

# ★ ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

**VOL. 53, No. 12 – NOVEMBER 2005**

December 21, 2005 – General Meeting  
RANDALL MUSEUM, 199 MUSEUM WAY, SAN FRANCISCO  
7:00 PM DOORS OPEN . 7:30 PM ANNOUNCEMENTS . 8:00 PM SPEAKER

## **MEMBER'S NIGHT**

### **JOHN DILLON THE BOOK NOBODY READ**



Copernicus' famous work, "De Revolutionibus", is the reason, today, we call bold new ideas "revolutionary". It played a central role in the emergence of modern science. For many years it was called "the book nobody read" because it took so long after it was published before the revolution in astronomy got underway. The Astronomer, Owen Gingerich, spent 30 years tracking down every known early edition and challenged its unread status. Then he wrote a popular book with that title. John Dillon recently had the privilege of examining a rare first edition and was motivated to delve further into its history. John will show why, although "De Revolutionibus" spurred a revolution, Copernicus was no revolutionary.

### **STEVE GOTTLIEB STARGAZING IN OZ**



In July, my family traveled again to Australia for three weeks of vacation in Sydney and Port Douglas (Great Barrier Reef) including 8 nights of stargazing at an astronomical inn with an 18-inch scope. For those who have never experienced the splendor of the southern Milky Way and its astronomical delights, this presentation will give some hints for planning a trip to Oz and an introduction to some of my favorite southern objects.

*Steve Gottlieb has been obsessed with deep sky observing for 27 years and a member of SFAA since 1981. He's written a number of deep-sky observing articles for Sky & Telescope, Astronomy, Deep Sky Magazine as well as the SFAA bulletin. His latest article on observing Wolf-Rayet nebulae will be published in the February '06 issue of Astronomy magazine.*

### **MICHAEL PORTUESI ASTRO-IMAGING WITHOUT THE CAMERA**

We've all seen stunning photos of the cosmos taken by amateur astronomers, using CCD, digital cameras, and film. But there's another way to image the cosmos, using the "camera" that nature provided every one of us. We'll take a look at the tools and techniques you can use to create your own astronomical sketches, and build your observing skills in the process.

*Michael Portuesi edits the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers website ([www.sfsidewalkastronomers.org](http://www.sfsidewalkastronomers.org)), and is past-president of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers. He is an avid observer, having sketched many celestial objects with his small collection of telescopes and binoculars. His articles and sketches have appeared in Night Sky magazine.*



## ANNUAL AWARDS

### Astrophotography

Members are encouraged to submit astrophotographs (up to three entries per member) for judging in the astrophotography award. Submissions are accepted October, November or at the December general meeting. All entries will be exhibited at the December meeting and voted upon by the general membership. Entries must have been taken this year (2004) and be of an astronomical theme. Size should be reasonable (11' x 14' or less), mounted or unmounted.

### Astronomical Arts

This contest is open to all members and will be judged by the membership at the December General Meeting. We had several fine entries at the inaugural competition last year. Any art related to astronomy is welcome. Your drawings of astronomical objects are worth sharing with other club members, as are craftwork, sculpture, jewelry, and paintings. There are almost no restrictions here. Size is a consideration since we have to fit all entries and club members, in the Randall Museum, alongside the Astrophotography Award entries. Also, no living critters, please. The museum may frown upon any living, breathing things that are not part of official exhibits. Live acts are restricted to the human kind. Please bring your entries to the Meeting on December 15, 2004. Any questions can be directed to club officers, listed on page two in this bulletin.

### Observer of the Year

The Observer of the Year Award is given for noteworthy observing accomplishments during the year, such as qualifying for the Messier Award, the Herschel Club, observing all the planets, getting articles or photographs published, etc. Nominations accepted in October and November. Members may submit their own name or the names of anyone they feel is qualified. Candidates should prepare a list of their observing accomplishments in 2004 for judging by the December meeting.

