



## The Fremont Peak

# OBSERVER

Promoting public education in Astronomy

December 1993

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## Thank You, Volunteers!

During the past several years we've asked many members of the FPOA to step forward and assist with the presentation of our public programs. The programs went beyond the Saturday evening "help people up the ladder to look at a Messier object or a planet", but to also plan and make a photographic slide presentation or a constellation walk. These "other" programs included assisting with special group presentations like visiting science journalists, scout organizations, astronomy clubs and schools.

On many occasions these volunteers have been asked on the spur of the moment to put something together and make a presentation and with very little preparation time they have successfully made the presentation. We've had many Saturday afternoon "work days" when members painted, repaired, fixed, rebuilt, and/or made adjustments to the building or the telescope. We've done a lot over the past several years and I don't recall our saying thank you to all the volunteers for all the time they have given to the FPOA in furthering its goals of education and interpretation in astronomy.

There are too many of you to name individually but know that I and the rest of the FPOA are in your debt. Thank you.

*Rick Morales*

## Dues To Increase in '94

Well, it looks like the State's fiscal woes have finally caught up with the FPOA. Our Association has increasingly been called upon to foot our own expenses, as the Department of Parks and Recreation is no longer able to afford such "luxuries" as liability

insurance, telephone service, etc. for its cooperating associations.

The FPOA Board in October addressed this financial crisis, and examined various ways the Association could save money. Several options were considered (such as eliminating this Newsletter and cancelling the annual picnic), but vetoed by the Board. The Board did come up with a three-point plan to keep the Association financially secure:

1. Raise the general membership dues from 10.00 per year to 20.00 per year
2. Aggressively seek corporate grants for specific FPOA programs and projects
3. Actively seek membership donations for specific FPOA programs and projects

The first point, raising the dues, was the most difficult for us. We have prided ourselves on never having had to raise our dues. We understand that this may pose a hardship for some, especially students. To cover this special case, we have created a special "student" membership at the 10.00 level. To be eligible for student membership, you must be a full-time student. As we believe our membership is honorable, we won't require that you prove your student status, we'll take your word for it.

John Stewart and Bruce de Graaf are heading up a Finance Committee, whose chief responsibility at present is seeking corporate grants. They are currently working on the paperwork for a Pacific Bell and a Hewlett-Packard grant. If you would like to contribute your time and/or expertise to this effort, give John a call at (510) 527-7036.

Finally, we are actively seeking donations from the

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Fremont Peak Observatory

36° 45' 20" N Lat  
121° 29' 48" W Long

## Dues Increase, Cont.

general membership to help defray the costs of certain programs of building maintenance. The latest renewal notice lists some of these programs, and gives you the opportunity to make a donation. The Board has also decided upon a way of recognizing members who have been generous: soon there will be a wooden plaque on the wall in the Observatory lecture room that will contain a bronze plate with the donor's name. There will be some minimum dollar limit one must contribute to receive such recognition, currently set at \$500.00 in any one year. Contributions by members will be tracked, and when/if the total for any one year for an individual reaches or exceeds that amount, their name will go on the plaque, along with the year that amount was attained.

As always, the Board welcomes suggestions for improvement as well as contributions; we hope you are generous with both!

## Meteor Observing, Anyone?

If you attended last summer's Annual Picnic, you had the opportunity to hear Peter Jenniskens of NASA talk about meteors. During his talk, Peter described how to set up a meteor observing program and the value such programs play in providing useful data to professional astronomers. He also demonstrated a meteor photographing platform that he built.

I was intrigued by this, so after the program I contacted Peter for more information. With his help I have built two platforms, each holding four SLR cameras (Peter acquired eight SLR cameras for this project via various swap meets). My intent is to establish two stations for observing: one at Fremont peak, the other at Loma Prieta (the play field at the elementary school). These sites are ideal, being a little over 25 miles apart in a north-south line, thus giving us a good baseline for triangulation. Peter and I are looking for a few interested individuals to learn how to use the platforms, how to make observations, and participate in the program. If you are interested, please call Frank Dibbell at (408) 974-7319.

## Certification Training In February

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be a certified operator of the 30-inch telescope? Then come to our Certification Classes, to be held on February 5th and March 5th of 1994.

In these classes, you will learn how to operate the scope and the observatory, and what is expected of you as you run a public program.

A brief outline of the certification class follows:

1. Learn how to open the observatory
2. Learn how to get the scope up and running
3. Learn how to shut the scope and observatory down
4. Learn how to give a public program
5. Learn the importance of the telescope log book
6. Learn how to log sales to visitors from our FPOA "store"

The privilege of using the 30-inch comes with a price: personal use of the scope requires that you commit to and give a minimum of two public programs during the course of the year. In the past, the FPOA has been a bit lax on enforcing this; many certified users have either failed to show up for their assigned programs, or cancelled out on us. As our programs become better attended and more widely publicized, we can no longer operate in this mode. Starting with the 1994 season therefore, the following policy will be in effect:

Certified users will be asked to sign up for two programs at the beginning of the season. They may also sign up to use the scope, per its availability. If they miss their first signed-up program for any reason, they will be automatically placed on probation, and will not be allowed to sign up for scope time until they have done a public program. They will remain on limited probation until they have completed their second public program, at which time any restrictions will be lifted for the remainder of the year. If for any reason

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## Certification, Cont.

they miss their rescheduled event, they will then lose use of the scope until they have completed two public programs.

We know that giving a public program can be intimidating to a lot of people. That is one reason why we are including in our training program "how" to give a public program. The FPOA is investing money in putting together a series of "canned" events to make it easier to give a presentation. If you have any special presentation skills you would like to share with us, please contact the Public Program and Training chairperson, Dave Barosso, at (209) 887-2106.

