

The *FREMONT PEAK*

OBSERVER

Volume Fourteen

Number Four

December, 1997

Editor - Denni Medlock

FAREWELLS.....HELLOS

FAREWELL, RICK

On November 8th the FPOA and the California Department of Parks and Recreation had to do something we never thought we would ever do - say goodbye to Ranger Rick Morales on his retirement from ranger service after 22 years.

Many of us with the FPOA can not remember a time at the observatory and Peak without Rick being there. He transferred to Fremont Peak in 1984 from Hearst Castle. What a strange transition that must have been - going from the most visited park in the system to one of the loneliest! And also to go from the quiet midnight shift at the Hill to the midnight rounds with undoubtedly strange and crazy amateur astronomers.

But if we embraced Rick as our new ranger at the Peak he certainly embraced us. Enthusiasm was a definite asset to have when the helping plan and build of the observatory was just one of his assignments. How much of his appearances were done on his off-duty hours? Uncountable, I'm sure.

You have to admit Rick put up with

some bizarre circumstances not many other rangers could boast. Rolling the observatory roof off 25 times to appease a TV commercial film crew; stomping out arsonist's fires to prevent them from spreading throughout the park; dealing with rowdy campers (not all of them toting a telescope); and knocks on his door for whatever reason at all hours of the night (Hey, Rick, do you think we might cut that tree down over by the fence? It's blocking my view of Centaurus A)....

The most amazing thing about Rick was that he handled it all with such aplomb. I never heard a complaint, or if I did it was a nice one. For all intents and purposes Rick was exactly what the FPOA needed during these first ten years - someone to listen and suggest, and then get right out there and help out, whether it was hammering a nail, moving untold picnic tables or giving a program to an unexpected group of interested cub scouts.

Rick is now off to a greater challenge - teaching science to middle school students in Gilroy. We like to think the amateur astronomers at the Peak were just preparation for this.

HELLO, MIKE

You're all probably wondering who could possibly step into the vacancy left by Rick. Introducing Ranger Mike Stalder, who has recently transferred in from a State Desert Preserve near the California-Mexican border. (Mike, I apologize for not naming it. You did say it was relatively desolate - 16 miles of dirt road in - and I could not find it on the map!).

He's now living in the ranger's house by the observatory with his wife and baby daughter.

Mike's a stranger to astronomy - he says - but I'll bet you can't spend that much time out in those desert nights and not know the sky by now.

So extend a welcome to Mike and his family the next time you're at the Peak. At least he has most of the winter to settle in before the next observing season starts.

A GIFT OF THE SKIES

Over 140 people attended Rick Morales' "Roast" on November 8, held at the Plaza Hall in San Juan Bautista. It gave many of Rick's friends and co-workers a chance to regal us all with stories about life with our favorite ranger, past and present. It also gave us the chance to thank him for the many hours he devoted to making Fremont Peak the enjoyable place that it is to do astronomy.

Because of several generous donations from the California State Department of Parks and Recreation, The FPOA, SAN Jose Astronomical Association, TAC and many others a Televue PRONTO telescope was given to Rick with the

hopes he will continue to look up no matter where he goes. (He promises not to be a stranger at the Peak.)

SCHEDULING CHANGES

With Rick moving down into San Juan Bautista and not wanting to burden Mike with too much too soon there will be upcoming changes to the FPOA scope reservation and message procedures. Our Director of Instruments, Rob Toebe, will be handling all requests for telescope time. He can be reached at (707) 426-2935. If you have a group not associated with a certified FPOA member wishing to reserve the 30" please reserve through the State Park System. They will then notify the FPOA of a need to provide a telescope operator.

New phone numbers at the Peak and the possibility of voice mail are coming.

OTHER CHANGES

About every two - three years there seem to be changes to the infrastructure of the FPOA Board so we're due for one. As editor, this will be my last newsletter. (Emperor) Frank Dibbell will once again regain that position. I will be taking over Treasurer from John Stewart, a job I did for a few years in the early nineties. John - well, I don't know what John has planned but I would like to thank him for the fine work he has done balancing our checkbook and making certain everything goes well financially.