## 2005 CLUB OFFICERS & CONTACTS

President	John Dillon	(415) 332-8096
Vice President	Steve Bryson	
Secretary	Jennifer Myers	(415) 386-7576 jenfrey@earthlink.net
Treasurer	Stefanie Ulrey	
Speaker Chair	Linda Mahan	
City Star Party	Randy Taylor	(415) 255-8670 randytaylor3@aol.com
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Editor-in-Chief	Phil Estrin	(510) 622-2428
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Telescope Loans	Pete Goldie	(415) 206-9867
Honorary Director	John Dobson	
Board Members	Russell Cashin	(415) 823-7545
	Peter Schumacher	
	Jorge Morales	(510) 337-1446
	Kenneth Frank	
	Robert English	(415) 383-6475 sfaa@bogusnet.net
	Nancy Cox	(415) 269-8259
	Michael Portuesi	(415) 550-9366
Board Member Emeritus	John Dobson	
Alt. Board Members	Don Charles	(415) 897-6554
	Dirk Lammerts	(415) 242-1464
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>

## 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 & Sarah Goldie, 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.

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## 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 20th day of the month.** Send your articles to Phil Estrin at [pestrin@dir.ca.gov](mailto:pestrin@dir.ca.gov).

## **Through the Finder ...**

You'll notice a ballot in this month's newsletter. A new 2006 Board of Directors must be elected and installed next month. We've assembled a full slate of Directors, Officers, and Alternates who have agreed to serve, but if you have another person you'd like to vote for, just write in their name - this is not North Korea! (Etiquette and prudence suggest your candidate should be aware of your endorsement and willing to serve.) Ballots can be mailed in or dropped off at this month's Membership meeting. Election results will be announced in next month's "Above the Fog."

Mars Night at the Randall Museum was a great success. The weather was mild and clear and 50 or so folks sat out on the deck in comfort and rapture as they listened to Michael Portuesi's presentation of Mars. For several hours afterwards families and neighbors continuously dropped by to peek at Mars through the scopes provided by SFAA members. It'll be another 13 years before we have it (Mars) so good again, but we will be planning more nights like this soon with other talks and other targets visible above city lights.

December's General Meeting is truly a members' meeting. The program focuses on things that SFAA members have been doing. Several short lecture presentations will be made by members, and entries in the astrophotography and astro-arts/crafts competition will be displayed and judged (you'll be the judge). Winners will be announced at the Annual Dinner on Saturday, January 21, 2005 at the Basque Cultural Center. (Reminder: Reservations need to be made soon! Look for reservation details and menu choices in this newsletter issue.)

Star parties are essential to any astronomy club, but our annual dinner provides a chance to meet and mingle with fellow SFAA members indoors under lights. You might be surprised how much easier it is to communicate without the need for dark-adapted eyes, with or without a libation!

See you in the light,

**John Dillon**  
**President**  
**San Francisco Amateur Astronomers**



## San Francisco Amateur Astronomers

SFAA  
P.O. Box 15097  
San Francisco, CA 94115

### ***BALLOT***

#### ***2006 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS***

#### **OFFICERS**

_____ President	John Dillon <jdillon@randallmuseum.org>
_____ Vice-President	Ken Frank <kennethfrank@planetarium.net>
_____ Secretary	Jennifer Myers <jenfrey@earthlink.net>
_____ Treasurer	Stefanie Ulrey <SULrey1680@aol.com>
_____ Write-ins	_____
_____ Write-ins	_____

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

_____ Russell H. Cashin <rhplace@earthlink.net>	_____ Peter Schumacher <drsclu@itsa.ucsf.edu>
_____ Robert English <renglish@bogusnet.net>	
_____ Jorge Morales <volare1@prodigy.net>	_____ Alternate 1 - Don Charles <Don.Charles@sun.com>
_____ Karim Mokhtar	_____ Alternate 2 - Dirk Lammerts <dirk_lammerts@sbcglobal.net>
_____ Write-ins	_____
_____ Write-ins	_____

#### **VOTING INSTRUCTIONS**

The club members listed above are candidates for Officers and Board of Directors of SFAA for the year 2006. Please vote for a total of four officers and a total of seven board or directors including write-ins. **Voting for more than four officers or for more than seven board members per ballot will invalidate the entire ballot.** Family memberships must submit a separate ballot for each voting family member. Write-ins for officers must include the candidate's name and office for which he or she is nominated.

All candidates, including write-ins, must have committed to attending at least seven board meetings and may not miss more than two consecutive meetings during the calendar year for which they are nominated.

