

# ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

Vol. 52, No. 1 - January 2004

## SFAA ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

Saturday, January 24, 2004

6:00 p.m. - No-host Bar 7:00 p.m. - Dinner

Basque Cultural Center . 599 Railroad Ave . South San Francisco . (650) 583-8091



*Prime Rib with Scalloped Potatoes & Vegetables (\$32.00)*  
*Breast of Chicken Chasseur with Vegetables & Rice (\$23.00)*  
*Vegetarian Pasta (\$18.50)*

*Soup, salad, bread & butter, ice cream and coffee included.*  
*Tax and gratuity included.*

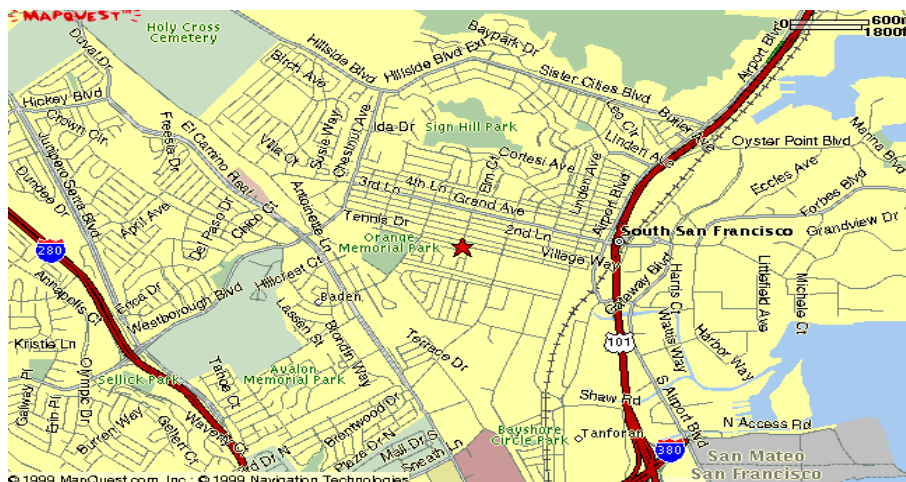
Please send a check or money order, along with your choice of entrée, to Lorrie Boen at 765 Geary Street #302, San Francisco, CA 94109 by **January 9, 2004**. Any requests received after this date cannot be guaranteed.

**Basque Cultural Center From Highway 280:** Take Highway 280 North to the Avalon Drive Exit in South San Francisco. Continue on Junipero Serra Boulevard to Westborough Blvd. Turn right and proceed to El Camino Real. Turn right and proceed to Orange Blvd. Turn left, and proceed to Railroad Ave. Turn right. Continue to 599 and turn right into parking lot.

From San Francisco, take Highway 280 South. From Highway 280, take the Westborough Exit, following the same directions as above after Westborough Blvd.

**Basque Cultural Center From Highway 101:** Take Highway 101 North to South San Francisco Grand Avenue Exit, turn right.. Turn right on East Grand Avenue, then left on Grand Avenue. Turn left on Magnolia and proceed for two blocks. Cross Railroad Avenue into the Basque Cultural Center parking lot.

From San Francisco, take Highway 101 South to the Grand Avenue Exit in South San Francisco. Continue on Grand Avenue. Turn left on Magnolia and proceed two blocks. Cross Railroad Avenue into the Basque Cultural Center parking lot.



## 2003 Club Officers & Contacts

<i>President</i>	Michael Portuesi	(415) 550-9366
<i>Vice President</i>	Nancy Cox	(415) 269-8259
<i>Secretary</i>	James Mace	
<i>Treasurer</i>	Lorrie Boen	
<i>Speaker Chair</i>	Linda Mahan	
<i>City Star Party</i>	Randy Taylor	(415) 255-8670
<i>Membership &amp;</i>	Lorrie Boen	
<i>Subscriptions</i>		
<i>Bulletin Editor</i>	Phil Estrin	(415) 703-4533
<i>Telescope Loans</i>	Pete Goldie	(415) 206-9867
<i>Honorary Director</i>	John Dobson	
<i>Board Members</i>	Jim Webster	
	Steve Bryson	
	Danny Christian	
	Cheryl Schudel	
	Ken Frank	
	Slava Evanikoff	
	Randy Taylor	
<i>Alt. Board Members</i>	John Dillon	
	Phil Estrin	
<i>Webmaster</i>	Joe Amato	

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### MEMBERSHIP DUES

The mailing label on the back of this issue shows the month and year through which your membership was paid. If the date has passed, your membership has expired. Members may receive no more than one bulletin after the expiration of membership.

