

ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

VOL. 48, No. 8 – August 2000

San Francisco
Amateur Astronomers



Sharing the Wonders
of the Universe



Information Hotline
(415) 566-2357

Web Page
<http://www.zennla.com/sfaa>

Lynette Rene Cook
Guest Speaker
General Meeting, August 16

“Creating Space Art”

Interested in both art and science since childhood, Lynette Cook double majored in Biology and Drawing & Painting at the Mississippi University for Women. She completed a Bachelor of Science degree in 1981 and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree a year later. Before her graduation with a Master of Fine Arts in 1984, Lynette interned at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, working in the departments of Exhibits and Invertebrate Zoology. This internship led to freelance work at the museum, and eventually to the staff job of Artist/Photographer for the Morrison Planetarium, a position she still holds.

Her astronomical artwork has been published around the world in a variety of formats and by many publishers, including the periodicals *"Astronomy"*, *"bild der wissenschaft"* (Germany), *"Cosas"* (Peru), *"Eos"* (Belgium), *"Science et Vie"* (France), *"Science News"*, and *"Sky & Telescope"*; in documentaries airing on BBC Television, CNN, The Discovery Channel, Japan Public Television, The Learning Channel, and PBS; and the newspapers *"The Washington Post"*, *"San Francisco Chronicle"*, and *"The Oakland Tribune"*. Lynette is a Fellow of the [International Association of Astronomical Artists](#) and a member of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators and the San Francisco Society of Illustrators.

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**Speaker**  
**City Star Party, August 5**  
To be announced...

## SFAA Officers 2000

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(510) 728-1851

*Vice-President* Bill Stepka  
(415) 928-2367

*Secretary* Renita Mock  
(415) 566-2357

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### Subscriptions & Membership

Chelle Owens (415) 479-5313

### Bulletin Editor

Lorrie Boen (415) 921-1432

### Telescope Loans

Ray Cash (415) 665-8666

## SFAA Website Update

For those of you with online access, don't forget to visit the club's website. The bulletin board area especially is a great place to post info and ask questions. Go to <http://www.zennla.com/sfaa>.

*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 last day of the prior month. Send your articles to Lorrie Boen at 765 Geary Street #302, San Francisco, CA 94109 or at LorrenLee@aol.com.

## Club Telescopes



Long time member Ray Cash-LePennec has 3 loaner telescopes for club member use and is in charge of loaning them out. If you are interested in borrowing a club telescope, give Ray a call. There are many new members in the SFAA and they ask what kind of telescope to buy or use and this is a good way to get to know the Dobsonian type of scope and learn the sky as well.

## CLUB DATES

### **Board Meeting**

August 9 – 7:00 p.m. Western Addition Library – corner of Scott & Geary Sts. SF

### **SFAA Club Meeting**

August 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Morrison Planetarium, Golden Gate Park

### **City Star Party**

August 5 at 8:00 p.m.

### **Mt. Tam Star Party**

July 29 at 8:30 p.m.

August 26 at 8:00 p.m.

## From the President

The Yosemite star party at Glacier Point the first weekend of July was another wonderful time for all involved. We were witness to a controlled demise of some Russian satellite parts. It looked like a meteor as it went all the way across the sky from West to East with it breaking up into four or so pieces as it disappeared on the Eastern horizon far beyond Half Dome. It was quite a sight and probably a once in a life event for us all. We saw Iridium flares, the Mir space station, and many satellites. Alpen glow and the earth's shadow rising in the East at the end of sunset were also observed by many of us. Solar activity was also observed by many of us and the general public who happened to walk by as well. Oh yes, there was some astronomical observing as well). (Many hours of it actually.) Including observing the companion star to Antaries, the two companion stars of Vega, the enjoyment of seeing many other wonderful objects, and the fun of honing many of our observing skills. It is always amazing how interested people become in our activities, when they just happen to be walking by.

Lynette Cook will be our guest speaker on August 16th explaining how she does her wonderful science art work. This may be the only time she gives this presentation so you may want to invite interested folks from other astronomy clubs to come hear this interesting presentation.

Look for information about the SFAA picnic in this bulletin. Starting in August there just might even be refreshments at our club meetings. I also understand that Nancy Cox may be presenting again at NCHALADA on August 5 at Chabot.

A literary award program has been offered to all interested SFAA club members. We would like to see some entries submitted for this program. There are some good writers out there for sure and we would like to hear from you!!!

