

From the President

By President Rick Morales

Having been recently elected to the position of president of the FPOA it has been pointed out to me that I should write a column for The Observer. As some of you may know, I've been associated with FPOA from the beginning. This is a column about my new association with amateur astronomers at the Peak way back then..

After being posted to Fremont Peak State Park as the resident Ranger back in 1985, my first Saturday night in the park there was a new moon and I found a number of people parked behind the gate. There was a sign posted at the gate that clearly stated, **Authorized Personnel Only**. As far as I knew none of these folk had been authorized to be behind the gate. So, I put on my most officious demeanor and went out to question these unauthorized people and find out what the heck they were up to.

The first person I encountered was a fellow sitting inside a plastic fenced enclosure peering through an unusual instrument. I introduced myself and asked, "What are you doing here? and why are you hiding behind this plastic fence?" He replied, "Astrophotography." And I responded with "what's that?" And he replied, "I'm taking photographs of the stars." The fellow was John Gleason, my first astronomer friend at the Peak, and one of many that I was soon to meet. The plastic fence was to keep the wind from wobbling his scope. John described very clearly what he was doing and that in a few minutes he would close the shutter on his cold camera and let me look through his scope. So, on my first Saturday night at the Peak, I was given a tour through the night sky in April with a Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope with a bright guy who began my education in astronomy. That night I learned what a cold camera was and how difficult it was to operate and track an object for 45 minutes to get a really good image on a piece of film and I saw probably 20 objects through his scope.

By summertime I really looked forward to those Saturday nights and looking through telescopes and meeting new people.

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FPOA Programs 2010

Saturday Evening Programs

Mar 20 Apr 10,17 May 8,15 Jun 5,12,19
Jul 3,10,17,31 Aug 7,14 Sept 4,11 Oct 2,9,16

Solar Programs

Mar 20, Apr 10, May 8, Jun 19, Jul 10,
Aug 14, Sept 11, Oct 2

Board Meetings

Mar 20, Apr 10, May 8, Jun 19
July 10, Aug 14, Sept 11, Oct 2, Nov 13

Please check <http://www.fpoa.net/schedule.html> for changes or updates to this schedule.

Fremont Peak Observatory Internship Program

By Pimol Moth

Fremont Peak Observatory and Hartnell Community College in Salinas are continuing and expanding their successful student internship program. During the internship program, which is currently in its fourth year, students work as a team to write and carry out a project management plan to help them prepare for and organize weekly public night observing programs at Fremont Peak Observatory. Student responsibilities included operating the 30-inch telescope and the smaller instruments, interpreting the night sky for visitors, and delivering the pre-observation public lecture.

For the past two years, some students in the program also participated in a research internship to image, track, and find the orbits of minor planets. They used the SBIG ST10XME CCD camera (acquired in 2007) to gather images on the Challenger telescope and other smaller telescopes at the observatory. They used Pinpoint Astronomical Engine and CLEA (Contemporary Laboratory Experiences in Astronomy) to determine the position of the moving asteroid and the FIND_ORBIT program to estimate

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One odd phenomenon that I observed was that I was only able to recognize different people by their voice, their shape (tall, short, heavy, thin) and the type of telescope they used. When I met them in the daylight I had to listen really carefully to their voice before I knew who they were. In fact, I got to recognize most of the amateur astronomers by their voice and what type of telescope they had with them.

It was a wonderful experience those first months at the Peak. And my association with the astronomical community for the past twenty five years has been the same. I feel very honored to be President of the FPOA. The position was not one that I campaigned for and I can't remember anyone actually campaigning for it. Its a job that needs to be done as are all the board positions. I want to thank my predecessor, Doug Brown, for guiding us through some difficult times when we weren't sure we would be able to stay in our current location. Our contractual agreement with State Parks hasn't yet been finalized and Doug is still our negotiator in the process. Loren Dynneson is the new Vice President. Loren is the lead person when it comes to keeping the observatory up and running. He heads up the crews that periodically maintain the observatory and surrounding area. Mark Levine is the new treasurer. He is taking over for me and I'm certain that he will keep the checkbook balanced. Dave Samuels moves over to the recording secretary position. He is making those of us on the board remember what are supposed to do before the next meeting. Ron Dammann is the guy who keeps the instruments functioning smoothly from the Challenger telescope to all the other telescopes that we have acquired over the years. Ron and Dave work with the Hartnell student interns who provide the additional help to staff our public programs throughout the summer months. Ed Huston brings lots of help to the Peak for the Star-b-que weekend. Pat Donnelly, past president, brings a rare sense of humor to our meetings. The meetings would be quite a bit different without it. And Rob Hawley, not quite a board member, but a regular to all our meetings has linked FPOA with Paypal to facilitate our membership base and, therefore, is our ad hoc membership chairman. And across the sea, stuck on a volcano in Hawaii (where there just happens to be telescopes) is our last board member, Donn Mukensnoble, who provides insight via telephone to our board meetings.

