

# *The FREMONT PEAK* **OBSERVER**

The newsletter of the Fremont Peak Observatory Association

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Editor - Denni Medlock

## ***HORSEHEAD MEATLOAF?***

### ***10th ANNUAL STAR-B-Q A (burp) SUCCESS!***

The 10th Annual Star-B-Q, as always, brought out the best of our culinary wizards. Approximately 125 guests sampled gastronomical creations at this now yearly event which is co-sponsored by the FPOA, the Astronomical Association of Northern California and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Such fare as Martian meteorites and island universe sushi were offered. The grand prize winner in AANC's tasting contest was Horsehead Meatloaf. (The horse's head was made of meatloaf - the clouds of mash potatoes!)

On equal footing with the food in expectation this year was the magnitude and quality of the door prizes offered. While the FPOA has always provided a dozen or so prizes from Orion Telescope Center to be won, this year we saw several nice prizes donated from those in the crowd. Crazy Ed (from Crazy Ed Optical, of course) donated a major star atlas. Bob Fies gave away several copies of optical software while Bob Garfinkle donated several copies of his book *Star Hopping*. Louis Epstein, always a

favorite author of readable physics books donated copies of *Thinking Physics*. Chuck Moore was there to represent Meade, who offered a copy of the new EPOCH 2000 software. Astronomical Society of the Pacific (represented by Bob Ashford) gave away Universe '96 T-shirts while Chabot Science Center gave away several items.

Despite burning temperatures in the valley (90+) it was extremely pleasant at the Peak. Most of the crowd stayed on past the barbeque to enjoy a guest speaker and then viewing through the many telescopes available that night. It was a remarkable event, but then again, it's been a remarkable ten years.

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### **Board Elections**

Board member elections were held at the August 10th Star-B-Q. The three board members elected to serve the upcoming three year term are Rob Toebe, Bob Black, who are both returning members, and new board member Ron Dammann.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS END FOR THE YEAR**

With the end of October the public programs draw to a close until next April. We've have an exciting year due to two bright comets, several meteor showers and a national conference. Already several private programs are booked into the winter schedule. Remember, if you are a FPOA member and certified to use the 30" (and you have given at least one public program in 1996) you can reserve the telescope for your own use. Many members belong to other astronomical societies and often reserve the Challenger as a club activity. Please clear schedules through Rick Morales, of course. Our Director of Instruments, Rob Toebe, also would like to emphasize that the eyepieces, binoculars and star charts be properly put away (not simply thrown into the drawer as some have been doing!). This ensures minimal damage and usable equipment come Spring. Many thanks.

## **REAL SKY ARRIVES!**

*REAL SKY*, the 10 disc CD ROM version of the Palomar Sky Survey now being produced by the ASP has arrived! This excellent addition to the FPOA library is a gift from Pat Donnelly and may be used by any member on the meeting room computer while visiting the peak.

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## **WINTERIZING WORK PARTY NOV. 16**

A work party to help prepare the observatory building for the upcoming winter weather is scheduled for Nov. 16, starting at 10 AM. The primary areas of focus will be weatherstripping the doors and checking the shingles. Come on up and help out! All hands appreciated.

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## **MANY THANKS!**

by  
Ranger Rick Morales

A note of thanks to all the FPOA volunteers who have helped with the public programs. For the past decade the FPOA has offered views of the night sky to thousands of people. Tens of thousands. No exaggeration/ This past year was no different. I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for bringing astronomy to the public for 1996. The following list is probably not complete. There are those of you who show up and do your part to point the telescope or talk about the object that is, at that moment, being observed or pointed out constellations or doing any of the things that make a night at the observatory a memorable event. Thanks to:

Jack Zeiders	Donn Mukensnoble	Duncan McNeill	Jim Tuttle
Doug Meyers	Doug Padrick	Mojo	Peter Lord
Ron Dammann	Paul Mortfield	Rob Toebe	Mark Wagner
Rich Neuschaefer	Rod "the Wizard" Norden	Richard Navarette	Dean Linebarger
Alan Nelms	Kevin Medlock	Denni Medlock	Ed Huston
Chris Angelos	Craig "Lunatic" Wandke	Carter Roberts	Bob Fingerhut

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Pat Donnelly  
Mark Peairs  
Alan Andrews  
Jack Murphy

Dennis Tye  
Tom Bullock  
Jody Thomas  
Robert Hoyle

Manuel Fuentes    Dave Rodriguez  
Andy Newton       John Lumen  
Homer Bosserman    Jesse DiCarlo  
...and I'm sure that I've missed a  
few names.