Please renew soon if your membership is expiring.

### ONLINE SERVICES FOR SFAA MEMBERS



The SFAA's Secretary's Web Site helps keep SFAA information together and accessible to members. The site URL is <http://www.whiteoaks.com/sfaa/>. At this site you can find such information as minutes from meetings of the Board of Directors, the SFAA official by-laws, and other information. SFAA also offers email lists to supplement the bulletin board offered at the SFAA's official web site. At present there are two email lists -- an unmoderated list for use primarily for business and discussion by the Board of Directors (but open to all members), and a moderated announcement list for all SFAA members. If you would like to be added to the SFAA-announce email list, please contact the secretary ([secretary@sfaa-astronomy.org](mailto:secretary@sfaa-astronomy.org)) and let him know. You can also sign up for the list yourself at this URL:

<http://www.whiteoaks.com/mailman/listinfo/sfaa-announce>

## CLUB TELESCOPES

The SFAA owns 4 club loaner telescopes, Dobsonian/Newtownian reflectors: 6" f/10, 8" f/7, and 10" f/8 and a Starblast. They are available for extended periods (30 days or more) to SFAA members. These are generally very fine scopes, easy to use and well-suited for deep sky, planets, and star parties. The loaner custodians are Pete Goldie & Sarah Szczechowicz, located in San Francisco. If you are interested in borrowing a scope, or if you have items you can donate for the loaner program (eyepieces, star maps/books, collimator, etc.) please contact them via email (<mailto:pg@lbin.com>) or phone (415-206-9867). Email communication is preferred and strongly recommended for a quick and accurate reply.



## CLUB ASTRONOMY VIDEOS

The SFAA owns a series of astronomy videotapes featuring Alex Filippenko, a world-renowned professor of astronomy at UC Berkeley. The videotapes provide an introduction to astronomy and cover topics such as the Solar System, the lifecycles of stars, the nature of galaxies, and the birth of the Universe. The SFAA loans the tapes free to all members. If you are interested in viewing these tapes, you may check them out at any of the SFAA General Meetings. These tapes were kindly donated to the SFAA by Bert Katzung. Our librarian is Dan Christian.



For information on the course tapes themselves:

<http://www.teach12.com/ttc/assets/coursedescriptions/180.asp>

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*Above the Fog* is the official bulletin of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers. It is the forum in which club members may share their experiences, ideas, and observations. We encourage you to participate by submitting your articles, announcements, letters, photos and drawings. We would also like to hear from our new members. Tell us about yourself – what you have done in the past and what other clubs you have joined. The deadline for the next issue is the seventh day of the month. Send your articles to Phil Estrin at [pestrin@dir.ca.gov](mailto:pestrin@dir.ca.gov).

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Welcome to 2004! I hope your holidays were happy, and that you received only the finest astronomical toys as holiday gifts.

Officer elections were but one of the activities at the December General Meeting, and the results appear here in this issue. A big welcome to our newest Board Members - Steve Bryson, Slava Evanikoff, Ken Frank, Phil Estrin and John Dillon. And James Mace formally takes over the office of club Secretary, vacated by Morris Jones after his move to Pasadena. A big thanks to the new and returning Board members and officers for their willingness to help out the club. And also, a huge nod of appreciation to those who served through 2003. I appreciated their help!

Our annual Awards Dinner is coming soon, Saturday January 24. Come and welcome our new Board members in person, see who won the Art and Photography competitions, and chat with your fellow club members.

Oh, yes, and enjoy a fabulous dinner too! Details are in this issue - but please get your reservation in by the 9th of January.

2004 opens with prime-time viewing of Saturn. It reached opposition December 31, and this opposition is very favorable - the best in 30 years. It is placed high in the sky, for crystal-clear viewing, and the rings are still close to maximum tilt. So, just like last summer's splendid Mars apparition, now is your golden opportunity to view Saturn. Why not get out your scope, observe, and share with your neighbors? Come out to the City Star Party on January 31st and enjoy the view.

