

★ ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

VOL. 52, No. 9 – SEPTEMBER 2004

SEPTEMBER 15, 2004 – GENERAL MEETING

RANDALL MUSEUM
199 MUSEUM WAY
SAN FRANCISCO

7:00 PM DOORS OPEN
7:30 PM ANNOUNCEMENTS
8:00 PM SPEAKER

DR. JOHN WESTFALL

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE TWO CLOSEST PLANETS



Taking the classical definition of *planet* – a regularly moving celestial object – the Moon and Venus are the two closest. Thus the first part of the talk describes the speaker's trip to the island of Cyprus to observe the June 8th transit of Venus, along with some results from the nearly worldwide observations of this event. The second subject is amateur observing of the Moon, highlighting several lunar projects that amateurs are involved in that have scientific value. Several useful free sources of lunar information on the worldwide web are described. To finish off, the October 27 total eclipse of the Moon is previewed, most of which will be visible from the Bay Area.

*Dr. John Westfall is a professor of Geography at San Francisco State University, and has been there since 1968 when he moved to San Francisco (although, finally tiring of the fog cutting into his observing, he moved to Antioch in 2000). He is a board member of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers and the coordinator of their Mercury/Venus Transit Section and their Galilean Satellite Eclipse Timing Program. He likes to observe the Moon, transits and eclipses and has authored *Atlas of the Lunar Terminator* (2000) and, with William Sheehan, *The Transits of Venus* (2004).*

2003 CLUB OFFICERS & CONTACTS

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| President | Michael Portuesi | (415) 550-9366 |
| Vice President | Nancy Cox | (415) 269-8259 |
| Secretary | James Mace | |
| Treasurer | Lorrie Boen | |
| Speaker Chair | Linda Mahan | |
| City Star Party | Randy Taylor | (415) 255-8670 |
| Membership & Subscriptions Bulletin | Lorrie Boen | |
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| Board Members | Jim Webster | |
| | Steve Bryson | |
| | Danny Christian | |
| | Cheryl Schudel | |
| | Ken Frank | |
| | Slava Evankoff | |
| | Randy Taylor | |
| Alt. Board Members | John Dillon | |
| | Phil Estrin | |
| Webmaster | Joe Amato | |

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 (<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>

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.

CLUB TELESCOPES

The SFAA owns 4 club loaner telescopes, Dobsonian/Newtonian 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>

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

MICHAEL PORTUESI

Out of all the columns I've written for this newsletter, this one is the most difficult for me to write, as it concerns the future of SFAA.

You might have noticed over the past few years, participation in SFAA events and functions has been getting thinner. Attendance at monthly meetings is down, and has been down for some time. Fewer people come to the star parties, and finding people who are willing to staff the gate for Mount Tam events has become very difficult. We had barely enough people at the Awards Dinner in January to secure the room reservations for the restaurant. Participation in outreach activities such as our Solar Day at the Public Library have gone downhill as well.

Part of this is due to some long-time members moving from the area. But that is not the entire explanation. Our special events, such as the Yosemite trip and last year's Annual Picnic, have been well attended. But overall, club participation is down across the board.

Currently, a small handful of people do the actual work of running the club, putting together events, and maintaining our ongoing relationships with the State Parks and other outside organizations. It's rewarding, but without additional people pitching in, it's demanding as well.

Which brings me to the end of this year. Several officers and board members, including myself, will be stepping down at the end of this year. We will need a new Secretary, Treasurer and President at a minimum.

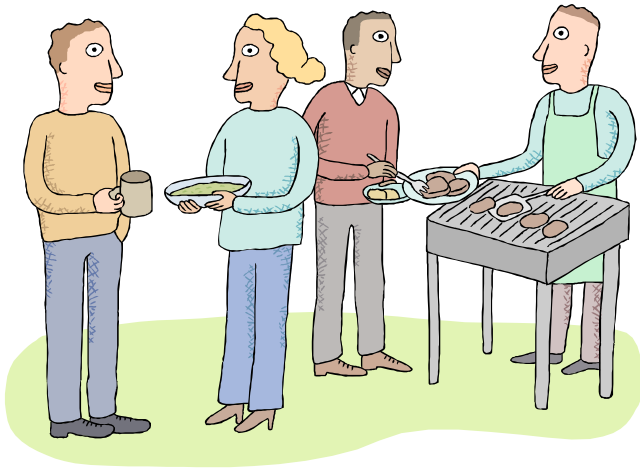
I have made requests at the general meetings, and here in the newsletter, seeking people who are interested in giving something back to the club in terms of service, in exchange for the benefits the club has brought them. So far, I have received no response.

