

# ★ ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

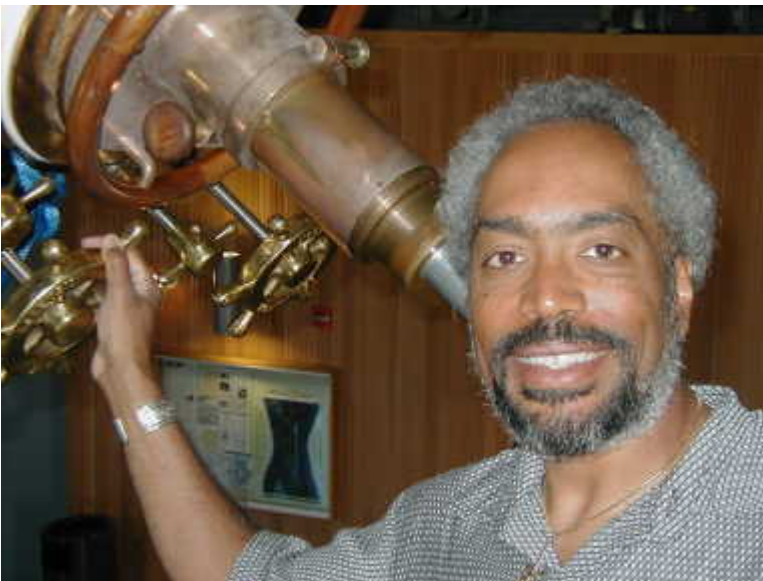
VOL. 54, No. 2 – FEBRUARY 2006

**February 15, 2006 – General Meeting**

RANDALL MUSEUM, 199 MUSEUM WAY, SAN FRANCISCO  
7:00 PM DOORS OPEN . 7:30 PM ANNOUNCEMENTS . 8:00 PM SPEAKER

**GIBOR BASRI**  
**Professor of Astronomy**  
**University of California - Berkeley**

## WHAT IS A PLANET?



The cover article of Parade Magazine for Jan. 15 asks "How Many Planets Are There (Hint: It's not Nine)?" This is a symptom of the substantial public interest generated by astronomical discoveries over the last decade. Not only is Pluto now not the largest Kuiper Belt Object known, but there are potential "free-floating planets", "sub-brown dwarfs", and other confusions at the high mass end of the planetary limit. The speaker has just concluded a technical article on the definition of "planet" with the discoverer of 2003 UB313 ("Xena"); they do not even agree with each other. He will summarize what the controversy is all about, discuss the latest discoveries, and show why astronomers are having a very hard time reaching agreement.

*In 1979, Gibor Basri received his Ph.D. in astrophysics at the University of Colorado at Boulder, not far from his hometown in Fort Collins. He has been at the University of California at Berkeley since 1982. One of the more inventive classes he has taught there in recent years is called "The Science in Science Fiction." With a long list of technical publications that would be the envy of any professor in his field, Basri is probably best known for his research on substellar objects known as "brown dwarfs" or "failed stars" which emit so little light they were not detectable until 1995 when using the 10-meter Keck Telescope, the team he headed helped to confirm their existence. Basri published an article on the discovery of brown dwarfs in the April 2000 issue of the prestigious journal Scientific American.*

## 2005 CLUB OFFICERS & CONTACTS

<i>President</i>	John Dillon	(415) 332-8096
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	Michael Portuesi	(415) 550-9366
	John Dobson	
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<i>Alt. Board Members</i>	Don Charles	(415) 897-6554
	Dirk Lammerts	(415) 242-1464
<i>Webmaster</i>	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>

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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).

## 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>

## THROUGH THE FINDER ...

This year's Annual Dinner on January 21 was attended by 27 members who again migrated down to our private room in the Basque Cultural Center in South San Francisco for an evening of munching, sipping, socializing, and honoring. For amateur astronomers who spend so much time sitting alone in the dark, this event provides an opportunity to see and be seen and to publicly recognize the exemplary work of members during the previous year. Award categories were Astrophotography, Astro-Art, Service and "Observer of the Year". The Art and Astrophotography entries were put on display at the Member's Night meeting at the Randall Museum in December and judged by those members present. The Service Award and Observer of the Year were decided by the SFAA Board. The results were announced and presentations made after the Dinner. **Geoff Collins** won 1<sup>st</sup> prize in Astrophotography for his stunning "capture" of the Veil Nebula. 2<sup>nd</sup> place went to **Norman Mahan**. **Nancy Cox** won the Astro-Art competition for her humorous series of astro-themed cartoons. 2<sup>nd</sup> place was awarded to **Jennifer Meyers**. The Observer of the Year award went to **Sheryl Schudel** for an intensive year of work (despite the uncooperative weather) on the Caldwell (and other) objects.