*(The following article contains more information on training on the A/V equipment.)*

## ...and More Training

We're looking for volunteers who enjoy standing before a group of people and talking about astronomy. This next year beginning February 5th there will be a class to train volunteers in the use of the equipment we have at the observatory like the stacking slide projectors and the dissolve unit, the overhead projector and preparation of material for use on the overhead, the TV and VCR and how to integrate them into a public program presentation.

The intent of the training is to have a staff of public speakers who will present a variety of programs this summer at the observatory. In spite of the success we've had with our summer programs, I think a variety of speakers with a wider variety of programs will make our programs more enjoyable as well as more educational and inspirational.

If you would like to become involved with the training, either as a volunteer or if you have something you would like to see included in the training, contact Rick Morales at (408) 623-2465.

### Dates To Remember

Jan 1, 1994:	FPOA Dues due
Feb 5, 1994:	Certification Training/FPOA Board Mtng
Mar 5, 1994:	Certification Training/FPOA Board Mtng

## Board Business

The FPOA Board elected a new slate of officers for the 1994 calendar year at the November Board meeting. Frank Dibbell will continue as President. Donn Mukensnoble will be Vice-President, Bruce de Graaf will be secretary, and John Stewart will be treasurer.

Other business conducted by the Board: the FPOA Board unanimously passed a resolution bestowing the title of Board Member Emeritus on Denni Medlock, in recognition of all the work she has done for the Association since its inception. Denni's promotion leaves a vacancy on the Board. If you would like to become involved in the administration of the FPOA, show up for the Feb. 5th Board meeting. If you know of someone who might be interested, you may nominate them by calling any Board Member.

## Project Astro

Last October I had the opportunity to participate in a very interesting program sponsored by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. The program is called Project Astro. This is a program which pairs public school teachers with local area amateur and professional astronomers with the goal of helping students learn and enjoy more astronomy.

As expressed by Project Director Andrew Fraknoi, "There is nothing quite like the study of astronomy to capture the imaginations of our students and to introduce them to the fundamental ideas of science and mathematics". Project Astro is a way to bring together the many astronomers who are concerned about the state of science education in our schools, and the teachers who would love to teach more astronomy but haven't the time to spend a semester or two back in school.

Project Astro is a pilot program designed to bring these two groups together. The two day workshop provided us with resources, background information, and, most importantly, hands-on activities designed to encourage active learning. Each amateur/

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7.5  
3

2'30

2'00

1'00"

45"

30"

15"

36  
00

## Work Party Heroes

This fall, FPOA members turned out for two work parties to perform much-needed maintenance on the observatory and telescope. The facility is over seven years old now, and the toll of the long, hot summers and chilly, foggy winters is starting to show. Thanks to the efforts of some dedicated folks, the building looks a lot better now than it has in years.

The shingles on the outside of the observatory and other exposed wood pieces were treated with a sealer. The brush and dry grass were cut down to reduce the danger from wildfires. Inside, both the observing room and the meeting room were painted. A new door reinforcement and security latches were installed, along with a much better red lighting system for the stairs. At last, the work has started to attach 'digital setting circles' to the Challenger 30" telescope, a useful feature that will also allow a computer-controlled star map (The Sky) to be attached.

Thanks to everyone who contributed their time and expertise, some of whom this writer did not record the names of, including John Stewart, Rob Toebe, Carter Roberts, David Bevins, Kevin Medlock, Bruce deGraaf, and of course our esteemed president (Emperor) Frank Dibbell who provided expert encouragement to the workers.

Donn F. Mukensnabe  
3779 Oakbrook Court,  
Pleasanton, CA 94588-3533  
Telephone: (510) 462-4602

*Note: The FPOA is looking for a qualified individual who is willing to help out with the work at the Observatory and assume the role of Building Maintenance Director. Qualifications should include trade experience, current liability practices experience, and building management experience. This is an unpaid volunteer position. Interested parties please forward your name to Donn at the above address.*

## Project Astro, Cont.

professional astronomer participant has been paired with a local school teacher prior to the workshop. During the workshop we got to know our teacher-partners by working on the activities together. As an amateur astronomer, my goal for the Project is to commit to meeting with my teacher-partner's class a minimum of four times during the school year, to assist in teaching "hands-on" astronomy.

I should also note that I recognized several other FPOA members at the workshop: Paul Mortfield, John Jossy, and Bob Ashford. In future newsletters I hope to write a summary of our experiences with this program. If you are interested in hearing more about Project Astro, please give me a call (Frank Dibbell) at (408) 974-7319. Given enough interest, I'll arrange for a special program at the Observatory, with myself, Paul, John, and Bob presenting a summary of our experiences.

### FPOA Officers and Directors

<b>President</b>	Frank Dibbell	(408) 974-7319
<b>Vice Pres.</b>	Bob Black	(415) 592-2166
<b>Secretary</b>	Bruce de Graaf	(408) 244-8146
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Stewart	(510) 527-7036
<b>Directors:</b>		
	Robert Toebe	(707) 425-7960
	Bob Fingerhut	(510) 745-0110
	Dave Barosso	(209) 887-2106
	Pat Donnelly	(408) 778-2741

The *Fremont Peak Observer* is published quarterly, and is the official publication of the Fremont Peak Observatory Association. The Association is a tax-exempt, not for profit organization dedicated to providing public education and interpretive services in Astronomy using the resources available at Fremont Peak State Park.

Basic membership in the Association is \$20.00 per year. Membership runs for the calendar year; there is no pro-rationing of dues. For more information, write to:

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