The seven board of directors' candidates who receive the highest number of votes will become regular board members. The two candidates receiving the next highest number of votes will become alternate board members. The new Officers and Board of Directors will be installed at the Annual Awards Dinner in January 2006.

*Please return your ballots to: SFAA Secretary, at the address above.*

**Ballots must be received no later than the general meeting on Wednesday, December 21, 2005.**







# SFAA ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

Saturday, January 21, 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

## Menu Choices

Prime Rib with Scalloped Potatoes & Vegetables (\$33.50)

Breast of Chicken Chasseur with Vegetables & Rice (\$24.00)

Vegetarian Pasta (\$20.00)

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

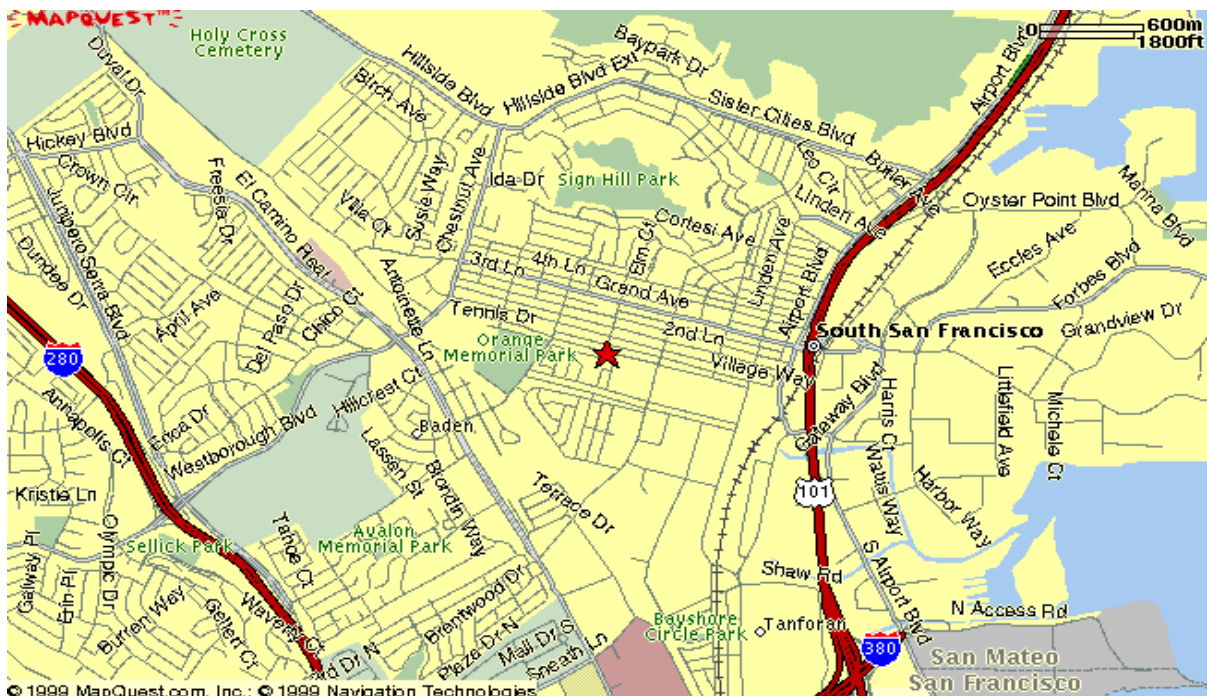
Please send a check or money order (made out to San Francisco Amateur Astronomers), along with your choice of entrée, to SFAA at P.O. Box 15097, San Francisco CA 94115 by **January 4, 2006**. **Any requests received after this date cannot be guaranteed.**

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

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



## ***'Twas the Night Before Solstice***

Jane Houston Jones

Inspired by the poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas," written by Major Henry Livingston, Jr.