The Annual Service Award was presented to **Annette Gabrielli**, our indefatigable (look it up if you need to, I did) assistant editor of "Above the Fog". I learned 2 astonishing things about Annette that night: 1) she first offered to take on the role before she was even a member of SFAA, and 2) she's willing, even happy, to continue in that role. A big "Thank You, Annette", and a big sigh of relief.

As has been the case for the last several years, the honor of winning these awards was greatly enhanced by the presentation of the gorgeous astro-themed objets d'art hand-crafted by our jeweler-in-residence, Linda Mahan. Honor, schmonor, I want one of those goblets!

**Reminder** – "Saturn Night" at the Randall Museum is Satur(n)day, Feb 18. It will start at sundown on the east deck of the Museum with slide talks by Michael Portuesi and Ken Frank. If you can, bring a scope to share with the public. You're also welcome to come scope-less and take a peek at Saturn at its best, near opposition.

See you in the dark,

**John Dillon**  
President  
San Francisco Amateur Astronomers

## EDWINA CHERRINGTON

*The San Francisco Amateur Astronomers is saddened by the loss of Edwina Cherrington.*

*In 1987, Edwina received the Herman Fast Award. Her son, Mark, noted that during Comet Halley's apparition, Edwina mobilized the San Francisco Bay Area and news media. Thousands of people, were trying to get to Rock Springs to view the Comet. Edwina truly made a difference in popularizing amateur astronomy during the 80's and increasing SFAA membership accordingly.*

*Bill was president of the SFAA in 1986 and he couldn't have had a better "first lady."*

*On the passing of Edwina, Sergey Karpov, Chief Adviser of the Krasnoyarsk Astronomical Club in Siberia, Russia, commented, "When we visited San Francisco .. in 1998 Edwina and Bill made our travel (experience) unforgettable. Extraordinary kindness and cordiality of Edwina are her main gifts. I will always remember her as such. I keep with care all the souvenirs she gave me and that remind me of her...."*

## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

### BOARD MEETINGS

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

### SFAA GENERAL MEETINGS & LECTURES

Wednesday, February 15  
Wednesday, March 15  
Wednesday, April 19  
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)*

### CITY STAR PARTIES

*LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED – NOT AT LAND'S END*  
Saturday, February 18, 6:00 p.m. – Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset  
Saturday, March 18, 6:30 p.m. – Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset  
Saturday, April 8, 7:30 p.m. – Telescope Clinic one hour before sunset

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

### MT TAM STAR PARTIES – SPECIAL USE PERMIT – MEMBERS ONLY

Saturday, February 25 – 6:00 p.m.  
Saturday, March 25 – 6:30 p.m. (Messier Madness)  
Saturday, April 22 – 6:00 p.m.

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## SFAA UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKERS

**MARCH 15, 2006**  
**DR. PAUL KALAS**  
**THE DIRT SURROUNDING EXOSOLAR PLANETS**

**APRIL 19, 2006**  
**DR. STEVEN STAHLER**  
**HOW STARS ARE MADE**

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**SATURDAY . JANUARY 21, 2006 . BASQUE CULTURAL CENTER  
SFAA ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER**



*CHERYL SCHUDEL  
Observer of the Year*



*GEOFF COLLINS  
First Place  
Astrophotography Award*



*NORMAN MAHAN  
Second Place  
Astrophotography Award*



*NANCY COX  
First Place  
Astronomical Arts*

*JENNIFER MYERS  
Second Place  
Astronomical Arts*



*ANNETTE GABRIELLI  
Service Award*



*... and  
recognition for  
long-standing  
dedication to  
our official  
Mt. Tam  
gatekeeper -  
"Uncle Bob"  
English!  
(a cookie tin of  
Star Party  
Munchies)*

**CHERYL SCHUDEL**  
**2005 SFAA Observer of the Year**

I wish to thank the board of directors of the SFAA and the members for awarding me the Observer of the Year award for 2005.

For several years I have been pursuing observing goals through the various programs offered through the AL (Astronomical League). This has helped me focus on specific observing objectives. The AL has several programs, which provide lists and locations for siting several categories of astronomical objects. Using observers logs I have kept notes and made sketches. I have so far completed and received certification for the "Universe Sampler", The "Northern Skies Constellation Hunter", "Telescope Messier Objects", and "Double Stars".

