

The Great Storm of '98

by Denni Medlock

Early Monday morning February 2, our Director of Instruments, Rob Toebe, got a call from Ranger Mike at Fremont Peak, saying something about the observatory roof being open. This was some cause for much alarm, considering the Peak had been hit with over one hundred mile an hour winds and downpours the night before. Mike reported severe damage to the park.

Rob had to go to work but got hold of Kevin Medlock by mid-morning and off he and Vance Chin went after a phone call to me at work which stated, "Hwy 17 & 101 south are closed. We'll have to go over to I5 and then cut back through Pacheco Pass. Haven't the faintest idea what we'll find or when we'll get back. Wish us luck!"

Fortunately, Hwys 17 and 101 were open and they were able to get to the San Juan Canyon turnoff. However, there's a reason we own a four wheel drive truck with high ground clearance. The creek that runs down the canyon had overflowed the road with mud and water, making that obstacle number one. Washout after washout and mudslide after mudslide had to be tackled before they finally were able to get into the park.

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What they found:

- 1) The fifty+ foot tree by the propane tank had toppled into the ranger's house, doing structural damage at the same time taking out the propane line. Mike and family had had that rude awakening in the middle of the night.
- 2) All the windows on the middle tool shed were blown out from the force of the wind.
- 3) The little weather station by the wood rail was leaning over at a 45 degree angle.
- 4) All the grass on the western side of the hill was gone.
- 5) The kiosk by the garage was gone.
- 6) There was not a garbage can to be found in the park.

Welcome to Fremont Peak, Ranger Mike!

Kevin and Vance found Mike, Rick Morales and Ron Dammann already there assessing the worst. Rick's famous words to Mike were something like, "Gee, it never got this bad up here before!"

Welcome to Fremont Peak, Mike!

Now, the observatory.

First off, because there has been some difficulties in closing the roof this winter the last two inches were not closed before tightening everything down. The roof, evidently buffeted by these hundred plus winds, had rocked back and forth - a huge amount of mass, if you think about such things - and in turn managed to strip two turn buckles and straightened two hooks! Now free, the roof headed north with a hundred miles an hour push behind it.

TidBits

We have always stored the 30" in an upright position, (or as upright as the height of the roof allows). Fortunately, this one routine is what saved the roof from flying off the north end of the rails. The upper end of the telescope tube caught the roof lip as it went over and stopped it before it could really get going. This did result in the jamming of the mirror end of the tube into the floor, but other than a gouged carpet, no damage was noticed.

However, the roof was open at least a few feet throughout the driving rain that night and most of our damage comes from water. The south side wall's sheet rock is destroyed and will have to be replaced. The carpet is indoor/outdoor (definitely more outdoor right now than indoor) with a good air circulation underneath so it probably won't need replacing. The floor board that took the tube jamming into it will need to be looked at and replaced if it's damaged too badly.

The roof itself hasn't got a shingle to its name (Sorry, Mike Maloon.) Remarkably, the building lost maybe less than a dozen shingles. Kevin says we should have Don Stone and Carter Roberts redo the roof since it was their shingling job on the rest of the building.

Kevin and Vance replaced the turnbuckles and cable tied the north end of the roof around the south pier for the duration, but the turnbuckles will have to be replaced with steel ones next time, not aluminum! Ron Dammann took down the computers and reported that the one in the observing one got the car wash treatment. He poured water out of the monitor when he got home. We'll have to see how badly that damage goes.

We will be looking into a metal roof to replace the wooden shingled one. They are lightweight and generally wind proof. The shutters, which remarkably did not take any damage throughout all of this will be replaced with metal roll-ups - much better weather-proofed than what we have now.

So, there is a move to raise money to fix the damage and get us up and running by late April/early May. The total estimate to repair all the damage is around \$10,000. Jack Zeiders has already pledged seed money of \$1000. Anybody else out there willing to put dollars or muscle in to get the FPO back together? Please call our treasurer, Denni Medlock, with your donation.

We are looking for suggestions for color schemes for the 30-inch scope. Please forward your ideas to Rob Toebe.

Because of the Winter Storms and delays we have experienced, the Renewal Grace Period has been extended through the end of March.

We need volunteers for the work parties. Please call Rob Toebe or Kevin Medlock to sign up.

What's In A Name?

OK, how *do* you spell my last name? Is it Dibble, or Dibbell, or Dibell, or Dibbel? I think my name is misspelled more often than Donn Mukensnables! If you can come up with an original spelling for my name, let me know. The person who comes up with the most original will be rewarded appropriately at the **FPOA Star-B-Q**.

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FPOA 1998 Planned Schedule of Events

March	14-15	Work Party
	28-29	Board Meeting at the Peak
April	4	Work Party
	18	Board Meeting at the Peak
	25-26	Work Party
May	2	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer) ASTRONOMY DAY
	16	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	23	Public Program; Board Meeting at the Peak SOLAR Program
	30	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
June	13	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	20	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	27	Public Program; Board Meeting at the Peak SOLAR Program
July	4	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	18	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	25	Public Program; Board Meeting at the Peak SOLAR Program
August	1	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	15	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	22	Public Program; Board Meeting at the Peak FPOA STAR-B-Q
	29	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
September	12	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	19	Public Program; Board Meeting at the Peak SOLAR Program
	26	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
October	10	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
	17	Public Program; Board Meeting at the Peak SOLAR Program
	24	Public Program: Hosted by: (need volunteer)
November	21	Board Meeting location TBD

FPOA Application For Membership/Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

eMail _____ Home PH: _____

New Member _____ Renewal _____ Work PH: _____

May we list you in the FPOA Directory? YES/NO (Non-commercial purposes only)

Please enroll me as a member of the Fremont Peak Observatory Association

___General \$20.00 per year

___Student \$10.00 per year

___Life \$350.00 one time fee (\$315.00 if over 60 years of age)

Your tax-deductible check may be made payable to the FPOA. Please do not send cash. Mail it along with this application to:

FPOA Membership
P.O. Box 787
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045