

★ ABOVE THE FOG

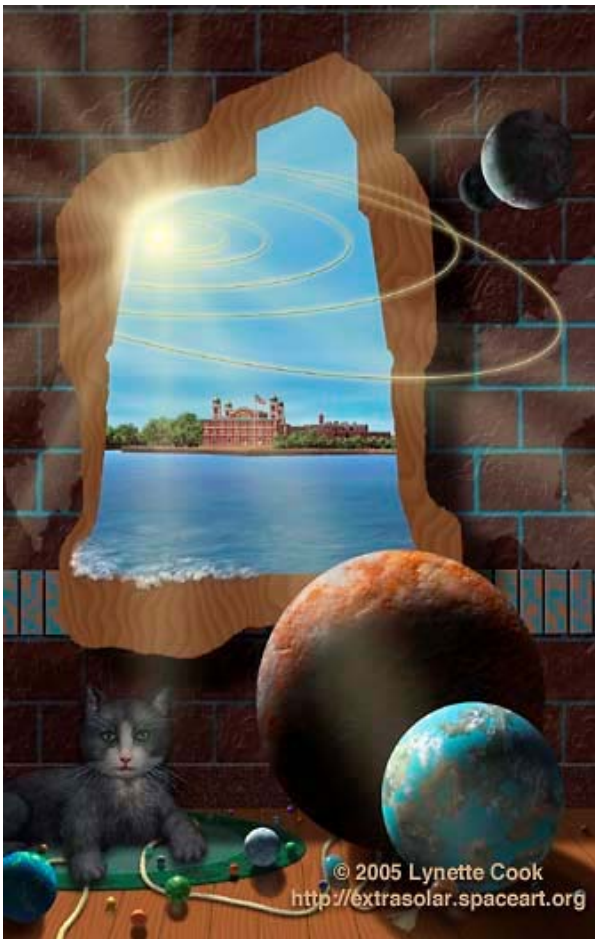
• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

Vol. 54, No. 10 – October 2006

October 18, 2006 – General Meeting

Randall Museum . 199 Museum Way . San Francisco
7:00 pm doors open . 7:30 pm announcements . 8:00 pm speaker

LYNETTE COOK, Astronomy Artist PLANET PORTRAITS NEAR AND FAR



Planets capture our attention and inspire our imagination, whether they are members of our own solar system or orbiting bodies around distant stars. Although the most exciting discoveries in recent years have been the extrasolar planets, our familiar “local planets” continue to stimulate discussion. The ongoing debate about “What is a planet?” and recent demotion of Pluto to dwarf planet status, is just one example.

In this beautifully illustrated presentation, Cook will discuss the challenges and rewards of being an astronomical illustrator who specializes in planets. Taking care to balance scientific facts in one hand and an artist’s tools in the other, her work is variable. From depictions of worlds too distant to be photographed close up, to educational visuals that become necessary as astronomy redefines itself, and finally to the delightful creations for Dava Sobel’s book “The Planets,” this talk will be both fun and informative.

Lynette Cook is best known for her depictions of extrasolar planets that have appeared in press releases, publications such as Astronomy and Sky & Telescope, textbooks and popular books, and documentaries airing on CNN and PBS. She has exhibited her original artwork at the American Museum of Natural History, Lick Observatory, NASA Ames Research Center, the Smithsonian, Stanford University, and other institutions.

Cook has illustrated two books on the topics of planets and life in space: a children’s picture book called “Faraway Worlds: Planets Beyond Our Solar System,” written by Paul Halpern and published by Charlesbridge

Publishing, and a book for adults titled “Infinite Worlds: An Illustrated Voyage to Planets Beyond Our Sun.” The latter, published by the University of California Press, is co-authored by Ray Villard and includes a foreword by Geoff Marcy and an afterword by Frank Drake.

Newly published is a series of images of the planets of our own solar system combining elements from mythology, history, fact, fiction, and the author’s own background that appear in the paperback version of Dava Sobel’s book “The Planets.”

Go to the Artist’s web site at <http://extrasolar.spaceart.org/> to see more of Cook’s artwork.

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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.