*'Twas the week before Solstice, when all through the city,  
Not a planet was shining, now isn't that a pity.  
The telescope was stored in the garage with despair,  
In hopes that the weather would soon turn to fair.*

*The astronomers were nestled all snug in their beds,  
While visions of nebulae danced in their heads.  
And Mojo with his laptop and I with my starmap,  
Had just settled down for a cloudy night nap.*

*When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew with a flash,  
To open the shutters and throw up the sash.*

*The moon shone brightly, no clouds hid the glow,  
A bright waning lustre on objects below.  
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But Pleiades, Orion, and Ursa Major, the bear.*

*With our trusty old telescope, the setup was quick,  
I knew in a moment we had objects to pick.  
More rapid than eagles, the targets they came,  
We aimed and we pointed and called them by name.*

*"Now, Procyon, now Pollux, now Castor and Capella!  
On Aldebaran, on Rigel, on Sirius, and Betelgeuse, the red  
fella :-)*

*To the top and around the winter circle of stars,  
Now a fond look at Saturn and magnificent Mars.*

*As fireflies that before the dawn's morning light,  
Brilliantly flicker and soon are a memory bright,  
A new wonder would paint the dark sky to pale blue,  
The sunrise was nearing, and morning twilight was, too.*

*And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof,  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As I stepped from the telescope and was turning around,  
Down the chimney the stranger came with a bound.*

*He looked like an astronomer, bundled from head to his foot,  
Like a stargazer, his clothes were tarnished with ashes and  
soot.*

*A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
Looked just like our telescope accessory pack.*

*His eyes - how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry.  
He looked like we do after a cold winter starshow  
Freezing but happy from the Milky Way glow.*

*The stump of a flashlight held tight in his teeth,  
Its soft red glow encircled his head like a wreath.  
We asked him if he'd ever looked closely at Mars  
"I'm working at night, I have no time for the stars".*

*He stepped up to the eyepiece, a right jolly old elf,  
And I smiled as he gasped, in spite of myself.  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.*

*He spoke not a word, but took in view after view,  
Then he spoke with a sigh he had more work to do.  
And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.*

*He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,  
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.  
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,  
"Happy stargazing to all and to all a dark night!"*

\*My "Twas the night before solstice" poem is updated to make it astronomically correct for this year.

Wonderful comments on it have been received from Mary Van Duesen, a descendent <http://www.iment.com/maida/familytree/henry/>  
of Col. Henry Livingston, the original poem's author, who loves astronomy, by the way.

My apologies to Major Henry Livingston Jr. 1748 - 1828,  
author of "'Twas the Night before Christmas or Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas."

<http://www.henrylivingston.com>



## FROM YOUR "REMOTE MICHIGAN REPORTER"

**BOB BERTA**

I am a member of two astronomy clubs here in Michigan (secretary of one of them), and astronomy is very active here. There are eight astronomy clubs in the immediate area! We just had a yearly star party on September 10-11 at a big city park called Kensington Metropark (about four times the size of Golden Gate Park and in a low population area). All eight clubs co-sponsored the event along with the park and rec department. We had over 5,000 people in attendance, and the two-day event had flawless weather. Had about 100 scopes out ... three of them were 22" or larger ... about 6-18", and the rest a wide variety of stuff including a few H-alpha-equipped scopes for daytime solar observing.

The Labor Day weekend gave me a chance to travel to the Two Hearted Star Party (THSP), which is WAY north in the upper peninsula of Michigan on the shores of Lake Superior where the Two Hearted River flows into the lake. My good friend, Bob Naeye (member of SFAA and now living in Boston and a Senior Editor at Sky and Telescope Magazine), flew into Detroit Airport where I picked him up, and we drove 370 miles north to the star party. This is a small star party but a very special one! There were only about eight people there, but we had a blast. It was put together by John Shibley ... a friend of Bob's and a science writer who has had articles published in Sky and Telescope. John lives there, so the four days of the event allowed him to give us guided tours of the two historic lighthouses in the area, waterfalls, river, etc. Bob and I rented a canoe one day and went for a trip on the Two

Hearted River, managing to stay dry the whole trip.

Dave Kriege, President of Obsession Telescopes out of Wisconsin, also attended and brought a 25" Obsession which saw LOTS of use. A big DOB from a really dark spot is incredible ... visual views start looking like the views you see in long-exposure astrophotos! Needless to say, it was extremely dark ... made Lake Sonoma look like a shopping mall in comparison for light pollution. Bob Naeye has been to the Texas Star Party twice and at Lake Sonoma. He told me that it was FAR darker here than in Texas. There was a bit of wind on all the days, so it wasn't ideal for astrophotography (my main interest) but was fantastic for observing. There was also some aurora on all but one of the days. Usually it wasn't a problem, although one day it was so strong it looked like there was a huge shopping mall located to the North. For a while, it could cast shadows on the ground and light up your face! Being a California native, I had never seen aurora to any extent until I got to Michigan ... I have seen it a lot now and it is a real treat so see it when at its most active. The photographs you have seen don't do it justice!