The situation is as simple as this, folks. If no one is willing to step forward and help, SFAA will cease to exist at the end of this year, once the officers' terms run out. The club by-laws stipulate the officer positions must be filled. If no one is willing to fill them, the current Board will be bound to investigate ways to dissolve the club, refund dues on a pro-rated basis, and turn the remaining club assets over to the Astronomical Association of Northern California (AANC).

SFAA needs not only leaders, but it needs more people who are willing to pitch in and help. Perhaps you could bring a telescope to outreach events, and staff the gate at Mount Tam star parties. Or you could volunteer to do a simple task such as shopping for party supplies, sponsoring a group event, organizing a group order of sweatshirts, or stuffing envelopes for a membership drive.

Please consider supporting the SFAA in whatever way is most meaningful to you. Or else there will be no SFAA to support.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2004 4:00 P.M.
SFAA Annual Picnic



Come to the 2004 San Francisco Amateur Astronomers Annual Picnic and Star B Q! Hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided. Any contributions of other food items will be most welcome, and gratefully devoured ... especially if they have an astronomical theme!

After the picnic, stay for a private SFAA-only star party. Bring your telescope/solar scope along and join in the fun!

You can do your own observing, or you can take part in a special group observing session we will be sponsoring for those interested. We will have a list of suggested targets for you to observe and the opportunity to share the views of these objects through each other's telescopes.

If you plan to attend, please send email to [kennethfrank \(at\) planitarium.net](mailto:kennethfrank@planitarium.net). We need an accurate count so there's no waste of food and supplies.

Following the Star B Q, for those wishing a darker site i.e. Lake Sonoma, feel free to leave early; we understand.

Directions

Blue and Gold Schedule from either Ferry Bldg. or Pier 41 <http://198.94.156.9/Sched/BG/TIB/A/>

Golden Gate Transit (stops at our driveway either NW or SE bound)

<http://www.goldengatetransit.org/schedules/pages/NewSchedules/Bus-Schedules.html>

[Tell the driver you want the Gilmartin Drive stop]

Driving 101 N or S take Tiburon Blvd (Hwy 131) exit. Pass thru Rock Hill signal. Turn Left up the driveway AT the Gilmartin Drive sign. We are on the Left. As Yosemite, drop off your scope and park on Tiburon Blvd. This is an easement and shared driveway. For fire/safety and continued good neighbor relations, please do not block the driveway or the carport.

We're one mile (exactly) past Blackie's Pasture (@Trestle Glen a steeply banked right-hand turn) and less than 4 miles from 101. You'll spot the Gilmartin Drive sign on the R.



http://maps.yahoo.com/py/maps.py?Pyt=Tmap&ed=xPqPI.p_0TqDfHl7SfKtpaQzGUU2mY2NjkuUKO7BfxjFiE09APbol5r6SzYs&csz=TIBURON,+CA&country=us

Stanford Linear Accelerator Center



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 10:00 A.M

STANFORD LINEAR ACCELERATOR CENTER FIELD TRIP

SFAA will host a tour of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center for members and their invited guests.

Those who wish to attend should sign up at the general meetings or by calling (415) 221-6004. If you leave a voice message you must also leave a phone number and your primary residence, and the names of any other family members or guests who will be attending along with their addresses and full names. All tour participants need to bring photo identification for access to the lab. Please check with the attendant at the front gate on your arrival for information on where to park and learn the tours starting place.

SLAC is located on about 430 acres of Stanford property. It is a government-owned facility operated by Stanford University for the Department of Energy Office of Science. The main entrance is located on Sand Hill Road, just east of highway 280, on the South side of the road. If you need additional driving directions these can be found at www.slac.stanford.edu/welcome/location.html.

The number of people attending will be limited to the first thirty. Tours take about two hours. Feel free to bring cameras. The tour guide will meet you at the tour meeting room, where the group will be given a presentation on SLAC, followed by a bus tour of the site. There is no fee.