SFAA WEBSITE AND ONLINE SERVICES



The SFAA web site at sfaa-astronomy.org is provided to our members and the general public for the sharing of club information and services. The web site contains links for club [star parties](#), [events](#), [newsletters](#), [lectures](#) and [meetings](#). If you wish to interact with other people who are interested in astronomy, the SFAA web site offers public and members only [bulletin board forums](#). If you wish to remain up-to-date on club activities, then we encourage you to subscribe to one or both of our public [mailing lists](#), which will allow you to receive our newsletter and/or club announcements via email. Other useful and interesting information and services are available on the site such as [observing location reviews](#), member [astronomy photos](#), and members only [telescope loans](#). Information about the SFAA's membership, organization and by-laws are available at the club's online public document [archive](#). If you need to contact a representative of the SFAA, then please visit our [contacts](#) page to help in finding the right person to answer your questions.

CLUB TELESCOPES

The SFAA owns eight very fine, easy to use, loaner telescopes well-suited for deep sky, planets, and star parties. All scopes are available to any SFAA member. The loaner custodians for the majority of our fleet are Pete & Sarah Goldie. Please contact them at pg@lbin.com for details if you are interested in borrowing a scope or if you have items you can donate for the loaner program (eyepieces, star maps/books, red flashlights, collimator, etc.). Please contact the appropriate member indicated below if you are interested in borrowing one of the telescopes.



- 1) 6" f/10.3 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 2) 8" f/7 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 3) 8.5" f/6 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 4) 10" f/8 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 5) 114mm F/4 Newtonian StarBlast / Pete Goldie
- 6) 8" f/10 Celestron SCT/Annette Gabrielli/agabrielli-sfaa@sbcglobal.net
- 7) 8" f/10 Meade SCT/Stefanie Ulrey/treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org
- 8) 9.5" f/5.6 Celestron Newtonian/Ken Frank/kennethfrank@planitarium.net

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 at danny.christian@sbcglobal.net.



For information on the course tapes themselves:
<http://www.teach12.com/ttc/assets/coursedescriptions/180.asp>

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 20th day of the month.** Send your articles to Phil Estrin at pestrin@dir.ca.gov.



!!!! IMPORTANT !!!! NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENT

Commencing with the December issue, SFAA's official newsletter, Above the Fog, will be delivered via e-mail. When the newsletter becomes available, members will receive an e-mail notification with a link to the online version. If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter in hard copy format, please submit a request to treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org.

THROUGH THE FINDER...

On November 8, we have a chance to witness a semi-rare astronomical event – a transit of Mercury. I say “semi-rare” because these transits happen about 13 times per century, and the last one was just three years ago. So every amateur astronomer has several opportunities per observing career. But for 150 5th graders visiting the Randall Museum that day, it will be the first -- and likely the only -- chance to see such a thing. Mercury is too tiny against the face of the sun to register without telescopic magnification, and then only with a proper solar filter. As a visual experience, I suppose a transit of Mercury will not soar to the top of most people's lifetime memories list. Venus is bigger, and its transit across the sun is both a more memorable and rarer event. Of course, a transit of the moon is the epitome of solar transits, but we assign a special name to that. Still, the sight of that tiny geometrically perfect, mercurial sphere progressing across the face of the sun, so precisely predicted, should be pretty memorable for a 5th grader. On the transit day, November 8, the Randall Museum staff, ASP staff, and SFAA volunteers will provide solar scopes and educational activities to help explain the dynamics of the transit. If you have a solar scope (white light or H-alpha) and would like to help out, let me know -- soon. Solar transits are necessarily a mid-day event which unfortunately means “work” day for most folks.

Some of you may have noticed a recent, but short-lived, problem with our web site. The cyber details are beyond my comprehension, but fortunately our webmaster, Joe Amato,

was vigilant and quickly gained the upper hand. Things are now back to normal, but it just reminded me how fortunate we are in having someone able to put in the time to not only maintain the site but redesign and upgrade it as well. Thanks, Joe!

Now that we have passed the autumnal equinox and have only one quarter left in the year, it is time to begin thinking of our end-of-year events. Our annual dinner in January is when we install a new Board of Directors and present our annual awards. None of those can be last-minute decisions. “Observer of the Year”, “Service”, and the “Herman Fast Lifetime Achievement” awards all deserve some thought. It's also the time we announce winners of the Astro Art and Astro Photography contests. So start thinking, creating and nominating now!