The subject matter of the talks have included atmospheric phenomena, cosmology, the size and distance of objects in the universe, the planets, the moon, the sun. Many of us use the two tray collection of slides that John Gleason put together a decade ago. It still works and it's always interesting for me to listen to another interesting for me to listen to another interpretation of that set of slides. Some of the speakers use more than just the slides; the programs are multimedia with music and video. All of them are interesting, informative and fun. A couple of the interpreters (that's what they are - interpreting the night sky) have even donned costumes of sorts. Craig Wandke, literally a lunatic, wears an Apollo astronaut outfit when he gives his presentations about the Moon; and Rod Norden wears a Wizard's hat, a conical crown adorned with crescent moons and stars, and a matching shirt, for his presentations. I've always wanted to do a program about Galileo and just after the program begins there would be a loud banging at the door, someone would open it and in would walk Galileo, old and stooped and blind but there to answer questions about his time and space; a sort of 400 year old Dr. Science.

We do have a lot of fun with the public programs. Most of the time. There are those nights when a hundred or more people show up. Like with Comet Hyakutake. What a Zoo!! The evening with all the folks from Universe '96 was a very pleasant one despite the numbers of people. The evening last month (September) of the total lunar eclipse was interesting, to say the least. Because of the trees to the east of the observatory we weren't able to point the telescope at the eclipsed moon but instead pointed it at Jupiter. When the eclipsed moon finally rose above the trees, a long line of curious people who had not yet seen Jupiter were adamant about seeing the giant planet and we were able to observe the moon for only a few minutes before it brightened to blinding brilliance. Oh, well.

I think all of us who have helped with the public astronomy programs have enjoyed the effort. Mark Wagner wrote a very positive piece for the SJAA Ephemeris about a night with the Challenger 30" and a bunch of eager astronomers and the visiting public.

So, thanks to all of you who have made the public programs so successful this year and the previous 9 years. It's been a great experience for us all.



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## **ASTEROIDS & METEORITES**

(in other words, Bits & Pieces)

### **FPOA DINNER**

All FPOA members should have received their invitation to the FPOA Dinner on Saturday, November 9th at Cademartori's, 600 - 1st St, San Juan Bautista. Dinner is \$20.00 per person and there are still several available openings if you want to attend. We will need to know your preference for dinner: New York Steak, Chicken Breast or Calamari. A program celebrating the FPOA's 10 years at the Peak will follow dinner.

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### **LEONID METEOR SHOWER APPROACHING**

The Leonid Meteor Shower will be peaking around November 15 & 16th. Observers are needed (about two - three people) at Fremont Peak to operate the film patrol cameras per evening. If you are interested in this fun and rewarding assignment please call Rick at (408) 623-4081.

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### **DESK NEEDED FOR OBSERVING ROOM**

A heavy duty desk, of wood or metal, is needed for the observing room. The ideal candidate would be smallish, have a raised monitor rack for the computer, a keyboard pull-out shelf, and have several locking drawers to protect our eyepieces, etc. If we can't find a donation the FPOA will have to raise the money to purchase a new one and these types of items can be very expensive. SO, if you know of anyone or any company disposing of a higher quality computer desk let us know by leaving a message at the FPOA hotline (408) 623-2465.

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### **FPOA ON THE NET**

FPOA news can be seen on a net homepage. It can be reached at <http://www.rahul.net/resource/fpeak>. FPOA member Mark Wagner is the site attendant. If you have FPOA news you can reach him at (408) 356-1072.

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### **COMING NEXT NEWSLETTER....**

"A Cosmological Conjecture" by FPOA member Duncan McNeill

Membership Drive for 1997

What's In Store For Next Season (hint: there's a comet out there)