

★ ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

Vol . 54, No. 8 – August 2006

August 16, 2006 – General Meeting

Randall Museum . 199 Museum Way . San Francisco

7:00 pm doors open . 7:30 pm announcements . 8:00 pm speaker

SFAA SPEAKER'S NIGHT ECLIPSE NIGHT AND DAYS

KENNETH LUM

Ken Lum will present his much-anticipated talk on the subject of his solar eclipse experience in Turkey. Ken is a member of several Bay Area astronomical associations. He also has a special interest in and lectures on the subject of antique astronomical instruments.

JOHN DILLON

SFAA president, John Dillon, also viewed the solar eclipse from Turkey and will speak about his observing experience.



**A PRESENTATION NOT TO BE
MISSED!**

2006 Club Officers & Contacts

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<i>Alt. Board Members</i>	Karim Mokhtar	
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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 <http://www.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 6 club loaner telescopes, Dobsonian/Newtonian reflectors: 6" f/10, 8" f/7, 8.5" f/6 and 10" f/8, a Starblast, a C-8 and a Meade 8" SCT. 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.



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.

THROUGH THE FINDER...



Just last night I committed an AA sin – I wished for rain! The problem with this global warming thing, it doesn't have a straight-forward effect. I personally wouldn't mind the ocean being a degree or two warmer, or the growing season to extend another week in Alaska, or less snow in Sausalito. But making weather prayers is a complex business. A few months ago, I blamed global warming for dragging out the rainy season and making our observing opportunities rare. Global warming is useful that way – it can be invoked for a wide variety of complaints. I begged for Clear Skies. Now we got clear skies but I forgot to specify – clear, *cool*, skies. And by "cool" I mean no triple digits after sunset! The Mt Tam ranger told those of us there for the July SUP observing that he recorded 109 at Pantoll that afternoon. At sundown we still had a nice sirocco, suitable for a typical midsummer afternoon.

Fremont Peak has been rescheduled for Aug. 18. Email Ken Frank if you plan to attend (kennethfrank@planetarium.net). He needs your license plate # (for the Park folks) and the size and type of scope you are bringing. Friday night (the 18th) is for SFAA. Stay for Saturday night if you can, and share your scope with the public.

The Edwina Cherrington Fund purchased a "Sun Blaster" sun scope for use by school groups at the Randall Museum. This is a very well thought out device that makes set-and-use very easy. The folded optics put a nicely enlarged image of the sun on a piece of paper where kids can trace out whatever sun spots they see and compare their positions on subsequent days. This works especially well for the summer Space Camp where kids come every day for two weeks, and that way can see how the sun's surface, including any sunspots on it, rotates.

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, August 16

Wednesday, September 20

Wednesday, October 18

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, August 8

Tuesday, September 12

October 10

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way
(Near 14th Street and Roosevelt)

Mt Tam Star Parties – Special Use Permit – Members Only

Saturday, August 19, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 16 – **ANNUAL STAR BQ, 3:00 p.m.**

Saturday, October 21, 7:00 p.m.

City Star Parties

Saturday, August 5, 8:00 p.m. – LAND'S END - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset
KENNETH FRANK, Speaker – SKY STUFF: Summer sky from Cyg (*nus*) To Sag (*ittarius*).

Saturday, September 30, 7:00 p.m. – RANDALL MUSEUM - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset
MICHAEL PORTUESI & KENNETH FRANK, Speakers
YOUR OTHER ADDRESS: FIND OUT WHERE YOU ARE IN THE UNIVERSE

Saturday, October 14, 6:30 p.m. – RANDALL MUSEUM - Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset
Location, speaker and topic TBA

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.

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

Upcoming General Meeting Guest Speakers

September 20 - SCOTT SANDFORD, NASA Ames Research Center

One of the original members of the Stardust Mission, and the Capsule Recovery Team, Scott Sandford will discuss the most recent findings on the dust grains from Comet Wild 2 that returned to Earth this January.

October 18 - LYNETTE COOK, Astronomy Artist

This Bay Area artist illuminates the Solar system and beyond. Her art is featured in Dava Sobel's "The Planets" and "Infinite Worlds" Lynette's beautiful illustrations appear in Astronomy and Sky and Telescope magazines.

Annual SFAA Night Redux Fremont Peak Observatory

Friday, August 18, 2006



Courtesy of [Art Rosch](#)

Are you ready to try again? I am. The FPOA has granted us use of the 30-inch on the third Friday of the month. SFAAer's can get recharged at Fremont Peak on August 18th and 19th. We have reserved the Observatory Friday evening for an exclusive private gathering of members from the SFAA.

