

From the President

By President Rick Morales

As the new Ranger at Fremont Peak in 1984, I quickly made friends with the amateur astronomers who frequented the park. Many of them belonged to astronomy organizations like the San Jose Astronomical Association, Eastbay Astronomical Society, San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers and umbrella groups like Astronomical Association of Northern California. Every new moon weekend, weather permitting, the park filled up with members of these organizations and I found myself wandering from telescope to telescope peering through different eyepieces at different parts of the night sky and seeing things I had never seen before. It was a wonderful experience. I met people in the dark that I could only identify by their voice and the kind of telescope they owned. Next day, I would approach them and recognized them only by their equipment and the sound of their voice. Over time I got to recognize them by their appearance. For some people it took longer than with others...oh, yea, yea... You have the big 20 inch Dobson... yea, yea, I recognize you now... It was a wonderful experience getting to know the faces in this crowd.

Within a few months of living and working at the Peak, I met Denni and Kevin Medlock. They told me about a project they were working on up in the East Bay Hills. Kevin had designed a telescope that he planned to build and haul to different dark sky locations. It was going to have 30 inches of aperture (I was learning new vocabulary) and he and Denni would let people look through the eyepiece at wherever the scope was pointing. It sounded like a great idea.

Sometime later, in a conversation with the Medlocks, I learned that they were also interested in, perhaps, a permanent location for the telescope. They wondered about the possibility of finding a location in a nice setting like Fremont Peak and what it would take to get an okay to develop the site for and construct a small observatory. The gears in our heads began to whirrrrr...

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FPOA Programs 2012

Tentative Schedule

Saturday Evening Programs

Mar. 17, 24, April 14, 21, 28
May 12, 19, 26, June 9, 16, 23
July 14, 21, Aug 11, 18,
Sept 8, 15, 22, Oct 13, 20

Solar Programs

Mar 24, April 21, May 19, June 16
July 21, Aug 18, Sept 15, Oct 13

Board Meetings

Jan 21, Feb 18, Mar 24, April 21,
May 19, June 16, July 21, Aug 18,
Sept 15, Oct, 13, Nov 10

Extra Events

May 20 Annual Solar Eclipse
June 5 Transit of Venus
Aug 12 Perseids Night
Aug 18 Star-B-Que
Sept 15 Member Appreciation Night

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

Time to Renew Your Membership

A reminder that annual membership needs to be renewed each December. FPOA relies on the continued support of our members to pay the bills. At the present time we just break even during the year. Thus your support is critically needed.

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Winter Observing

By Rob Hawley

Our Public programs have closed for the year, but there is still a lot to see in the sky. During the winter the park is sometimes closed to the public, but under the terms of our contract the state permits FPOA Observers access to the area subject to the state's access and notification rules.

Winter weather can be distinctly unfriendly to astronomy; however the nights between storms can be very clear (but cold). The winter skies offer treats to those willing to explore in it.

For this article I will consider the winter sky to be from about RA 4 h to RA 10 h or roughly from the Pleiades in the west to Cancer in the east.

The winter Milky Way is filled with Messier Open Clusters from M 38 to the north (west) to M 93 in the south (east). The best known Messier Object that is not an open cluster is the Orion Nebula. This can be easily seen even in the city.

Non-Messier Winter Viewing

The Messier Objects are all well known to anyone familiar with astronomy (which likely includes you gentle reader). Thus rather than spending your time discussing Messier objects in detail I would like to suggest some non-Messier Objects to look at. For full disclosure part of the list is derived from the TAC Eye Candy List (<http://observers.org/observing/eyecandy/index.html>); however, I have only included items that I have actually viewed and added a couple of others that did not make the list. These are sorted west to east.

