the usual exclamations for bright meteors.

The public was starting to gather around the observatory, so it was decided to put the Challenger telescope into action to entertain and perhaps educate or spark an interest of things in the dark night sky.

The Perseid did not disappoint us. Starting before midnight, they put on a constant show with several bursts till 3 am when the moon rose and the sky brightened. Kevin Medlock was busy imaging meteors with his digital camera as was Joseph Liu, while Ron Dammann was using a Nikon F3 with film. Peter Jenniskins's group was successful in imaging high-resolution spectrums of the meteors. Peter was also able to observe the meteor trains through the FPOA 16" McLaughlin Dob that Mike Koop set up.

It was another great night at the Peak for the researchers, photographers and casual observers. The weather was great, the company enjoyable and the Perseids put on a fine display.

From the FPOA log...

June 12 PUBLIC PROGRAM: 30 people attending, Ron Dammann was the presenter, telescope operator was Paul Bradshaw. Bobby the Bat entertained the crowd. Observatory open: 1700-0230 Temperature: 64 degrees

June 19 PUBLIC PROGRAM: 30 people attending, Ron Dammann, Loren Dynneson and Paul Bradshaw ran the program. Observatory open: 1700-0300.

June 26 PUBLIC PROGRAM: 50 visitors and then about 100 scouts and family arrived at about 930 PM. Pat Donnelly, Rick Morales. Observatory open: 1500-0000

July 9 SFAA NIGHT: The program was given by Ken Frank with 13 visitors. Observatory open: 1830-0130

July 10 SFAA PUBLIC PROGRAM: 30 visitors attended the program. Observatory open: 1700-0300

July 17 STAR-B-Q: Jeff Moore gave a talk about the MER Mars Exploration Rovers, FPOA board members Pat Donnelly, Doug Brown, and Donn Mukensnoble were re-elected. Mike Koop and Ron Dammann ran telescope. Observatory closed at 0100.

July 24 PUBLIC PROGRAM: 40-50 people Bob Fingerhut, Paul Mortfield gave talk, one of his last.

Paul moved to Canada. Observatory open: 1800-0000.

August 7 PUBLIC PROGRAM: Doug Brown, results from Mars rover, 25-30 people, Ron Dammann Observatory closed at 0100.

August 11 PERSEID METEOR SHOWER: Peter Jenniskins, Kevin and Denni Medlock, Ron Dammann, and Mike Koop, and various other FPOA members ran the program. About 30 people dropped in during the evening.

August 14 MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION NIGHT: Pat Donnelly gave a Transit of Venus talk and Donn Mukensnoble ran scope. Observatory open: 1900 - 0400.

August 21 PUBLIC PROGRAM: The observatory was shut down by fog at 2130 About 20 people heard Ron Dammann talk. Bob Fingerhut ran the scope. Observatory opened again at 2300-0115. There were 9-10 visitors. Log entry by Jamie Dillon.

September 4 PUBLIC PROGRAM: 35 visitors talk by Ron, Bob Fingerhut on scope with Loren Dynneson and Ed Huston closed at moonrise. Observatory open 1700-0000

September 8 Special last minute program given by Ron Dammann and assisted by Paul Bradshaw. 60 Dunn Middle school students attended the program. Observatory was closed at 2130.

Astrophotography on the FPOA Premises

The Fremont Peak Observatory Association encourages astrophotography on its premises. Astrophotographers must have a current FPOA membership and a current supplemental FPOA Observer Membership. Consistent with our educational mission, FPOA encourages publication of photographs and other material derived from work done on our site, asking only that appropriate recognition be given. Therefore FPOA hereby grants its members license to distribute Astro-photographs, data and derivative works based on observations made on the FPOA premises. Those works distributed for commercial purposes must include the credit line, "Fremont Peak Observatory Association". We request that those used for personal, educational, or scientific purposes include the same credit line or, if space does not permit, then "FPOA". FPOA would also appreciate copies of photographs suitable for display in the observatory meeting room.

Write for the Fremont Peak Observer

The Fremont Peak Observer is soliciting authors to write articles and columns for the newsletter. The subject may be anything related to astronomy and activities at Fremont Peak. 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 "Fremont Peak Observer" by E-mail

In the very near future the Fremont Peak Observer will be available online. We will publish three forms of the newsletter: 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 Fremont Peak Observer. Naturally, publishing costs will be reduced by those members can elect to use only the online versions of the Fremont Peak 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

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