



# *The FREMONT PEAK* OBSERVER

*Promoting public education in astronomy*

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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

By Patrick Donnelly

Well 2005 is here. Another year is beginning, and there is no lack of interesting things going on in the sky. Comet Machholz is still slowly moving through the far northern skies. It should remain a naked eye object through February and a good telescopic object for a while. Delta Scorpio is still quite bright and worth a look to see if it gets any brighter. Jupiter and Saturn are becoming better placed, and Mars will make another fairly close pass the Earth this fall. With this in mind why not come up to the Peak to see some of these sights in the sky.

2005 also is quite a year for planetary exploration. The Cassini/Huygens Mission continues through this year with many more discoveries ahead. We are on our way to bombard a comet, and another probe is bringing cometary particles back to the Earth. A probe is on its way to Mercury - the first since Mariner 10 visited Mercury over 25 years ago. Finally, there are two orbiters circling Mars and two rovers traveling across Mars as we speak. I look for a whole host of new data to be learned about our Solar System.

For 2005 the FPOA board has some new faces and titles. Bob Black has left the board, but he will continue on as our Membership Chairman. Doug Brown will become the new Vice President of the FPOA. Also, Steven Loos will fill Bob's spot on the board. Finally, Marko Sillanpaa has agreed to be our member to get us into the NASA Night Sky Network. If you have any items you would like the board to consider, just submit them to the board.

Our public programs will begin in April and continue through October. The schedule for these programs is shown on the FPOA calendar 2005. The calendar also lists any special events for the FPOA and the members taking part in the public programs. If you would like to be part of one of our programs, please contact Ron Dammann or me. I look forward seeing many of you at the peak.

## **Observing at the Peak**

By Ron Dammann

### **Wintertime Observing Policies:**

Spring is quickly approaching, but as for the months of December, January and February, the Park is closed at night, except for those amateurs with Observer Class memberships. This change in operating procedures was brought on by limited staffing budgets, low camping usage during the winter months and the need to reduce non-approved activities at night in the park. The FPOA contract along with DPR Superintendent, C.L. Price's approval has allowed the FPOA to continue the Special Programs for schools and usage of the FPOA Premises by members with the Observer class membership. Starting in March, the park will re-open at night for camping and amateur astronomy in their respective areas.

### **Using the FPOA Premises:**

Feedback from amateurs that have been using the FPOA Premises this winter indicated that the system has working well. An email with reservation information is sent 48 hours in advance to [Schedule@fpoa.net](mailto:Schedule@fpoa.net). The response will have the gate combo to be used to access the FPOA Premises. The reservation system for members with Observer Class memberships continues throughout the year to insure telescope site for each observer and to provide DPR with information on usage of the area. Members with the General Class of membership who wish to use their own telescope in the FPOA Premises may do so at Public Programs. Using the reservation system, and set up your telescope near the Observatory. By offering views to the Public, you will be assisting in the Public Program. After the visitors depart, you will be free to continue your own observing.

### **Green Lasers Pointers:**

Concerns over the proper usage of green laser pointers has been raised and the following safety guidelines should apply to those amateurs using pointers at the Peak.

1. The location of the Peak puts it in the flyway of airplanes using San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco airports. Do not aim a laser pointer at or near any airplane. Remember that laser pointer beams diverge and the beam diameter at 2 miles is much larger than it is at 200 feet.
2. Don't loan your green laser pointer to any kids to play "Stars Wars" .

### **Using the Challenger Telescope:**

Some FPOA members with the Observer Class membership are Certified to reserve the Challenger for astro-imaging, etc.

### **Some things to remember:**

Don't allow dew to form or drip onto the optical surfaces of the Challenger telescope. This has been a problem for some certified users. A good indicator of dew formation is the top surface of the sill on the South wall of the observing room. If it is damp so is the telescope framework. Close the roof and take a break while the framework warms up. Remember that dew guns are prohibited in the Observatory and using them is cause for loss of observing privileges.

We are looking forward to our 19th year at the observatory presenting Public and Special Programs and providing our members with a premium location to use their telescopes. Please come and join us.

Ron Dammann, Director of Instruments

### **The FPOA on TV**

By Patrick Donnelly

On Friday, January 14, 2005 the TV Station KION out of Salinas came to the peak interview the FPOA about the landing of the Huygens probe on Titan. As it turned out the FPOA was giving a program to a school in Salinas on that very night. Not only did people, who watched the newscast at 10:00 PM, get to see the observatory, the Challenger Telescope, and Saturn, but they also had Ron Dammann and yours truly on the tube. Some of the kids from the school were also on the newscast. DPR Superintendent, Curtis Price, saw the newscast and thought we did a great job. The night was a huge success, and FPOA got some good PR. We should see more visitors to the observatory this summer from the surrounding area.

### **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 "FP 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 either by mail or by e-mail to receive the "FP Observer". naturally, publishing costs will be reduced by those members who elect to use the e-mail versions of the "FP Observer". Please note this

addition to the Membership Application form: Would you prefer to receive the "Fremont Peak Observer" by e-mail? No/Yes(A "Yes" saves FPOA money and saves wear and tear on the publisher. Default is "Yes") Our sneaky publisher made sure that if no response is given then the "Fremont Peak Observer" will be delivered by e-mail and not by US Postal Service, thereby relieving him of some printing and envelope stuffing. However, the issue that contains the renewal information and return envelope will still be sent by US Postal Service to all subscribers.

Bob Black, Sneaky Publisher

### **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](mailto:editor@fpoa.net).

### **New Season of Public Observing Programs**

The 2005 season of public programs starts Saturday, April 9, and continues until October 29 with a work party on May 7. Now is the time for FPOA members to think about volunteering to give a lecture or to assist with one or more public programs shown on the Events Schedule in this issue. Although operation of the Challenger Telescope is limited to Certified Telescope Users with an Observer Class Membership, that is not required to use FPOA facilities if you are participating in a public program. Also remember that exclusive use of the Challenger Telescope does require participation in at least one public program within the past year. Contact Ron at (408) 255-1863 or send email to [schedule@fpoa.net](mailto:schedule@fpoa.net) to get your program scheduled or team up with someone doing a public program. Complete information for planning a public program is now on the FPOA members only web page. Just click the MEMBERS ONLY link on the FPOA home page, and enter the member's password.

## Schedule of Public Programs for 2005

Evening Program Dates for 2005	
April	9, 16
May	7, 14, 28
June	4, 11, 25
July	2, 9, 30
August	6, 13, 27
September	3, 10, 24
October	1, 8, 22, 29

Solar Program Dates for 2005	
Solar observing is offered at the observatory during the afternoon on these dates. See sunspots and solar prominences through special solar telescopes.	
	May 7
	June 4
	July 2
	August 6
	September 3
	October 1

## Special Events and Astronomical Events for 2005

Spring Work Party	May 7
Star-B-Que	July 9
FPOA Member Appreciation Night	August 6
Rob Toebe Night	September 10

## 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](mailto:schedule@fpoa.net)

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

Observatory telephone: (831) 623-2465

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