

★ ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

**Vol. 62, No. 1
In Memory of John Dobson**

JOHN LOWRY DOBSON 1915 - 2014



**Memorial Service
March 8, 2014 - Noon
Land's End
San Francisco**

**International Sidewalk Astronomy Night - ISAN 7
March 8, 2014**

**Honoring John Dobson * Dedicated to his memory
Amateur astronomers worldwide can join to celebrate John's life
and the co-founding of the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers in 1968.**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings SFAA'ers,

Earlier this year I mentioned that I attempted to add up all of the hours of volunteering that the club receives annually. There are two reasons I wanted to add them up. First, volunteer hours are very valuable and in order to use them as wisely as possible I think they need to be understood at a high level. Second, it's in my nature to make lists and add things up :)

By my estimate, our club members contribute about 3100 volunteer hours per year to the club. The types of hours I count include efforts like sharing views through a scope at a public star party, maintaining our website, picking up our mail at the PO box, creating and updating our club brochure, sending out email blasts (and responding to the subsequent responses from members), etc.

I also broke down where the 3100 hours go, in other words, who benefits from them:

- 1500 hours directly benefit the public, but not necessarily club members (aside from a club member's possible positive feelings about volunteering).
- 600 hours benefit both the public and the club members, for example, our lectures at the Randall Museum.
- 300 hours benefit club members only, for example, Mt Tam Members Only Nights.
- 700 hours are spent on administrative tasks that don't directly benefit either the club members or the public.

If I add up what we need in order to do everything I think the club should do however, I get 4000. Next year I'm afraid we will still fall short on things like making T-shirts and developing a formal mentoring program, but I am confident that we'll be able to add more social events.

In addition to all of the hours contributed by club members, I learned last May that we have another source of volunteers -- our significant others! When I transitioned to stay-at-home life as opposed to a being a full time worker, I was surprised how *busy* I was given I wasn't working. My husband Doug had been doing more than his fair share of house chores like doing the dishes, while I worked on club activities, ever since I became Treasurer a few years ago. (If you want to see a picture of this great guy, see below). Thanks to all of you significant others and family members who support the club and support amateur astronomy as a hobby (especially with the being-away-late-

at-night-thing).

This is my last President's Message for this term. If you've noticed I haven't been around much towards the end of this year, my apologies, and it's not for lack of wanting to be around. (I've got an illness in the family which gave me less time for the club.) I miss Mt Tam Member Nights, which is my regular winter stargazing spot. Maybe someday years down the road I will run for the board or President again if the club is in the need of leadership. I found the President job to be often easy, occasionally not easy, but worth the effort as I was rewarded by seeing the results -- a mostly thriving and fun club fulfilling the mission to Popularize Amateur Astronomy.

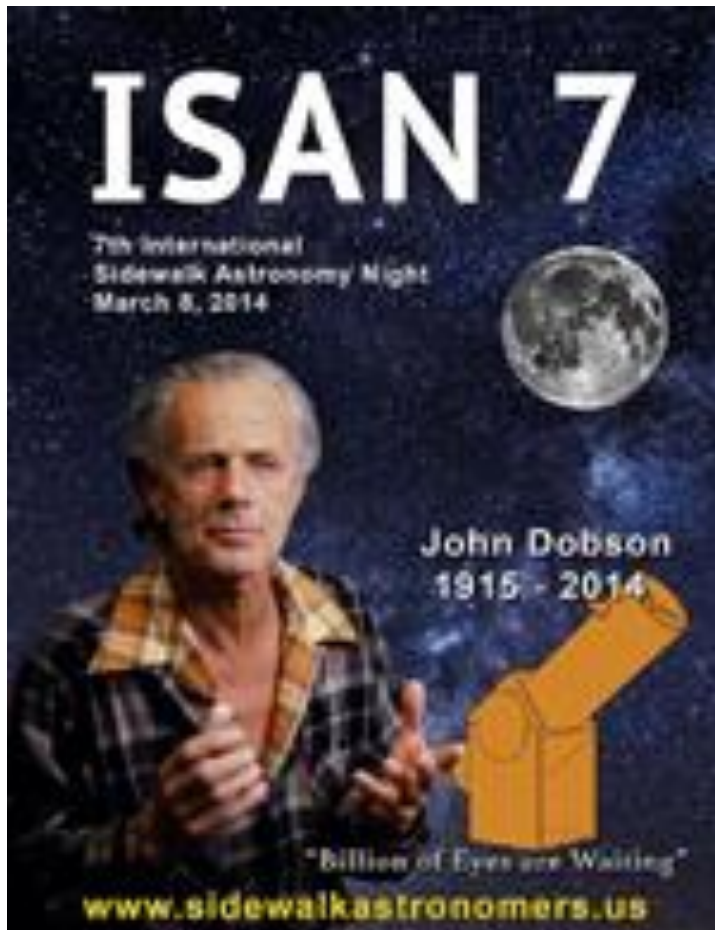
Take it away Matt Jones, the Officers, Board, and club members of 2014!