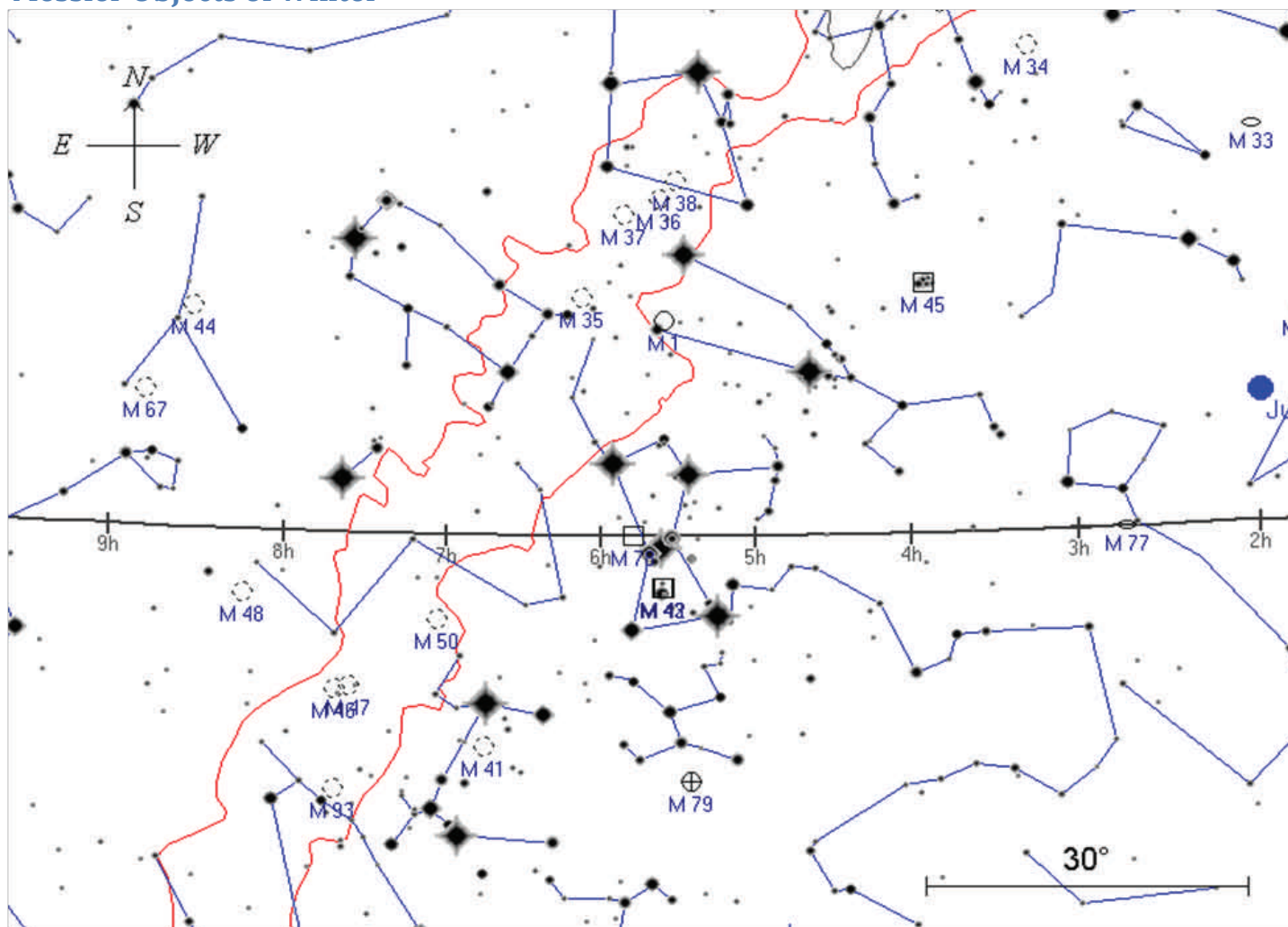
NGC 1360

This is a planetary nebula with a bright central star

NGC 1535

Another big and bright planetary. Best with an Oxygen III filter

Messier Objects of Winter



SkyMap Pro 11

NGC 1788

This is a bright Nebula in the sword of Orion. It looks more like a galaxy than it does a nebula

M 1

OK I know I said I was not going to do Messier objects, but M1 is an interesting object and if you have a scope out in the Winter or late Fall it is worth a look

NGC 2261

Also known as Hubble's Variable Nebula it could easily be mistaken for a comet.

NGC 2438

This is a little surprise when looking at the open cluster M46. Located in one corner is a little planetary. Use an Oxygen III filter.