In 2005 I completed the Caldwell's and the Binocular Messier program.

I am currently working on programs observing the Hershels, the sunspotters club and globular cluster observing for certification.

In spring 2005, I took an observational astronomy class at CCSF and volunteered in their service learning program where I was able to operate and set up telescopes on the science building roof for the lab students viewing.

My future astronomical plans and aspirations include observing in the southern hemisphere to obtain a greater knowledge of the constellations and richly numerous astronomical objects to be observed there.

When dark sky isn't available to me or skies are cloudy, I also help crunch data for the SETI group which I have done since June 1999.

**ANNETTE GABRIELLI**  
**2005 SFAA Service Award**

Thank you to the SFAA officers and board for the SFAA 2005 Service Award. This award and acknowledgment was presented in appreciation for producing our Above the Fog newsletter over the past four years.



A special thank you to Linda Mahan for creating SFAA's gift of blue lapis star earrings. They are beautiful and I treasure them.

In addition to my work, producing the newsletter requires the efforts of a number of individuals who deserve to be acknowledged --

Phil Estrin, by way of his gracious and constant support as editor, keeps me in a working partnership that would be the envy of many. Stephanie Ulrey, responsible for membership and subscriptions, keeps me supplied with a current mailing list -- as did Lorrie Boen who served in that position during the previous three years.

SFAA's Above the Fog article contributors --

Linda Mahan for her masterful work in arranging our guest speaker program and for seeing to it that all of the elements needed for the newsletter's front page are provided; Jane Houston Jones, who breathes so much life and enthusiasm for astronomy into her articles and into our newsletter; Michael Portuesi for his informative articles over the years that are so helpful to individuals at all levels; Ken Frank, who, especially during this last year, poured his heart and energies into club activities and consequently has had much to contribute to the newsletter; Bob Berta, our long-distance member, who

maintains an active presence and voice by way of his article submissions from time to time.

Long before becoming a member, my helping Phil and knowing Microsoft Word was what connected me to the newsletter. I immediately came to enjoy the material. A few years back, I joined a group of SFAA members at Peacock Gap for a lunar eclipse viewing. Being enthralled by the views of the moon through the telescopes and impressed by the kindness of the members, from then on, as long as Phil would serve as the official editor, I have wanted to prepare the newsletter.

Since that time, figuratively speaking, the newsletter has become a magic carpet that continues to take me on an incredible astronomic tour of many facets and has enabled me to become acquainted and share this interest with brilliant, kind, gracious, thoughtful, and generous SFAA members. Now, an evening of clear skies does not pass without my looking at the stars in an effort to learn the night sky.

This service award is presented to one individual; however, there are others who have given SFAA extremely generous service and support through 2005 --

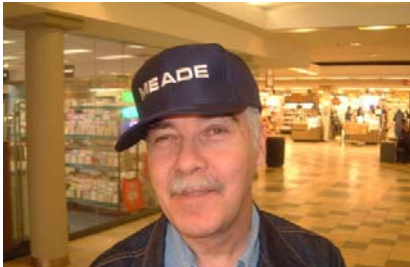
I would like to acknowledge Ken Frank for his tremendous efforts during this past year in arranging the Fremont Peak weekend; for assisting in arranging Mt. Tam Special Use Permit Members Only Nights; for coordinating the Glacier Point Star Party for the second consecutive year; and for coordinating a very successful and most enjoyable AANC Conference at the Randall Museum hosted by SFAA, including a 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party honoring John Dobson, a full-day and full-evening lineup of speakers and activities, capped by a raffle made possible through the most

generous support and contributions of SFAA members and sponsors.

Out of the corner of my eye, I also observed our president, John Dillon, attending to the extensive details of making the Randall Museum available as the venue for the AANC conference.

I accept and thank you for this acknowledgment of service and share it in my heart with all who so caringly and willingly have given so much to this organization in 2005.

*January 21, 2006  
MEADE DAY AT SCOPE CITY*



*Randy Taylor and his jauntily-placed Meade cap*

**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.



*SFAA members participated in Scope City's Meade Day festivities*

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*Dave Samuels wins the DSI Pro 2*

## CITY STAR PARTY LECTURES

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

### GOODBYE TO LAND'S END THE LOCATION OF THE CITY STAR PARTIES IS CHANGING



As you may have heard or noted, the weather pattern at Land's End has only been getting worse. For the last several months of 2005, your board was checking out alternative locations, and we now have two good sites vying for our use. For 2006, we will probably be alternating between the RANDALL MUSEUM and the new site we are trying out, INSPIRATION POINT in the Presidio. Inspiration Point is reached by driving north along Arguello as it passes the Arguello Gate into the Presidio and then begins to wind downwards; the lookout, on the right side of the road, has a small parking area next to an excellent "telescope stage."