Angie

ANGIE TRAEGER
President
San Francisco Amateur Astronomers
2013



THANKS, BUDDY!
Photograph by Jorge Lavererio
Yosemite Star Party 2013



ISAN 7

**7th International
Sidewalk
Astronomy
Night**

**John Dobson Memorial Remembrance
March 8, 2014 . Noon
Land's End . San Francisco**

**This year has special significance for us,
as we celebrate the life and work of John Dobson.**

Join us for ISAN 7 on March 8th. International Sidewalk Astronomy Night was started to honor John Dobson and his goal of showing the people of this planet where they live. By taking part this year, we all "accept his big inheritance - we all continue his work, going to the streets, showing to the people the wonders of our universe."

The Srancisco Sidewalk Astronomers, San Francisco Amateur Astronomers and the Astronomical Association of Northern California announce a memorial and celebration of the life of John Lowry Dobson.

EVENTS

VALLEY OF THE DOBS

If you took John's telescope making class and you still have your scope kicking around, bring it! We will have the "Valley of the Dobs" for a great photo opportunity. Reconnect with your classmates pushing glass.

GROUP PHOTO

Along with the group photo, please bring yours, too, to share your memories and fun stories. We would also like for someone to make a video, please.

GRIND A MIRROR

John used to say, "The mirror must be accurate to within one one-thousandth the thickness of Saran Wrap." Just how do you make a mirror this accurate? Test your skills. We would like for everyone to spend a few moments grinding the mirror in remembrance of John.

SAFE SOLAR VIEWING

Members of SFAA, SFSA and AANC will provide telescopes for safe solar viewing of our nearest star.

SIDEWALK ASTRONOMY

This memorial will be part of the great universal star party in memory of John. We hope that amateurs everywhere will help celebrate the life and work of John Dobson by performing public observing sessions on March 8th. As amateur astronomers, John felt this was our task. He repeatedly said that "If amateur astronomers don't do it, who will? Professionals have other work to do, it's the amateurs that need to go to the people." He spent over 40 years going out every clear night to perform that task. Many times, he would meet amateurs who would tell him of their public events and his reply would always be, "Good, that's what you're supposed to be doing!"

We hope that you'll get a scope and do some true "sidewalk" observing, but if that is difficult in your area, we hope that you will hold some kind of public star party.

JOHN LOWRY DOBSON
1915 - 2014



We have learned with great sadness of the passing of John Dobson, inventor of the Dobsonian telescope, who changed the field of astronomy by creating a telescope accessible to the public worldwide.

John Dobson was born in Peking, China. His grandfather founded Peking University. His mother was a musician; his father taught zoology at the university. In 1927, due to political unrest in China, the family moved to San Francisco. John received his degree in chemistry at UC Berkeley in 1943, and proceeded to work in a number of defense-related jobs. He then discovered the Vedanta Center, entered the Vedanta Monastery in 1944 and served as a monk of the Ramakrishna Order for 23 years.

As a member of the Ramakrishna Order, known for its intellectual rigor and public service, John was assigned to reconcile teachings of religion with science. With a desire to see the universe, he built his first telescope in 1956 and soon after, a second telescope utilizing a lens made from 12-inch porthole glass. With a desire to share what he saw of the night sky through his telescope, a life of public service began. His support and assistance to those opening their eyes to the skies conflicted with monastic duties, and in 1967, John re-entered public life. As he said, “The Universe is bigger than the earth, it’s bigger than the solar system, it’s bigger than our galaxy, and we owe it to ourselves to notice it,” and his life

evolved to this calling in service to the public.