JIM WEBSTER



IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8 . OCTOBER 13 .
NOVEMBER 10
7:00 P.M.

Western Addition Library
Scott & Geary Streets, San Francisco

SFAA GENERAL MEETING & LECTURE
SEPTEMBER 15 . OCTOBER 20
NOVEMBER 17

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)

CITY STAR PARTY

OCTOBER 23 – 6:21 P.M.

NOVEMBER 20 – 4:55 P.M.

DECEMBER 18 – 4:53 P.M.

Star parties on the above dates sponsored by the National Park Service

Position Open - Treasurer

After six years of volunteering in various roles with the SFAA, I am stepping back for at least the next year. It is mostly to focus on a couple of projects, but also because I do not get much opportunity to attend most SFAA events. After being a board member for four years, three of those also as bulletin editor, I have been treasurer since January 2003. So, the club needs someone to take the plunge and run for treasurer for 2005.

The role is not very difficult or time-consuming. The main duties are processing renewals and new memberships, picking up mail from the post office box (I do this once a week), banking the checks, and attending the board meetings. I also maintain current and lapsed membership lists and sent an electronic file of address labels to the bulletin editor once a month. There are other occasional checks to be written, such as the post office box fees, insurance premiums and donations. It's all quite easy, really. I spend about six hours a month on the duties of the office, plus the time needed for the board meeting.

My decision to not run for the office again is not optional. So, I hope someone out there is willing to devote a little time and effort to the club. I have enjoyed my involvement immensely. If you have any interest and want to ask about it, please email me at treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org.

Clear skies,
Lorrie Boen
Treasurer

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2004
FAMILY ASTRO WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY!



Dear Amateur and Enthusiast:

The non-profit Astronomical Society of the Pacific program, Family ASTRO, brings fun astronomy programs to diverse groups of families. With support from the National Science Foundation, we have created a series of accessible, hands-on kits and events on basic astronomy topics.

We are offering a free Family ASTRO Event-Leader Training Workshop on Saturday, October 2nd, and would be happy to include a member of your educational or activity staff (or volunteer) who is interested in working on science with families. The program will take place at the Astronomical Society of the Pacific's office in San Francisco from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. We are on Ocean Avenue, half way between City College and San Francisco State.

The workshop will prepare Leaders to use the activities in our Night Sky Adventure kit by focusing on activities related to the night sky and constellations. Families build and use their own star finder and learn to identify objects in the Night Sky. We recommend that these events include a star party at your family event. The activities can also serve as a back up in case your star party gets clouded out!

We are asking all event leaders to commit to doing at least two Night Sky Adventure family events with groups of five or more families throughout the next year.

If you are interested in the October 2nd training, you can find the application at:

<<http://www.astrosociety.org/education/familyflyer.html>.><http://www.astrosociety.org/education/familyflyer.html>. The application deadline is Friday, September 24.

You can also contact Kristin Nelson at (415) 337-1100 ext. 101 or knelson@astrosociety.org for an application or for more information. Space is limited, so please submit your application quickly.

We think you will find our kits and new ways of working directly with families intriguing. Family ASTRO may be able to add a new dimension to your outreach and planned family activities. We hope you can join us.

Thanks,

Kristin Nelson
Bay Area Project ASTRO Coordinator & Family ASTRO Coordinator & Night Sky Network Administrator

www.astrosociety.org/education

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF HELPING KIDS SET THEIR SIGHTS ON THE STARS!

Read more at

<<http://www.astrosociety.org/education/astro/pressrelease.html>.><http://www.astrosociety.org/education/astro/pressrelease.html>

ASTRO Volunteers' Discussion Forums at:

<http://www.astrosociety.org/phpBB2/index.php>><http://www.astrosociety.org/phpBB2/index.php>

NEW JOB WITH NIGHT SKY NETWORK

Several clubs in the Bay Area are members of NASA's Night Sky Network, so they know it is growing and flourishing and there's more work than we can keep up with. The ASP is announcing a new half-time position for a person who has great people skills, is organized and loves astronomy to help build a sense of community among the participants. The official posting is below, please help us spread the word.