Wishing you the clearest, darkest skies for 2004.

Michael Portuesi  
[president@sfaa-astronomy.org](mailto:president@sfaa-astronomy.org),  
415-550-9366



## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

### Board Meeting

January 14 - 7:00 p.m.  
February 11 - 7:00 p.m.  
March 10 - 7:00 p.m.

*Western Addition Library  
Scott & Geary Streets, San Francisco*

### SFAA General Meeting & Lecture

January 24 - Awards Dinner  
6:00 p.m. Open Bar - 7:00 p.m. Dinner  
February 18 - 7:00 p.m.  
March 17 - 7:00 p.m.

*Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way  
(near 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Roosevelt)*

### City Star Party

January 31 - Sunset, 5:32 p.m.  
February 28 - Sunset, 6:02 p.m.  
March 27 - Sunset 6:29 p.m.

*Telescope Clinic starts one hour before Star Party*

# SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS SPEAKERS 2004

LINDA MAHAN



**RANDALL MUSEUM**

As Speaker Coordinator for SFAA in 2004, I want to bring you up to date on the first few speakers we will have in our new home. The Randall Museum has kindly invited us to hold our meetings in their facility, and I sincerely hope that those of you who have attended the Planetarium meetings will continue to come, as well as many members who have yet to come and enjoy one of the very special benefits of membership in SFAA ~ our fine speakers.

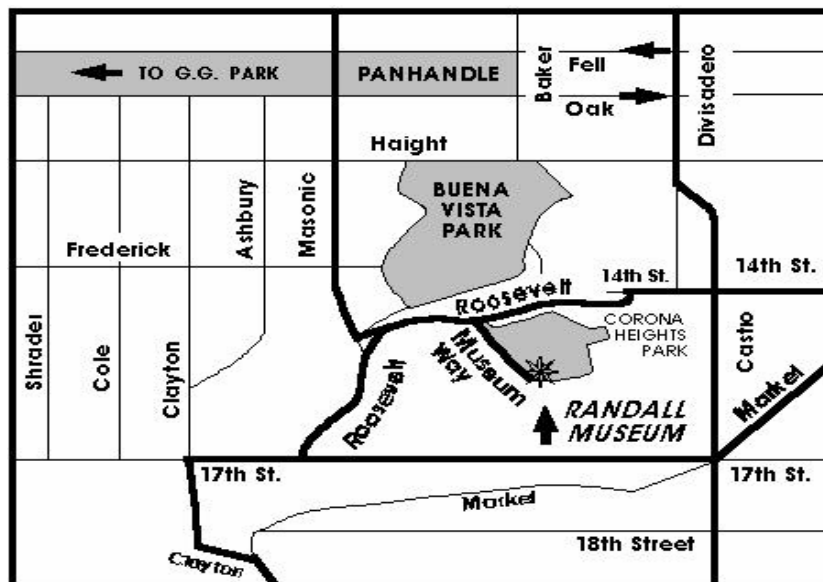
**On Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>**, we will kick off being in our new location, the Randall Museum, with a festive evening and a special talk on Ancient Astronomy. John Dillon, of the Randall Museum will share his knowledge and love of this subject with us. We hope to have a few surprises. Make sure to be there for this "first".

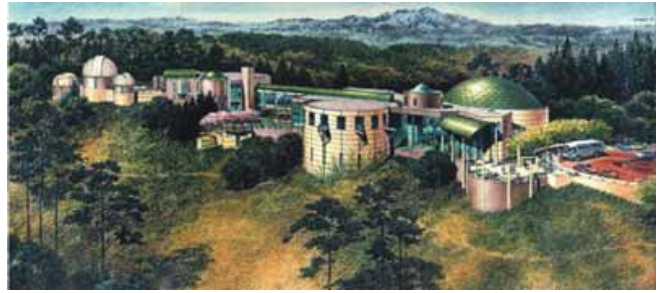
**On March 17<sup>th</sup>**, our speaker will be John E. Westfall, author of: *Atlas of the Lunar Terminator*. John's background as a cartographer and his love and knowledge of the Moon will provide a timely talk. Because of the winter weather and the frequent availability of the Moon as our most prominent viewing target, this talk will inspire and inform us. Invite an interested guest for this talk.

