

The Fremont Peak

Observer

Bringing Astronomy to the Public

Vol 29 No. 1

Spring 2012

From the President

By President Rick Morales

FPOA is as busy as ever with public programs and keeping up the observatory and its equipment. The number of guests to the observatory has not decreased during these hard times. The observatory runs on membership dues and donations – mostly membership dues. Membership has dropped some so I encourage you to renew your membership if you intend to do so. Also, if you have a chance to help on public program nights, just show up and we will get you started in interpreting the night sky to the visitors. If you feel that you have a presentation that you'd like to give, we'd love to have you present it

There have been a lot of things going on this year so far. We completed negotiations for a new 5 year contract with the State. We had a successful work party where we performed some routine weed abatement and some needed fixes. If we had more helpers, we might have finished all the projects on the work party list. Maybe you can join us in the fall work party? We hosted a film crew from Japan's equivalent of our PBS (NHK) who used footage of FPOA in a program which aired June 17 in Japan. We have our 6th group of interns from Hartnell College. We had two very successful Special Public Programs, the Annular Eclipse (Sunday program) and the Transit of Venus (Tuesday program). Star-B-Que planning is well under way and we look forward to seeing you there.

Board Elections

Each year at Star-B-Que three Board positions come up for election by the membership. This year a fourth position has become open. Any FPOA member in good standing who has an interest in becoming a Board member can contact Ron Dammann at schedule@fpoa.net to be added to the election ballot. Board Members serve a three year term and Board meetings are once a month on Saturdays afternoons from January through November.

FPOA Programs 2012

Saturday Evening Programs

July 14, 21, Aug 11, 18,
Sept 8, 15, 22, Oct 13, 20

Solar Programs

July 21, Aug 18, Sept 15, Oct 13

Board Meetings

July 21, Aug 18, Sept 15,
Oct, 13, Nov 10

Extra Events

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.

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

Star-B-Que 2012

By Dave Samuels

The 27th Annual Fremont Peak Star-B-Que and Annual Meeting will be on Saturday, August 18 this year at the observatory. It's a great chance to meet with other members and amateur astronomers. Anyone interested in astronomy or Fremont Peak State Park is welcome. There is no charge to attend. FPOA will provide the barbeque and the rest is potluck (bring something to share). Some who have special dietary requirements bring their own meals, such as vegetarian burgers. There will be a guest speaker, a raffle, and the whole thing starts around 4:30pm. Feel free to arrive early to help set up. There will be announcements and awards from FPOA and AANC as well as officer elections. If you would like your name on the ballot, please email "schedule@fpoa.net".

Visit www.fpoa.net/events/starbq2012/ for complete details. Directions to the observatory are on the home page. RSVP by August 14 so we can purchase enough food for everyone.

FPOA/Hartnell College Interns

This year FPOA has a group of five interns and their mentor Lukas Bonick who will be assisting FPOA members with the Public Programs on Saturday evenings. Lukas is a Berkeley graduate in Astrophysics. The program is funded by a Hartnell STEP grant.



Left to Right: Lukas Bonick, Jose Lopez, Ricky Maciel, Tyler Hooks, Jared Wolfe. Not Pictured: Cameron Schaefer

NHK Filming at Fremont Peak

By Dave Samuels

FPOA hosted a film crew from NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) for the April Lyrid meteor shower on Saturday, April 21, 2012 to use Fremont Peak and our guests in part of their "The Cosmic Shore" series, specifically "Star Showers: Cosmic Arks of Life". It shows how people all over the world are fascinated by meteors and meteor showers. Some people make wishes when they see one and they showed some of the wishes that some people make. The program aired in Japan June 17 at 9pm, prime time national broadcast. Their English PR site is:

http://www.nhk.or.jp/space/nagisa/index_e.html.

We are proud to be included in this program. Dr. Petrus Jenniskens, renowned meteor scientist at NASA/SETI and FPOA member introduced them to FPOA due to our involvement with Dr. Jenniskens through the CAMS project. There were well over 100 guests there that night. It was a beautiful clear night with a thin fog covering the city lights – perfect for watching the Lyrids and observing the dark sky at Fremont Peak. There were several amazing fireballs seen by most. The shower seemed to peak for about ½ hour around 3am (after most people left). It will be interesting to see the results of the April 21 Lyrids from the NASA CAMS array mounted on the observatory. Kayoko Mitsumatsu, Associate Producer NHK, also did a great job translating for us.