The Fremont Peak Observer is published quarterly by the Fremont Peak Observatory Association, P.O. Box 787, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

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BITS & PIECES

1998 Board of Directors Schedule

The first two meetings of the Board of Directors will be held February 2 and March 28 in the meeting room of the observatory. Generally, these meetings are held at 2:00 PM but check with Donn or Denni a few days beforehand for the final time.

The FPOA Board really encourages members and interested parties to attend these meetings, as it is both a practical way for the board to hear what others have to say and for FPOA members who have an interest in being a board member to "warm up" to the idea.

The meetings usually don't last longer than 1-1/2 hours and are actually interesting!



Brain Storming Session Scheduled

Generally, around the first of the year, before the heavy public program and observing schedule at the Peak kicks into gear, the FPOA Board holds a brainstorming session somewhere off-site for the purpose of evaluating the program's past performance and planning the new year.

This year the FPOA Board would like to invite EVERYONE!, that is, anyone who has a desire to see the astronomy program at the Peak improved - this includes not only the public program at the observatory, but the observing

situations over at Coulter/Madrone, the upper parking lot, and the level area behind the ranger's house.

Several issues have been batted around the campground this year, ideas such as observing terraces, light screens, new lights for Soledad and how to deal with the inevitable growth of certain trees in strategic observing spots. This idea session is meant for those who want to see progressive changes which will enhance the observing conditions in the park.

It will be run as a brain storming session - all ideas welcome, no criticism dished out - in a comfortable setting. Complaints will be welcomed as long as the complainer has a practical suggestion to a solution attached!

This session will be held March 7 at a restaurant in the San José area, site and time to be announced.

Stay tuned to the next *Observer* for details of where and when.



Many Thanks!

To:
Jack Murphy, who successfully ran FPOA's first solar program this summer. Jack set up the solar scope in the upper parking lot each new Moon Saturday and had approximately 15 - 30 people a session.

Jack intends to do this again next summer but would appreciate others helping out.

To:
Peter Jenniskens, for running FPOA's Meteor Observing Program. Peter has

put the FPO on the map internationally when it comes to meteor recording.

If you are interested in joining this program contact Peter at (415) 604-3086 or peter@max.arc.nasa.gov.

To:

Pat Donnelly, for donating the REAL SKY CD set for the computer. (The Southern Sky has arrived, by the way, and is ready for use.)

To:

Bob Black, for negotiating the FPOA's operating contract with the State DPR. This was a time and emotion consuming effort that took many, many months of phone calls and drafting. It's now signed and in effect as of 7/17/97 and will be good for three years.

To:

Rob Toebe and Dave Barosso, for many things, none the least is getting THE SKY program running on the 30" telescope. It makes using the Challenger much less of a challenge!

To:

Rob Toebe, again, for taking over the telescope reservation line now that Rick is gone. If you want to reserve the 30" call him at (707) 426-2935 or fpniteowl@mail.jps.net.

To:

Every certified member who volunteered their time, many more than once, to give the public programs throughout 1997's extended public schedule. You did the best of jobs! We had thousands of visitors this year who will testify to that.

Application For Membership in the Fremont Peak Observatory Association

Name _____
Street: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Optional Information
e-mail: _____ Home Phone: _____
Work Phone: _____
May we list you in the FPOA Directory? (Y/N) _____ (For FPOA members; non-commercial purposes only)

Please enroll me as a member in the FREMONT PEAK OBSERVATORY ASSOCIATION under the following category:

- _____ General \$20.00 year
- _____ Student \$10.00 year
- _____ Life \$350 one-time fee (\$315 for applicants over 60 years of age)

Additional (optional) contribution: \$ _____ for _____
Is this a renewal? (Y/N) _____

Your tax deductible check may be made out to FPOA. No cash, please. Mail with application to:
FPOA, P.O. Box 787, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045