Morrison Planetarium's  
**Benjamin Dean Lecture Series**  
*Presents*

A Summer of Stellar Storytelling for the Family  
*Featuring Tales of the Sky and the Universe*

**8 August**  
***Olga Loya***

*"Sky Stories from Latin America"*

Celebrate the magic of stories of the heavens from the Aztecs, the Incas and the Mayans,  
in a bilingual presentation featuring drums and audience participation.

DEAN LECTURE INFORMATION LINE at (415) 750-7141



# Mt. Tamalpais State Park Astronomy Programs

*Lectures held in the Mountain Theater  
Observing is in the Rock Springs Parking Area*

**July 29-at 8:30 p.m. - DR. PHILIP SCHERRER**

Professor of Physics, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

"Journey to the Center of the Sun"

New understanding of the solar interior, based on recent observations from the SOHO spacecraft, has implications for the mechanisms that generate the solar sunspot cycle.

**August 26 at 8:00 p.m. - DR. DOMENICK TENERELLI**

Systems Engineer Consultant for TPF, LOCKHEED-MARTIN

"The Terrestrial Planet Finder"

The TPF, under development, is a major component of NASA's Origins program. Missions over the next two decades will study planets beyond our solar system.

**September 30 at 7:30 p.m. - DR. LYNN ROTHSCILD**

Research Scientist, Ecosystem Branch, NASA-AMES RESEARCH CENTER

"The Sun, the Moon and the Algae" Evolution is influenced by the physical environment, including extraterrestrial factors. What was the roll of the Sun and the Moon on the development of life?

Information: (415) 455-5370, (415) 388-2070

Same Day Hotlines: (415) 566-2357, (415) 455-5370 (messages after 4:00 p.m.)

Address: MTIA/Astronomy Programs, PO Box 3318, San Rafael, CA 94912

If you are a Mt. Tam volunteer, please call in your hours to Bridget Mason at (415) 361-6527



## Upcoming Speakers at the General Meetings

| Name                                                  | Date                | Topic                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Lynette Cook</b><br>Artist at Morrison Planetarium | <b>August 16</b>    | <b>Creating Space Art</b>                       |
| <b>Joe Tenn</b><br>College Professor and History Buff | <b>September 20</b> | <b>Astronomy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century</b> |
| <b>Paul Mortfield</b><br>Astrophotographer            | <b>October 18</b>   | <b>The Good, the Bad and the Fuzzy</b>          |

# SFAA Annual Picnic

*Set aside the date! Get out the map and mark the spot!*

**September 16, 2000**

**Stern Grove – 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Sloat Blvd.**

**East Meadow Picnic Area**

(details and directions will be in the next issue!)



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## *LAST CALL!!!*

### **SFAA 2000 Literary Award**

- 750 words (each word can be big as you like, as small as you like)
- Postmarked by August 31, 2000
- In print ready format, on a 3.5" diskette or zip disk, or as an attachment to an email
- All disks will be returned to the owners
- Mail to Lorrie Boen at 765 Geary Street #302, San Francisco, CA 94109
- Email to [LorrenLee@aol.com](mailto:LorrenLee@aol.com).
- Everyone in the club will get to read and vote on every article
- Winners announced at the December 20 General Meeting
- Awards presented at the SFAA Annual Awards Banquet in January 2001
- Reprints of articles in "Above the Fog" in 2000 accepted (up to 750 words)

Sponsored by our friends at



## "Sky Show" Event Scheduled for Davis

Patricia Kurtz, Astronomy magazine

I represent Astronomy Magazine in its Outreach and Education arena. To this end, we are implementing a new kind of star party; one that we hope will excite and inspire the general public, as well as expert amateurs. We are proud to invite you to participate in Astronomy Magazine's Davis "Sky Show" on August 4th and 5th.

The event will be held in Davis, California, at the Veteran's Conference Center and will begin with a keynote speaker the evening of August 4th. The next day's activities may begin with a pancake breakfast followed by the opening of the exhibit area at 10:00 a.m. Our speaker series should begin shortly thereafter and will feature notables like Alex Filippenko, Ray Jay, and Seth Shostak. We will also host a special panel of astronomy personages such as Bonnie Gordon, David Eicher, Lynette Cook, and Sally Stephens. Daytime activities will include exhibits, children and family activities, vendors, photo and book signings, and solar viewing. We will set up a website that will update speakers and events as we progress. As you can tell, we are planning a full day of astronomy!