AND, We will again be beating the bushes to recruit new Directors and Officers. From past experience, it's best if you come out of the bushes on your own and let us know if you'd be willing to serve. No one wants to be swinging around wildly at bushes in the dark. Someone, or some thing, might get hurt. Just step forward, show yourself (we avoid bright lights), and we'll put you on the ballot that goes out in two months.

See you in the dark...in front of the bushes,

John Dillon
President

San Francisco Amateur Astronomers



NEW SFAA MEMBERS

Scope City is offering to new members a \$25 credit toward the purchase of telescopes and binoculars.

Obtain a receipt for dues payment from Stephanie Ulrey, Treasurer, treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org.

Contact Sam Sweiss at Scope City to arrange for your discount.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

SFAA General Meetings & Lectures

Wednesday, October 18

Wednesday, November 15

Wednesday, December 20

7:00 p.m. Doors open. 7:30 p.m. Announcements. 8:00 p.m. Speaker
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way (Near 14th Street and Roosevelt)

Board Meetings

Tuesday, October 10

Tuesday, November 14

Tuesday, December 12

7:00-8:30 p.m.
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way
(Near 14th Street and Roosevelt)

City Star Parties

Saturday, October 14, 6:30 p.m. – RANDALL MUSEUM - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset
STEPHANIE ULREY, Speaker

AMATEUR ASTRONOMY – HOW TO GET STARTED

Saturday, November 25, 5:00 p.m. - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset
SPEAKER VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Saturday, December 16, 5:00 p.m. - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset
SPEAKER VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Weather may cancel the City Star Party. Call the SFAA Hotline at (415) 289-6636 AFTER 4 PM to learn the status of the event and the location. If the hotline announces the Star Party is cancelled, the Telescope Clinic and Lecture are cancelled as well. However, if the Hotline does not cancel the Star Party, be assured that the Lecture will proceed as scheduled even given less-than-perfect telescope conditions.

Please also note that while City Star Parties WILL ALWAYS be held on Saturdays, some will be closer to the last quarter phase of the moon, while others will be close to first quarter. This is so we can work around dates for Mt. Tam public star parties as well as our members-only events on Mt. Tam.

Mt Tam Star Parties – Special Use Permit – Members Only

Saturday, October 21, 7:00 p.m. – Orionids - **ONE GATEKEEPER VOLUNTEER NEEDED**

Saturday, November 18, 5:00 p.m. - **TWO GATEKEEPER VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Upcoming General Meeting Guest Speakers

November 15 – ADRIENNE COOL, San Francisco State University

A member of the Hubble Heritage Team, Dr. Cool presents the latest results from the Hubble Telescope's Advanced Camera for Surveys (ACS).

December 20 – MEMBER'S NIGHT

The December 20th SFAA meeting is Member's Night, when members get a chance to speak about their special interests. A short talk about an observing experience, a favorite astronomy site, astronomy equipment or a particular target of study are a few suggestions of possible talks. Now is the time to begin thinking about how you can participate in the year's final meeting.

Please contact Linda Mahan doublestar@comcast.net

December Member's Night is also a chance to participate by entering the Astronomy Art Contest with your original art work. You may enter drawings, paintings, sculpture, found art or collage. Be creative. A decorated cake was entered one year. Enjoy this chance to express yourself, and enter the Art Contest.

The Astronomical Photography contest is also a feature of Member's Night. Plan now to enter your original astro images.

Everyone present for the December meeting judges the Art and Astrophotography before the talks begin. Winners are announced at the Member's Dinner in January, where beautiful hand made awards are presented for First, Second and Third prizes in the Art and Astrophotography category. Enter, and plan to join your fellow SFAA members for the Awards Dinner. Our participation enriches the experience of SFAA.

Sunday, October 8, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM
OBSERVE, LEARN AND CREATE

Autumn Moon Fall Family Festival

ASIAN ART MUSEUM

**200 Larkin Street (across from the Main
Library and City Hall)
San Francisco, California**

Join Bay Area artists as they facilitate fun and engaging hands-on activities related to artwork on display in the museum. Screen printing, woodblock prints, shadow puppets, Chinese children's hats and paper cuts, and Vietnamese lanterns.