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the semi-major axis, period of revolution, and eccentricity for 190 Ismene and 132 Aethra.

Last year, through the funding made possible by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRA) grant sub award and NSF Science Talent Expansion Project (STEP) grant awarded to Hartnell College, there were 6 students participating in the public night internships and three students in the research internships. Their bios are listed below. This summer, both the public night and research internship programs will continue under the support of Hartnell's NSF Science Talent Expansion Project (STEP) grant.

If you are visiting Fremont Peak Observatory for a public program, please introduce yourselves to the interns this summer!

2009 Interns:

Kyle Priddy- Kyle is currently enrolled at Hartnell College where he wants to pursue a major in astronomy.

Miguel Vieyra- Miguel has transferred to Fresno State with a Major in Psychology and he enjoys baseball.

Jade Stephens- Jade is currently enrolled at Hartnell pursuing a major in astronomy and she enjoys music.

Adam Medeiros- Adam is the father of a vibrant and active four year old named Layla. His interests are music and astronomy, and he is currently an engineering major at Hartnell College.

Demetrius Ramon- Demetrius is currently attending Hartnell College with intentions to transfer next year to San Jose State or Santa Cruz University, majoring in English and photography.

Miguel Rodriguez- Miguel has had in interest in astronomy since childhood. He is pursuing a degree in Bioengineering.



FPO intern, Demetrius Ramon, operating the 30 inch Challenger Telescope.

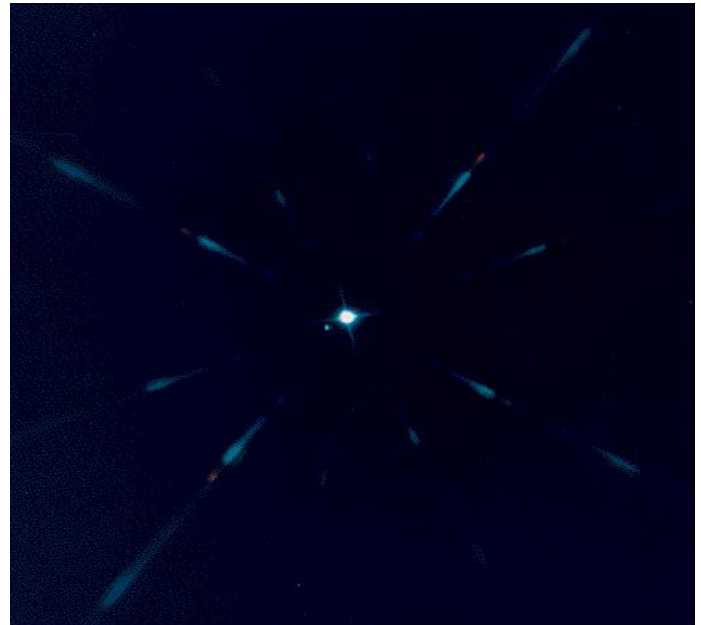
Some Interesting Observing: March – May 2010
By Pat Donnelly

The spring of 2010 is an excellent time to do some observing. The weather is warming, and the birds have returned. All of the naked eye planets, except for Jupiter, will be visible in the evening sky until about April 25, the winter constellations are still visible in the west, and the Milky Way is rising in the east.

The place to begin observing is before sunset. The Sun finally has a few sunspots to observe, and there is some activity to be seen in the H α telescopes. However, don't be surprised to see nothing in either scope, since solar activity is still very low. Also, don't forget to try to find Venus in the daytime. It is best to view from a deep shadow away from the Sun. Venus is only 12 -15° from the Sun, but with a little work and knowing where to look she can be found in the daytime. Make sure you pick a day with no clouds and low humidity to minimize any scattered light. Venus will be to the upper left of the Sun in the afternoon.