As for the night - The star party rules the night. At least it rules Saturday night! The largest area of the star party will be completely geared to the general public unfamiliar with astronomy and stargazing. There will be basic "observing stations" - one for constellations, one for lunar and planetary, and one for deep sky observing. Each station will introduce the types of telescopes in use, and some observing etiquette. The visitors will be given handouts at each station to take home with them:

Constellation Station - A quick tour of the sky and constellations. We'll introduce the summer triangle and the Milky Way along with the use of binoculars for stargazing.

Lunar/Planetary Station - We get a brief opportunity to view Venus after sunset followed by great views of a waxing Moon and will discuss their phasing. The outer gas giants will be available later in the evening. We will also talk about observing this Fall's planets Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

Deep Sky Station - A talk (still brief, here) will discuss the difference between nebulae (i.e., reflection, dark, planetary, supernova remnants), star clusters (globs and open), and galaxies. The telescopes at this station will be separated into these three categories. The tricks to observing some objects will also be discussed.

We are looking for volunteers and telescopes to work these stations. Do you have members you consider experts or proficient in these areas that would be interested in leading a station? If you or your club would like to help run one of these stations please let us know. This will really give your members a chance to showcase what they love. And, we'd like to group most of the telescopes within these stations so that people will be able to choose what they see and learn while they're at it. Perhaps your members will have a preference as to which station they'd like to participate in.

There should be plenty of room for "hundreds" of telescopes. Please help us get the word out and make this Northern California's largest star party ever. Additionally, it will be very helpful to have an approximate count of folks with telescopes so that we can arrange special parking, if needed.

You might be asking, "Why Davis?" Recently, Davis passed one of the strongest light pollution ordinances in California. Help us show their community that light pollution does matter and that we support them with their efforts to fight it.

Please respond by email anytime, or telephone myself at (303) 948-5825, or Kris Koenig at (530) 879-0207. Email [pkurtz@globaltelescope.com](mailto:pkurtz@globaltelescope.com)

Mail to: [Patricia Kurtz](mailto:Patricia.Kurtz) Copyright © 2000 San Jose Astronomical Association Last updated: June 27, 2000

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## *Walter Scott Houston Fund*

Walter Scott Houston was a well know science writer and amateur astronomer. For 50 years, he wrote a page titled "Deep Space Wonders" for Sky and Telescope. He was also a sundial enthusiast. In his honor, Wesleyan University set up a fund to construct a sundial at the University. However, it appears that the proposed project was a little ambitious for the available funds.

Professor William Herbst of the Astronomy Department has announced that the 20-inch Clark refractor telescope in the observatory at Wesleyan University will be renovated instead. In this way, qualified amateur astronomers will be able to enjoy use of the telescope, just as Walter had done on many occasions.

The University hopes that this change in plans for the Fund will have the approval of anyone who made a donation. Lew Epstein, a long time friend of Walter Scott Houston, and member of the SFAA, feels that Walter would most certainly approve. Lew believes that Walter would say that it is much better to spend the money on an instrument that will be used by many rather than a (useless) ornament.



## To snail mail or not to snail mail, that is the question...

I am looking for hardy souls who would like to try getting their bulletins by email instead of by the courtesy of the U.S. Postal Service. Send me your email address, by email or snail mail. You'll find both addresses on page 2, top right paragraph. Be patient, however, with any gremlin instigated glitches that may occur. There are growing pains with any exercise.

I use MS Word2000. (Sorry, no ultra-high-or-low-tech stuff going on here.) I do try to keep the file size under 1.0 MB. (Many email systems do not accept large attachments.)

It is hoped to reduce costs to the club to email the bulletin as an attachment to any who would prefer that to USPS mail. A bonus is that you will get to see the color in any photos or graphics used in the bulletin.



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, 13 Mabry Way, San Rafael, CA 94903**

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

- \$ 8 enclosed, youth membership (under 18)
- \$30 enclosed, institutional membership
- \$30 enclosed, family membership
- \$30 enclosed, foreign membership
- \$25 enclosed, individual membership

**Select one category:**

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

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## **San Francisco Amateur Astronomers Membership Application**

### **San Francisco Amateur Astronomers**

c/o Morrison Planetarium  
California Academy of Sciences  
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA 94118

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**In This Issue of SFAA's  
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