Wanna come? It's open to all current dues paying members of SFAA. Please email me at [kennethfrank at planetarium dot net](mailto:kennethfrank@planetarium.net) the license plate # of your car, and, if you're bringing a scope, the type and size - like you do for Yosemite. [Here's](#) who has signed up so far.

The Fremont Peak Observatory features a fine 30-inch f/4.8 Newtonian telescope built by Kevin Medlock of the [Eastbay Astronomical Society](#). The telescope is mounted on an English cross-axis equatorial system. There are also powered observing pads outside the observatory, where visiting astronomers (like SFAAer [Richard Crisp](#)) can set up to observe in Fremont Peak's dark skies.

The next weekend is FPOA's annual StarBQ on August 26th. It'll be a blast. This is their 20th year anniversary and the [AANC](#) will present their [annual awards](#), too.

From March through October, Fremont Peak Observatory conducts programs for the public at least three Saturday evenings a month, excluding the Saturday closest to full moon.

Fremont Peak State Park is about 100 miles south of San Francisco, and eleven miles south east of the town of San Juan Bautista. The park features camping facilities which are available

either by reservation or first come first served basis. Please be sure and pay the day fee or, if camping, the overnight fee. The fee should be placed in the green box by the public phone. The San Juan Inn is at the bottom of the hill in San Juan Bautista for those who would like more civilized overnight amenities.

Pat Donnelly, President of FPOA, noted that Fremont Peak is popular as an historical stopping place and is mentioned on page 50 of the May/June 2005 issue of AAA's Via Magazine! If you'd like to help in maintaining the observatory, there will be a work party arriving that Saturday. If you're interested, contact Pat via: KUNGFUGINA at aol dot com

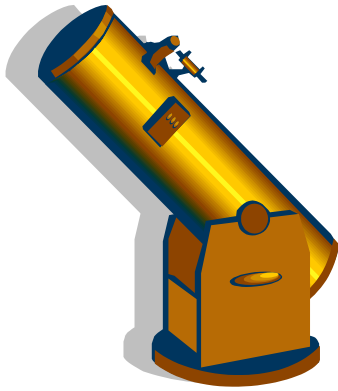
If you're an SFAA member who wants to enjoy this gorgeous telescope on your own, practically whenever you choose (with a few exceptions) and you're interested in joining FPOA and becoming qualified to use the telescope, contact [Ron Dammann](#), Director of Instruments at FPOA. For more information about Fremont Peak Observatory, including excellent directions, visit their web site at <http://www.fpoa.net>

The FPOA website now has [weather cam](#) for those of you who are rightly paranoid of our now ridiculously hot weather.

Looking forward to seeing you this year, Ken

TWO EXCITING CLASSES TAUGHT BY JOHN DOBSON

Build a Telescope with John Dobson!



Imagine if you had a chance to learn Morse code from Samuel Morse, or study Cartesian Geometry from Rene De Carte. 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.

Mars Hoax



Photo courtesy of NASA

There's a rumor about Mars going around the internet...again. Here are some bits of bogus emails:

"The Red Planet is about to be spectacular." "Earth is catching up with Mars [for] the closest approach between the two planets in recorded history." "On August 27th ... Mars will look as large as the full moon." Only the first sentence is true (at *some* opposition). The Red Planet is (was) spectacular. The rest is a hoax. Here are the facts: Earth and Mars did converge for a close encounter on August 27, 2003. That was the closest in recorded history, by a whisker, and millions of people watched as the distance between Mars and Earth shrunk to 56 million km. In 2003,

Mars looked like a bright red star, to the unaided eye (as it does now)--a pinprick of light, certainly not as wide as the full Moon. So I'd put a positive spin on this: help make the public aware of clubs like the SFAA, so they can learn the really fun facts about the Red Planet. Ken

SFAA Yosemite Star Party at Glacier Point

July 14 and 15, 2006

The trip went exceedingly well, and everyone seemed to have a great time. Everyone really pitched in to make it nice. What a great group of people!

We had a guest from San Diego as a speaker - he has extended an invitation to contact him if any of us are ever down there and want to go observing. His name is Roy Ang, and I have his email if anyone is ever interested.

We also had a guest from Sweden, Per, who was just awesome! He had a good time on the single night he was there.