In April Mercury will join Venus in the evening sky after sunset. On April 15 & 16 there will be grand configuration of Mercury, Venus, the Moon, and the Pleiades in the west-northwest. On April 15 (Income Tax Day) Mercury will be just below the 36 hour old

April will also be your last chance this year to look for Sirius "B" (The Pup). The little white dwarf is due east of Sirius "A" about 9" from Sirius "A." An 8 inch telescope is probably needed to see The Pup. To see The Pup use as high a power as practical for your scope, and you might want to insert an aperture stop in your eyepiece to hide the bright "A" component. This will help you see The Pup.



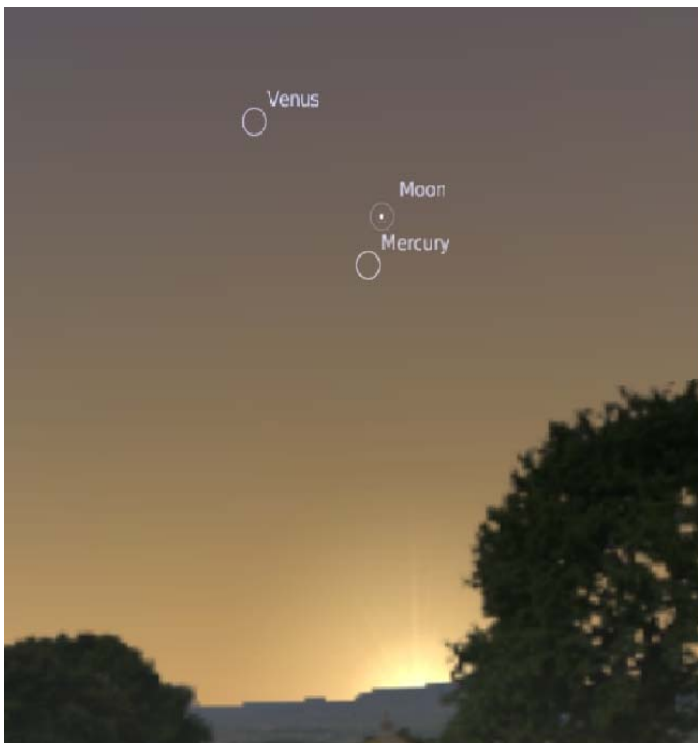
Sirius A and B
McDonald Observatory Image

April and May are the last two months where the evening Zodiacal Light can be spotted in the west after the end of astronomical twilight. The Zodiacal Light will be a very dim, diffuse band of light extending from the lower right to the upper left. The Zodiacal Light could extend up to 40 - 50° above the western horizon.

If you wish to see a bright asteroid, Vesta is wandering through the sickle of Leo the Lion for most of March, April, and May. To find Vesta use the excellent sky chart provided in the February 2010 issue of *Sky and Telescope*. At a magnitude of +7.0 or brighter Vesta should be easy to find in any good pair of 7x50 binoculars.

I realize that this barely scratches the surface of interesting objects to observe, but I have always had a fondness for the early evening. This is especially true now that "Darkness Squandering Time" has returned.

Pat



moon. This should be a grand sight for a couple of days. This would also be an excellent time to show your friends the planet Mercury. Make sure you tell them that only one in every 10,000 people on earth have ever seen the planet Mercury.

Regarding our board of directors, as we sit staring at one another across the table during board meetings, we've noticed a certain graying of the old guard. One of us suggested that perhaps its time to bring in some young blood. If anyone who is reading this column would like to join us and learn what it is that we do, please contact me. Our meeting dates are published in our newsletter and they are usually around the new moon Saturday about 2:00 PM at the Observatory.

Clear skies, Rick Morales

New FPOA Board Officers for 2010



President
Rick Morales



Vice President
Loren Dynneson



Secretary
Dave Samuels



Treasurer
Mark Levine

EMAIL DELIVERY OF THE OBSERVER

Dear FPOA Members,
We have been delivering the Observer via email for the past several issues. This obviously saves the Association postal expenses, and assures the quickest delivery to you. However, several of you no longer have valid email addresses, due to ISP changes, moves, etc. If you would like to continue to receive, or begin to receive, notification of the Observer via email, please send your current email address to schedule@fpoa.net

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The Fremont Peak Observer is published four times a year (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall). Articles from members are encouraged and should be emailed to tatamark@razzolink.com. Articles should be in plain text or MS Word format. Deadlines are Feb. 1, May 1, Aug. 1 and Nov 1, respectively.

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