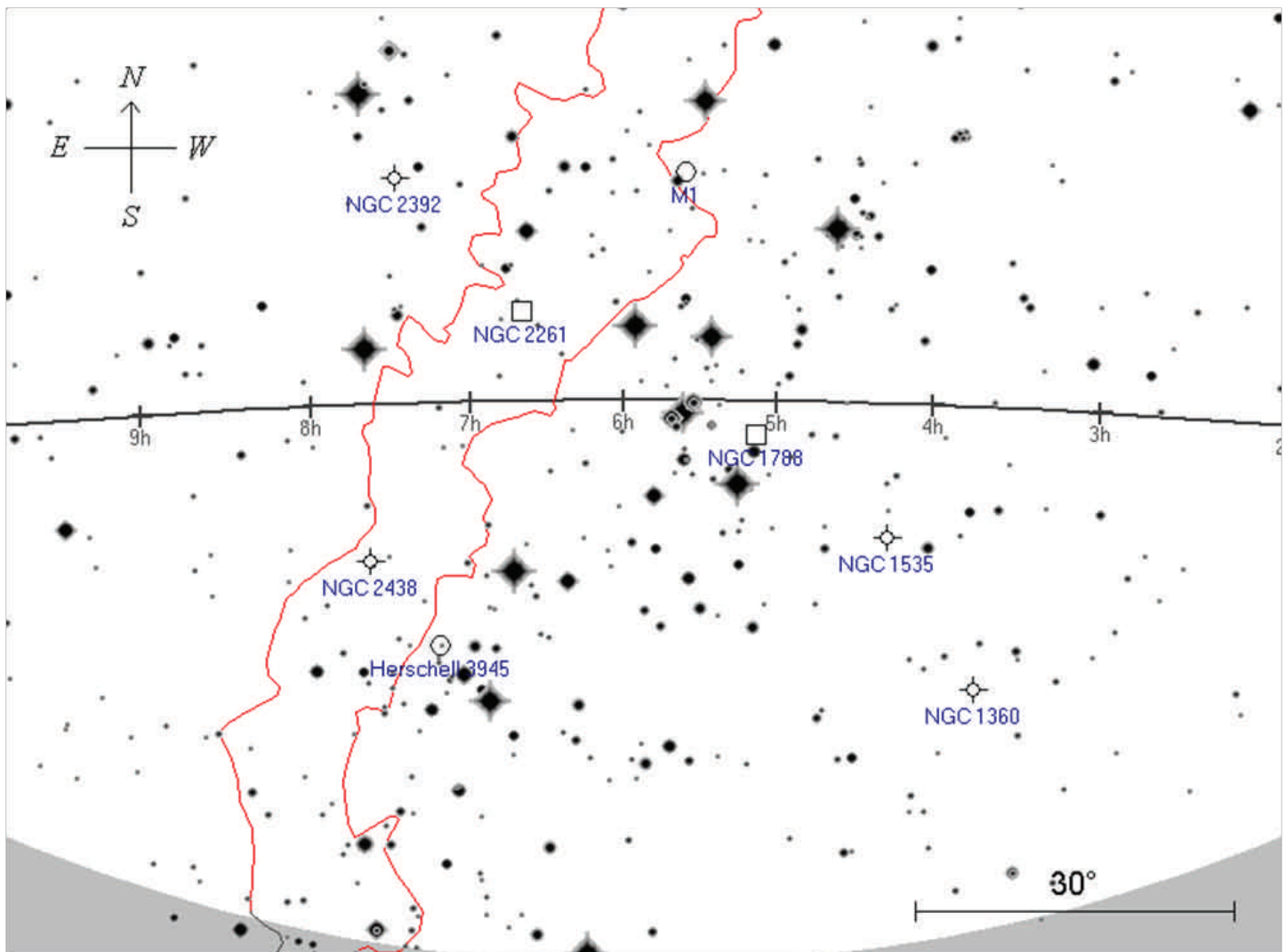
NGC 3292

The Eskimo Nebula is a favorite at the Foothill Observatory. It helps to have the focal length of an SCT since this is otherwise a very small object; however, in an SCT it is eye candy.

Herschel 3945

This striking double star is commonly known as the Winter Alberio. Like its summer analog it features two contrasting colors in its stars. For those with GoTos try HIP35210.

I hope these lists will encourage you to warm up some coffee and get out to enjoy the night's sky. If you are not an Observer at Fremont Peak then you can see other viewing opportunities at observers.org.



President's Column

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I asked Harry Batlin, the park superintendent, what he thought of the idea. He said it was an opportunity to bring another kind of experience to park visitors, another way of learning about and understanding our planet. He suggested that I look into this opportunity. I did.

Over the next few months, I met with the Medlocks and a group of other amateur astronomers who all became my friends and we kicked the idea around. We needed some kind of vehicle to take this idea to fruition. More amateur astronomers heard about the idea and before long someone suggested that we form an organization to move this idea along. We did. First, we talked about establishing some kind of organization, club, association... something that would take us to the next level in our pursuit of building a small observatory on Fremont Peak. Then we talked about where we would build it, how we might raise money toward this effort, what type of construction, where we would acquire a dome. All sorts of ideas were knocked around. Well, we had an idea, a telescope nearing completion, a bunch of amateur astronomers who were willing to move this idea along, some people in the California Department of Parks and Recreation who were also willing to help. The next step was forming an organization to move this idea along.

It was going to be a great ride...

Rick Morales

2012 Membership Renewal

Renewals are easy. You can use the forms on the membership page <http://www.fpoa.net/membership.html> to pay with either PayPal or via a credit card. For those preferring paper you can just send a check (that has your current correct address)

to : FPOA Membership
c/o Rob Hawley
1233 Hillcrest Dr
San Jose CA 95120

If you email has changed then please be sure to include that in either the PayPal payment as a comment or a note with your check.

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 membership at 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 ron.dammann at lmco.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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