**On April 21<sup>st</sup>**, our speaker will be Chuck Pullen, with the AAVSO, who will show us how to enjoy viewing Variable Stars. Note that variable stars can be viewed with the naked eye or binoculars. Chuck will teach us how to keep a log and be experienced for long summer night viewing. This is another talk to which you may want to invite a potential SFAA Member to join you.

Other upcoming Speakers will be Phil Plait, "the bad astronomer." Ken Lum, speaker coordinator of the Peninsula Astronomers, will talk on Barnard Schmidt and the Schmidt camera. Ken will also talk about his appreciation and knowledge of antique telescopes and his travels to see them.

If you have suggestions on topics or speakers you would like for our meetings, please contact me at: Linda Mahan 415-383-7916, or [doublestar@ix.netcom.com](mailto:doublestar@ix.netcom.com)





## DISTINGUISHED LECTURER SERIES

### GAMMA RAY & NEUTRINO ASTRONOMY -- NEW WINDOWS ON THE UNIVERSE

Chabot Space & Science Center's Distinguished Lecturer Series is proud to present Dr. Rick Norman, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories, speaking on "Gamma Ray and Neutrino Astronomy: New Windows on the Universe." Gamma ray and neutrino observations have provided new insights into the nuclear processes that power the stars and produce the chemical elements we find on Earth. Come hear one of the top experts in the field discuss the latest in this new frontier of astronomy.

Adult Astronomy Class January 11 - February 15, Sunday evenings, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. This non-mathematical class will cover constellations, the Solar System, Galaxies and the Universe. Historical conceptions & modern research will also be discussed. The course utilizes the Ask Jeeves Planetarium and the new 36" telescope. \$55 members, \$65 non-members. Call Denni Medlock at (510) 336-7368 to register.

Future Distinguished Lecturer Series events are: Saturday, January 17, 2004, at 6: 30 pm : Dr. David Grinspoon will give a lecture on "Lonely Planets: The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life," and be on hand to sign copies of his new book by the same title.

On Saturday, January 31, 2004, in celebration of the Mars Exploratory Rovers landing on Mars internationally-known astronomical author Ken Croswell will be speak on "Magnificent Mars." Copies of his new book by the same name will be available for signing.

For more information on any of the above call (510) 336-7373.

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## SILICON VALLEY ASTRONOMY LECTURE SERIES

"THE SEARCH FOR PLANET X: EXPLORING THE SOLAR SYSTEM BEYOND NEPTUNE."  
DR. EUGENE CHIANG . UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY  
NON-TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATED TALK

Dr. Chiang will discuss how new discoveries are revealing an array of interesting new objects -- including several mini-planets -- at the outskirts of our planetary system.

Smithwick Theater, Foothill College, El Monte Road and Freeway 280, Los Altos Hills, California  
Parking on campus: \$2.00 (eight quarters) Parking lots 1, 5, 6 and 7 provide easy access to the theater.  
Free and open to the public - Call the series hotline at (650)949-7888 for more information

Co-sponsored by: NASA Ames Research Center The Foothill College Astronomy Program  
The SETI Institute The Astronomical Society of the Pacific

## **JOURNEY TO MARS AT THE EXPLORATORIUM**

from Raphael Rosen <mailto:raphaelr@exploratorium.edu>

### **WEEKEND SPECIAL EVENTS**

January 3, 10 & 11, 17 & 18, 24 & 25

As robotic rovers begin to explore the Martian terrain in January 2004, the Exploratorium offers zany and substantive special weekend events designed to bring the distant red planet and the science and art of Mars exploration to light for everyone here on Earth. All events are free with museum admission. Simulate the challenges faced by NASA scientists by designing a contraption to protect an egg when launched from heights of fifteen feet. Meet the author of the definitive book on mapping Mars's fascinating terrain. Watch insect-like robots clamber over obstacles; marvel at a fire that burns without oxygen; cheer on robotic rovers made from LEGO's, as well as their schoolaged inventors, and cartoon your own version of Mars. Go to: <http://www.exploratorium.edu/pr/documents/04-1Journey.html>