Dean Gustafson and the telescope he made in class last year



Setting up

Notice the alpenglow as SFAAers set up telescopes at Glacier Point with Half Dome in the distance

The public was great this year as well - full of enthusiasm and respect, and I think they were jazzed from the moment they saw us setting up our scopes.

Also, the ranger there, Ranger Dave, was immensely helpful. He presented his talk and we pulled together some basic stuff to go with it.

Bottom line - IT WAS GREAT!!!!!!!!!!!!

SFAA ANNUAL BOOTJACK STAR-B-Q
Saturday September 16, 2006

At 3:00 pm in the Bootjack picnic area, enjoy meeting your astro buddies (not in the dark), for fun and camaraderie and all that good stuff.

"Members-only" star party to follow at the usual Rock Springs parking lot. Let John Dillon (jdillon1399 at earthlink.net) know if you're coming by September 1st (with Bootjack in the subject line)--and please show up this time! With that said, if you need to cancel let John know for obvious reasons, like having six months' worth of hot dog buns in my freezer! Thanks, Ken



Monday, 11 September 2006
Benjamin Dean Lecture Series

Dr. Charles Wood
Wheeling Jesuit University & Titan Radar Mapper Team Member

"Exploration of a New World"

Titan is the largest piece of unexplored real estate in the solar system. It is bigger than the planet Mercury and has a dense atmosphere. The Cassini radar instrument is discovering volcanoes, river channels and dunes - features that make Titan the most Earth-like object in the solar system.

The program begins at 7:30 pm in Kanbar Hall at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street (at Presidio Ave.). Tickets are \$4 and are available in advance or at the door.

Parking is available across the street in the UCSF Laurel Heights campus parking lot for \$1.25 per night. Parking in the JCC garage is \$1.25 per half-hour. The #1 California, #3 Jackson, #4 Sutter, and #43 Masonic MUNI lines stop directly in front of the building. The #38 Geary and #24 Divisadero buses stop only a few blocks away.

If you would like to be on the Dean Series e-mail list to get advance notice of future lectures, as well as any changes, send an e-mail to deanseries@calacademy.org. Your e-mail address will not be used for any other purpose.

MT TAM ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS

MOUNTAIN THEATER, Mt. Tamalpais State Park

EXPLORE THE WONDERS OF THE UNIVERSE



On the Saturdays between the new and first quarter moons through September 23, we will enjoy a lecture in the Mountain Theater followed by viewing through telescopes. A complete list of the programs with dates and times can be found at the MTIA website: www.mttam.net. **Check it out and plan now to come and join us.**

Following the talk, and weather permitting of course, you can join the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers for a close up look at the marvelous objects in our summer sky. Jupiter will be a highlight, and this will be a good month to peruse the rich regions of nebulae and clusters in the Milky Way.

Even if the day is hot, wear layers as it can chill down at night. And don't forget your flashlights. Please car pool, if at all possible. If there is any change in the program due to weather, it will be on the hot line: 415-455-5370 after 4:00pm.

Thanks for supporting our programs, and for forwarding this to anyone interested. To be removed from this list just send a return with "unsubscribe".

STAR PARTY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are always looking for volunteers to help our programs run smoothly. THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED SO FAR THIS YEAR AND THOSE SCHEDULED TO DO SO FOR THE REST OF THE PROGRAMS. YOUR TIME AND EFFORTS ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED. WE HAVE A NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE NOT COMMITTED YET THIS SEASON AND WE WOULD REALLY LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU. You can park cars, set out lanterns, greet the public, etc., and still enjoy the programs and the star party. But to do so, you must be a VIP (Volunteer in the Park, also Very Important Person) which means a one time, two-hour session with a park ranger. If you can help us out at any of the programs this year, please join us. Let me know by return e-mail or by calling me at (415) 454-4715.

I look forward to seeing you on The Mountain this year. Please share this information with anyone interested.
Tinka Ross, volunteer coordinator, Mt Tam Astronomy Programs

2006 SPEAKERS

August 26
8:30 pm

John Dillon
Randall
Museum

"Ancient Astronomy, the First Science"

The pinnacle of ancient Greek science was the amazingly sophisticated astronomy developed more than 2000 years ago at the legendary Museum of Alexandria.

September 23
8:00pm

Dr. Chris McKay
NASA-Ames
Research
Center

"Latest results from the Huygens' Mission to Titan"

Last year the Huygens Probe landed successfully on Titan, the largest moon of Saturn. What we saw was not what we expected. Hear the latest results from the analysis of the data from the Probe.

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.