On the front steps of the museum, view the Sun through special, safe, solar telescopes provided by the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers.

For more information:

<http://www.asianart.org/familyfestival.htm>

Regards,

Michael Portuesi

San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers

info@sfsidewalkastronomers.org;

<http://sfsidewalkastronomers.org>

**TELESCOPE MAKING AND
COSMOLOGY CLASSES
TAUGHT BY JOHN DOBSON**

Imagine if you had a chance to learn Morse code from Samuel Morse, or study Cartesian Geometry from Rene' Descartes. Imagine how you'd feel if you had to tell your grandchildren that you had **missed** your chance to build your own diesel engine under the supervision of Rudolph Diesel. Well, don't miss your chance to make your own Dobsonian telescope!

Explore the Universe with John Dobson! How it got the way it is and how we got the way we are to wonder about it. His specialty is seeing the philosophical meaning behind quantum mechanics and relativity theory. What does Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle tell us about the nature of our universe? Hear his alternative view to the Big Bang cosmological model.

Classes will be held at: Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco, CA 94114 ph: (415) 554-9600 **starting October 11th at 7:00 pm** for telescope making and **Thursday October 12th 7:00 pm** for cosmology. There are 10 classes ending on December 12-13. Please contact the Randall Museum to sign up. <http://www.randallmuseum.org/events.cfm>
Class size is limited.

FREE EVENING LECTURE AT NASA AMES

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 25, 2006

7-9 P.M.

NASA AMES RESEARCH CENTER, BLDG. 943, EAGLE ROOM

Greetings from NASA Ames!

The NASA Research Park Exploration Lecture Series is presenting '*The View From the Center of the Universe*' on October 25, 2006. Cosmologist Dr. Joel R. Primack and writer/philosopher Nancy Ellen Abrams will discuss recent advances in astronomy, show spectacular new videos, and frame a compelling new theory for understanding the universe and our role in it.

Book-signing opportunity after the lecture.

Co-sponsored by SETI Institute.

For directions or to read more about the authors, please visit: www.researchpark.arc.nasa.gov

SFAA ANNUAL BOOTJACK STAR-B-Q

Saturday September 16, 2006

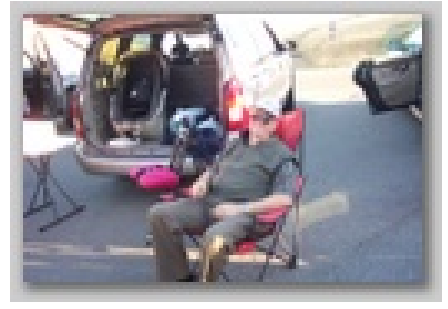
There was a wonderful turnout for the 2006 Star-B-Q was held on Saturday, September 16th. The weather was just right for a very comfortable picnic and an even more comfortable evening of observing (despite the slight glow to the sky). Below are some photos before the sun went down --



*Linda's handpaddle idea –
Raised clear plastic for the
keypad*



*Linda and her Celestron "no
glare" designer skirt*



Norm, watching Linda set up



*Jim explaining the finer points installing
the Argo Navis setting circles*



*Michael getting ready for
serious double star sluthing*



*Steph & Melvin with Jim's
tripod/wedge donation to SFAA*



Art & Kerry



Monean fine tuning her new finder



*Chelle, Art & Kerry instructing on
the fine art of...*



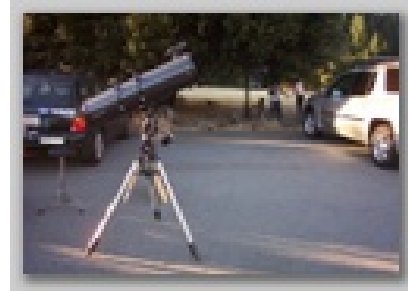
Traffic Directress



Joe setting up



Ed Gerck & Family



Melvin's Orion



Eric & Joanne Pousard w/ their classic LX-10



John setting up



Monean & her toys



Talk about an eyepiece extension



Jupiter over Rock Springs



Testing the Sky Scout

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, POB 15097, San Francisco CA 94115

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:

Address:

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

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.