While weather can be more problematic here (they call it the "Michigan Nebula") ... we had very good weather the whole trip. The first night was cloudy but cleared up around 3:30, and the rest of the nights provided clear skies. Star hopping was easy ... it was so dark that most Messier objects could be seen naked eye. All the stars in the Little Dipper were easily seen naked eye.

## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

### BOARD MEETINGS

Tuesday, December 6  
7:00-8:30 p.m.  
*Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way  
(Near 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Roosevelt)*

### SFAA GENERAL MEETINGS & LECTURES

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>. MEMBER'S NIGHT**  
7:00 p.m. Doors open . 7:30 p.m. Announcements . 8:00 p.m. Speaker  
*Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way (Near 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Roosevelt)*

**THIS IS A SPECIAL NIGHT TO PLAN AHEAD FOR ~**

Plan to submit your work of Astronomy related Art, or Astronomical Photography, using any kind of camera. Consider giving a presentation at the meeting, or submit ideas for all the members to discuss. We will have a longer time for snacks and judging member's works. Be sure to attend. To give a talk, contact Linda Mahan at [doublestar@comcast.net](mailto:doublestar@comcast.net)

## SFAA ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

*Saturday, January 21, 2006*  
6:00 p.m. - No-host Bar 7:00 p.m. - Dinner  
*Basque Cultural Center . 599 Railroad Ave . South San Francisco*

### CITY STAR PARTIES

Saturday, December 10 – 5:00 p.m. – Telescope Clinic 4:00 p.m.  
*Land's End, San Francisco*  
Map and directions <http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org/sfaa/starparties/cspmap.shtml>

### 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](mailto:treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org). Contact Sam Sweiss at Scope City to arrange for your discount.



350 Bay Street  
San Francisco  
(415) 421-8800  
[www.scopecity.com](http://www.scopecity.com)

## **CITY STAR PARTY LECTURES**

### **Land's End, San Francisco**

#### *Map and directions*

<http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org/sfaa/starparties/cspmap.shtml>



Michael Portuesi, the genie of the Hotline, will make a determination by 4:00 p.m. as to whether the weather permits the Star Party to go forward. If the Star Party is cancelled, the whole event is off.

- Unless you can tell from your sidewalk that it is clear at Land's End, you should phone the Hotline: (415) 289-6636.

- *If the Hotline says the Star Party is cancelled, then don't bother going to Land's End for the lecture even if the sky has miraculously turned clear as glass. (But hey, if you want to bring your telescope and just unofficially hang out, you might get great views.)*

- *If the Hotline says the event is happening, but you can see perfectly well that the fog has rolled in, come on by anyway and hear one of*

your fellow SFAA members give a nice lecture. Please look over the following lineup of topics and speakers listed.

**December 10, 2005, 5:00 p.m.**

### **WINTER CONSTELLATIONS**

**Speaker: Kenneth Frank**

#### **WINTER CONSTELLATIONS:**

#### **HOW DO YOU FIND THEM AND WHAT GOOD ARE THEY?**

Kenneth Frank became absorbed in astronomy when his son, Aeddan, was first interested in *Star Wars*. Ken wanted Aeddan to be involved with something more practical than a sci-fi movie series.

What evolved was Kenneth's growing passion for understanding the night sky and bringing that interest to the public in the form of outreach. Kenneth is a member of the NASA/JPL Saturn Observation Campaign, giving children the unique opportunity to explore the wonders of our neighboring planets. He is an active SFAA Board member, and we owe him a lot for his work with the State Park service on Mt. Tam to provide and preserve the public access to the night sky. He is currently the Vice President of the AANC, the Northern California umbrella agency "club of clubs" for the amateur astronomer community; he assists John Dobson with telescope making classes starting this fall at the Randall Museum in San Francisco and Sidewalk Astronomy frequently in the Bay Area. Kenneth happily lives in Tiburon with his wife, Jayni Allsep, son Aeddan Frank, and is a consultant for Scope City in San Francisco.

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](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.