### **JOURNEY TO MARS LIVE IN-MUSEUM AND ONLINE WEBCAST SCHEDULE**

Come to the Exploratorium or go to <http://www.exploratorium.edu/marsrover>

In conjunction with Journey to Mars, talk with Exploratorium senior scientists about the history of Mars exploration; see images taken by Spirit, which just landed on the Martian surface; learn how Spirit transmits its images from Mars to Earth; discover what humans would actually experience camping on Martian soil; touch Mars snowflakes, and find out why scientists are so eager to learn whether water ever existed on Mars. Go to: <http://www.exploratorium.edu/pr/documents/04-1Journey1.html>

EXPLORATORIUM OPEN FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S BIRTHDAY, MONDAY, JANUARY 19  
OPEN FROM 10AM UNTIL 5PM. THE EXPLORATORIUM IS REGULARLY OPEN TUESDAY-SUNDAY, 10AM-5PM.

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Contact: LINDA DACKMAN (415) 561-0363 / Leslie Patterson (415) 561-0377

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# SFAA 2004 CALENDAR

## JANUARY

- 14 - 7 PM Board Meeting
- 24 - Awards Dinner
  - 6 PM Open Bar
  - 7 PM Dinner
- 31 - 4:30 PM Telescope Clinic
- 31 - Sunset 5:32 PM City Star Party (CSP)

## FEBRUARY

- 11 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 18 - 7PM General Meeting
- 28 - 5PM Telescope Clinic (CSP)
- 28 - Sunset 6:02 pm City Star Party

## MARCH

- 10 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 17 - 7PM General Meeting
- 27 - Sunset 6:29 PM City Star Party
- 27 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 27 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## APRIL

- 14 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 17 - Sunset 6:48 PM Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 21 - General Meeting 7 pm
- 24 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 24 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## MAY

- 12 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 15 - Sunset 8:13 PM Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 19 - 7PM General Meeting
- 22 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 22 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## JUNE

- 9 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 16 - 7PM General Meeting
- 12 - Sunset 8:32 PM Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 26 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 26 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## JULY

- 14 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 17 - Sunset 8:30 pm Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 21 - 7PM General Meeting
- 24 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 24 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## AUGUST

- 11 - 7 PM Board Meeting
- 14 - Sunset 8:03 PM Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 18 - 7PM General Meeting
- 21 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 21 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## SEPTEMBER

- 8 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 11 - Sunset 7:23 PM Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 15 - 7PM General Meeting
- 18 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 18 - Mount Tam Public Star Party

## OCTOBER

- 9 - Sunset 6:40 PM Mount Tam SFAA-only Star Party
- 13 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 16 - Mount Tam Telescope Clinic
- 16 - Mount Tam Public Star Party
- 20 - 7PM General Meeting
- 23 - Sunset 6:21 PM City Star Party

## NOVEMBER

- 10 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 17 - 7PM General Meeting
- 20 - 4PM Telescope Clinic (CSP)
- 20 - Sunset 4:55 PM City Star Party

## DECEMBER

- 8 - 7PM Board Meeting
- 15 - 7PM General Meeting/Member's Night
- 18 - 4PM Telescope Clinic (CSP)
- 18 - Sunset 4:53 PM City Star Party

Founded in September 1952, the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers (SFAA) is an association of people who share a common interest in astronomy and other related sciences. Our membership consists of people from all walks of life, educational backgrounds and ages. Many SFAA members own their own telescopes; some have been made by hand in local telescope-making classes and vary in size from 6 to 25 inches.

**Treasurer, SFAA, 765 Geary St., #302, San Francisco CA 94109**

make checks payable to **San Francisco Amateur Astronomers** and mail to:

- \$10 enclosed, youth/student membership
- \$25 enclosed, individual membership
- \$30 enclosed, family or foreign membership
- \$40 enclosed, institutional membership
- \$75 enclosed, supporting membership

**Select one category:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address:

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Address:

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Name: Telephone:

## San Francisco Amateur Astronomers Membership Application

**San Francisco Amateur Astronomers**  
P.O. Box 15097  
San Francisco, CA 94115



Information Hotline: (415) 289-6636

Web Page: [www.sfaa-astronomy.org](http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org)

*Sharing the Wonders of the Universe*

**Has your membership expired?** Your mailing label includes the month and year through which your membership is paid. If it is past, your membership has expired and this may be your last issue.