PLEASE CHECK THE HOTLINE AT (415) 289-6636 OR THE WEB SITE for the location of each month's star party.

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.

**February 18, 2006, 6:00 p.m.**

**SATURN**

**Speakers: Michael Portuesi & Kenneth Frank**

**March 18, 2006, 6:30 p.m.**

**TYPES OF TELESCOPES**

**Speaker: Jorge Morales**

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### MT. TAM MEMBERS ONLY SPECIAL USE PERMIT NIGHTS

**February 25, 2006 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Mercury's Greatest Elongation**

<http://sfaa-astronomy.org/sfaa/calendar/pubevent.shtml?drawevent:sfaa:556>

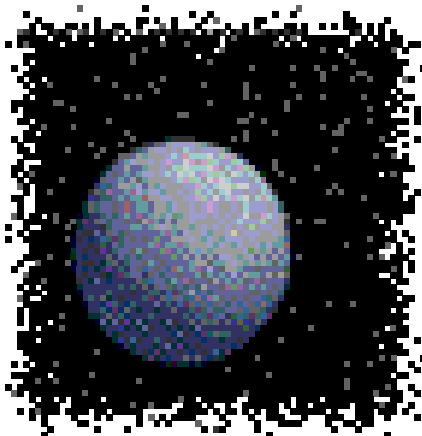
**March 25, 2006 – 6:30 p.m. INTO THE EARLY MORNING**

**Messier Madness**

<http://sfaa-astronomy.org/sfaa/calendar/pubevent.shtml?drawevent:sfaa:564>

**April 22, 2006 – 7:00 p.m. – Lyrid Meteor Peak at Midnight**

<http://sfaa-astronomy.org/sfaa/calendar/pubevent.shtml?drawevent:sfaa:559>





# SFAA 2006 Calendar of Events

## Mount Tam Public Events

Public nights start with a lecture, followed by public viewing. SFAA members may view privately after crowd departs approx. 11 pm-2 am. Note that access to SUP private events is contingent on our participation in the public events.

April 1  
April 29  
June 3  
July 1  
July 29  
August 26  
September 23

## Mount Tam SUP Events

SUP (Special Use Permit) observing nights on Mount Tam are open *only* to SFAA members. Please try to arrive by sunset (times listed below). We must be off the mountain by 2 am except on specially approved nights (such as Messier Marathon).

January 28, 5:29 pm  
February 25, 5:59 pm  
March 25 (Messier Marathon night), 6:26 pm  
April 22, 7:52 pm  
May 27, 8:22 pm  
June 24, 8:35 pm  
July 22, 8:27 pm  
August 19, 7:57 pm  
September 16, 7:16 pm  
October 21, 6:24 pm  
November 18, 4:56 pm  
December 23, 4:55 pm

## City Star Party

CSP events start at sunset (times listed below) with a public lecture, followed by public viewing. Inspiration Point in the Presidio and the Randall Museum are the new locations for the CSP this year. Locations for specific dates are TBA.

February 18 (Randall Museum), 5:52 pm  
March 18, 6:20 pm  
April 8, 7:39 pm  
May 6 (Astronomy Day @ Cal Academy of Sciences), 8:05 pm  
June 17, 8:34 pm  
July 16, 8:31 pm  
August 5, 8:14 pm  
September 30, 6:54 pm  
October 14, 6:33 pm  
November 25, 4:53 pm  
December 16, 4:52 pm

## Board Meetings

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month, at the Randall Museum. 7 pm. All SFAA members are invited.

February 14  
March 14  
April 11  
May 9  
June 13  
July 11  
August 8  
September 12  
October 10  
November 14  
December 12

## General Meetings

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month, at the Randall Museum. Doors open 7 pm, announcements 7:30 pm, guest speaker 8 pm.