Enthusiasts of the solar eclipse had a lot of options on where to view this year's annular eclipse and over one hundred people made their way up to the Peak to take advantage of its to-the-horizon view to the west. It was a beautiful, cloudless day and FPOA volunteers set up 5 solar scopes for the public to use; one scope was our special H-Alpha solar scope. Eclipse glasses were handed out to the crowd by FPOA volunteers and the energy and excitement was high. The eclipse started right on time and as advertised.



With more and more of the sun disappearing every minute, the participants at the peak were getting a great show (even though we would only experience a 80% eclipse), it was amazing to watch the progress of the moon steadily moving into position between us and the Sun. Lots of people tried to capture the event using their small cameras pointed into the eyepieces of the various scopes and some had great success! At its peak, long shadows with exact and sharp edges were noticed, in addition to the slight darkening of the sky and the temperature dropping a few degrees

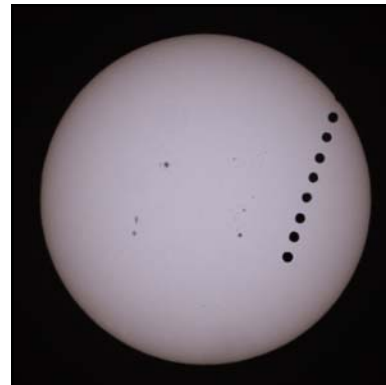
As with all things astronomical, our celestial neighbors continued on their paths and the moon began to slowly reveal more and more of our stars' surface and it was a beautiful sunset to behold up on the peak.

By Rob Hawley

It looked like we were going to be watching the transit through thick clouds, but in the end the sun was mostly in the clear. FPOA set up the two scopes normally used in the solar program. Members contributed by setting up 5 or 6 scopes additional scopes. We had about 20 guests during the day. Unlike the eclipse, there was no single "ahh" moment so people drifted in and out during the entire event. I did reprise my lecture on the history and scientific significance of the Transit in the 1700's. The interns gave a presentation of how present day scientists were taking advantage of the transit.

We began about 2:30 and most people began to leave about 6 PM when it looked like we were going to lose the sun for good.

The photo is a composite created from the couple hundred pictures I took during the event. It represents the location of Venus about every 1/2 hour.



Contract News

By Rob Hawley

A new 5 year contract for the FPOA concession became effective on April 1.

This will ensure that we can operate the observatory with stable contract terms at least until 2017. The state can choose to extend the contract for another 5 years.

The new contract is mostly the same as the old contract; however, two changes are notable. First, the state now recognizes the observer program and grants FPOA the authority to operate it. Before this year, the observer program was operated informally and in spite of conflicting provisions under the 2003 contract. The other change is that the state now charges us \$100 per year rent.

Contract News

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The state recognizes the importance of the Observatory which is why we were put under the Interpretive Concession program in the first place. Our biggest contract threat at this point are the continuing budget difficulties in Sacramento and whether FPSP will be collateral damage.

Observatory Visitor Comments

"On the way back all we could talk about was how amazing everything looked. Even though the road back home was really long, it didn't matter because the experience was great. I didn't know a place like this existed, where one can come and look at the sky and learn many things. I LOVED IT SO MUCH! That I am going back to take my son and family."

"A classmate and I were talking about how much fun the trip was and how seeing Saturn made the whole trip worth it. I see myself going more in the future just for fun. I learned more from talking to the guys out there. What makes it so nice is that they do this for fun and they are all volunteers and really enjoy this. You can tell when we were all talking to them, this is something they are really passionate about."

"My son Joseph who is 9 years old was amazed at how beautiful the sight was that he was jumping. It was his first time being there as well as for my husband and myself.... My son was so amazed that he talked about giving a speech on Monday in front of his class to tell his classmates that he had visited Fremont Peak Observatory."

"I liked it because I don't have a telescope or don't have the money to afford one, but you just have to drive to Fremont Peak's show and use very good telescopes and have the volunteers help out by explaining things and answering questions."

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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