Thanks,

Suzy Chippindale, ASP Night Sky Network Coordinator

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP, www.astrosociety.org) has a half-time position available for an articulate, responsible person, with an interest in amateur astronomer outreach, to work with the Night Sky Network (nightsky.nasa.jpl.gov). This program is run by the ASP for NASA to bring resources to amateur astronomy clubs active in outreach and is working to create a community of practice with its participating clubs.

Job responsibilities focus on creating a sense of community for the participants and include:

- * researching, writing and posting news stories that highlight the outreach activities of participants and milestones of the Network on the public and private web pages,
- * organizing teleconferences for participants with NASA astronomers and scientists,
- * managing the discussion board,
- * responding to inquiries from participants in a timely manner,
- * regular correspondence acknowledging accomplishments,
- * administering the awarding of quarterly and annual incentives to participants.

A background as an amateur astronomer is highly desirable; applicants should have a bachelor's degree, a strong command of written and spoken English, good organizational skills, and familiarity with computers (including e-mail, word processing, and the web.)

The ASP is a pleasant, informal place to work, especially as part of a team interested in improving science education at many levels. Preference will be given to applicants in the San Francisco Bay area, but applications will be considered from those who would need to telecommute. As a half time position, no relocation expenses will be reimbursed and no benefits apply. The ASP provides equal employment opportunity to all qualified persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, national origin, medical condition or handicap as defined in federal, state and local laws. The ASP has an employment-at-will relationship with all of its employees, which means that employment at the ASP shall continue only so long as it is mutually agreeable to the employee and the ASP.

To apply for the position, email a cover letter explaining your qualifications and a resume to: schippindale@astrosociety.org

Or send a hard copy to: Suzanne Chippindale
Astronomical Society of the Pacific
390 Ashton Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94112

2004 MT TAM ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS

TINKA ROSS

MT TAM ENTHUSIASTS

**BELOW IS A LISTING OF OUR PROGRAMS FOR THE 2004 SEASON
LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN!**

A FEW CHANGES THIS YEAR

- 1) Our astronomy programs will be on the Saturdays near the First Quarter Moons (not new moons)
- 2) The Madrone Picnic Area (next to the Mt Theater) is reserved 1 1/2 hours before each program for informal gathering. Bring your picnic supper and meet the speakers before the talk.
- 3) We have added two storytelling evenings - suitable for young and old alike. No telescope viewing with these programs

Plenty of time to get your raffle tickets for the trip to Egypt to view the Transit of Venus this coming June. Purchase at our March-May programs, check out our website at <http://www.mttam.net/> or send money to Mt Tam Astronomy Programs, c/o Tinka Ross, 89 Dominican Drive, San Rafael, CA 94901. \$5 per ticket or 5 tickets for \$20. Proceeds will benefit the Mt Tam Astronomy Programs and the MTIA Gravity Barn Project.

2004 MT TAM STORYTELLING

OCTOBER 23 - 5:00PM
MARY ELLEN HILL

"WE ARE THE STARS THAT SING: THE STORY OF THE UNIVERSE"

SAN FRANCISCO CITY STAR PARTY. 2004

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 6:00 P.M.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 5:00 P.M.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 6:15 P.M.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 5:00 P.M.

Join the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers (SFAA) and the National Park Service in sharing the wonders of the night sky in San Francisco. Ask about your favorite constellation or astronomical phenomenon. Telescopes will be provided, or you may bring your own. The San Francisco Amateur Astronomers will co-sponsor the City Star Party in the winter and fall months, January, February, March, October, November and December. The National Park Service will sponsor the City Star Party in the spring and summer--April, May, June, July, August and September. The star parties will be held in the parking lot next to the *USS San Francisco* Memorial at Lands End on El Camino del Mar, just north of 48th and Pt. Lobos avenues, off of Geary Blvd. For more information about the program and weather conditions for the winter and fall events, please call the SFAA hotline at (415) 289-6636 or visit the SFAA website at www.sfaa-astronomy.org. For more information about the spring and summer programs, call the National Park Service at (415) 239-2366 or visit their website at www.nps.gov/goga/parknews/events.

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.

make checks payable to **San Francisco Amateur Astronomers** and mail to:
Treasurer, SFAA, 765 Geary St., #302, San Francisco CA 94109

- \$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:

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

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.