February 15  
March 15  
April 19  
May 17  
June 21  
July 19  
August 16  
September 20  
October 18  
November 15  
December 20

## Other SFAA Events

Messier Marathon, March 25  
Astronomy Day @ California Academy of Sciences, May 6  
SFAA Annual Picnic, TBA  
Yosemite Weekend, TBA

## Other Astronomy Events

- Riverside Telescope Maker's Conference  
May 26-28  
[www.rtmcastronomyexpo.org](http://www.rtmcastronomyexpo.org)
- Grand Canyon Star Party  
June 17-24  
[www.tucsonastronomy.org/gcsp.html](http://www.tucsonastronomy.org/gcsp.html)
- Shingletown Star Party  
June 21-26  
[www.shingletownstarparty.org](http://www.shingletownstarparty.org)
- Stellafane  
July 28-29  
[www.stellafane.com](http://www.stellafane.com)
- Fremont Peak Star-B-Q  
August 26  
[www.fpoa.net](http://www.fpoa.net)
- Calstar (Lake San Antonio)  
September 21-23  
[www.sjaa.net](http://www.sjaa.net)

## MADEIRA MONUMENT EVENT IN VOLCANO

Unveiling of the plaque was by Muriel Thebaut and Norma Madeira Morgan. (Muriel Thebaut was responsible for first bringing forth the idea that a monument to George Madeira and the first astronomical observatory in California should be put up in Volcano. Her talk before the Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society in the early 1950's inspired Victor Killick, though he didn't acknowledge her role. Norma Madeira Morgan is the oldest living direct descendant of George Madeira, daughter of Jesse, grand-daughter of Frank, great-granddaughter of George Madeira. She was 89 at the time of the ceremony, so I've been told.



Norma Madeira Morgan (right) with sister Ann Madeira Kately and Norma's husband H. H. Morgan (family historian).

The dedication event took place in Volcano, Amador County, California on 21 January 2006.

Madeira Family present numbered 47+ (there were 47 paid lunches from the family, + a few small children who didn't pay). This number includes spouses and friends, so the number of descendants was smaller. There were four great-grandchildren of George Madeira present. They were: Harrison Truitt Starr, whose grandmother Mary Mitchell Madeira, oldest child of George Madeira, was born in Volcano in 1860; George William Madeira, whose grandfather was William R. Madeira, fifth child of George Madeira; and two great-granddaughters descended from Francisco Doria Madeira (known as 'Frank'), the seventh child of George Madeira. They are also the daughters of Jesse G. Madeira who participated in the 1968 ceremony. They are Norma Madeira Morgan and Ann Madeira Kateley. Family attending came from Oregon, Nevada and various parts of California.



Muriel Thebaut, Norma Madeira Morgan and Marshal Merriam prepare for the unveiling.



Just some of the Madeira family attending the dedication!

Astronomical Societies with members attending were SAS, SVAS, AAS (Amador Astronomical Society), and MDAS (Mount Diablo Astronomical Society). Also there were two persons attending from Lick Observatory (unofficially).

Speakers at the unveiling were: David Scharlach (Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society), Jerry Hyatt (Stockton Astronomical Society), Harrison Truitt Starr (descendant, see above).



In Armory Hall before the dedication, Marshal Merriam reviewed the life of George Madeira and issues found in researching the new monument location.  
Photo ©2006 Webcentric Computer Services



Harrison Truitt Starr spoke on behalf of the Madeira family.

Monument sponsors (i.e., those whose contributions paid for it) were: the two astronomical societies (SAS and SVAS), several of the descendants of George Madeira, other individuals (including Marshal...ed.). Official sponsor of the project and the event was the Amador County Historical Society. This was an ACHS project to commemorate the 150th year ('Sesquicentennial') of Amador County. (When the Madeira family arrived in 1852, Volcano was part of Calaveras County and Amador County did not yet exist.)

Total attendance was 130, estimated by counting empty chairs.



Main Street, Volcano - population 102. St George Hotel at far end.



SAS group, from left: Trevor Atkinson, Emelia Seiferling, Rosemary Atkinson, Jim Seiferling, Mary & Jerry Hyatt, Marshal & Diane, Bev & Jack Sales; Lloyd and Judy Altamirano are out of picture on the right.  
Photo ©2006 Webcentric Computer Services

George David Madeira was born on 14 October 1836 in Galena, Illinois and died 21 January 1922 in San Francisco. He was cremated and what happened to the ashes isn't known (at least not to me).

This being the 84th anniversary of his death, the program was, in part, a commemoration of the life of George David Madeira, with special emphasis on the portion of his life he spent in Volcano.

Press coverage (before the event) included a page-1 story in the Stockton Record on 19 January and a feature story on the first page of an interior section of the Ledger-Dispatch of Jackson, Amador County, on 11 January. There were also various short announcements on other dates.

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:

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Name: Telephone:

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

**San Francisco Amateur Astronomers**  
P.O. Box 15097  
San Francisco, CA 94115



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Web Page: [www.sfaa-astronomy.org](http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org)

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