In keeping with his desire to open the depths of the skies to everyone, John created plans for low-cost telescopes and mounts of various sizes made from plywood, cardboard and a mirror ground from glass. These [plans](#) would not be patented and they currently remain available to all at the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers' website.

In 1968, John Dobson, along with two of his students, Bruce Sams and Jeff Roloff, established the [San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers](#) whose sole purpose is public service in astronomy and whose primary work is to provide the opportunity to see celestial objects through good-sized telescopes, provide information about what is seen, and teach and assist in low-cost telescope making. This organization has become known [throughout the world](#) as "the Sidewalk Astronomers," a living part of the fulfillment of John's dream.

John Dobson held the distinction of being San Francisco Amateur Astronomers' Honorary Director and Board Member Emeritus. In May 2005, he traveled with SFAA's Ken Frank to the [Riverside Telescope Makers Conference](#) for a special appearance where he was presented with a special award honoring his 90th birthday and his contributions to amateur astronomy. He saw three members of Girl Scout Troop 83, Katie Barmazel, Sarah Davis & Ivy White, receive the the Astronomer's Choice Award for their 8" f/5 Dobsonian with homemade mirror.



August 27, 2005 brought the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers' hosting of AANC CON, the annual conference of the Astronomy Association of Northern California (AANC), held at the Randall Museum, where we were able to honor John Dobson on his 90th birthday with more than 500 people in attendance. The City of San Francisco presented John with a commemorative plaque officially proclaiming August 27, 2005 as JOHN DOBSON DAY.



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the City and County of San Francisco is proud to recognize and honor one of its most extraordinary citizens, John Dobson; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dobson has been one of this country's most influential people in amateur astronomy in the last 30 years, serving the people of the City and County of San Francisco with distinction, innovation; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dobson for his accomplishments in encouraging the citizens of this planet to think and wonder about the universe and give them a chance to see its beauty with their own eyes, all the while earning the admiration and respect of his colleagues; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dobson has dedicated his life to public service as a teacher of cosmology and telescope making and his accomplishments are many and known to all astronomers worldwide, as he has almost single-handedly revolutionized astronomy by making deep space accessible to millions; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that I Gavin Newsom, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, join with friends, family and colleagues in honoring John Dobson on the occasion of his 90th birthday, for his dedication, hard work and devotion to public service promoting astronomy advancement, and do hereby proclaim August 27, 2005 as... JOHN DOBSON DAY In San Francisco!



Over the course of many years, John conducted telescope making classes at the Randall Museum.



How fortunate we have been for the gift of having this great, passionate individual in our midst here in San Francisco, to know his passion for the universe, his passion as well to open wide the telescopic windows of our world to our great universe, devoting his life to his ongoing dream and wish for everyone. Over the years, individuals within our membership have so generously and caringly seized the privilege of supporting John in his endeavors and with his needs. With saddened hearts we bid farewell to a great man and upon the many ways he gave to us and the many ways, as well, in which our members rose to reach out to him.

San Francisco Amateur Astronomers will greatly miss our Honorary Director and Board Member Emeritus, John Dobson. He will long be remembered with great appreciation by all of us and the rest of the astronomy world as well.

We extend our most sincere sympathies and condolences to his family.

2013 CLUB OFFICERS & CONTACTS

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1 st Alternate	Suzanne Huang	
2 nd Alternate	Joe Heavey	
Webmaster	Matthew Jones	

CLUB TELESCOPES

The SFAA owns eight very fine, easy to use, loaner telescopes well-suited for deep sky, planets, and star parties. All scopes are available to any SFAA member. The loaner custodians for the majority of our fleet are Pete & Sarah Goldie. Please contact them at telescopes@sfaa-astronomy.org for details if you are interested in borrowing a scope or if you have items you can donate for the loaner program (eyepieces, star maps/books, red flashlights, collimator, etc.). Please contact the appropriate member indicated below if you are interested in borrowing one of the telescopes.

- 1) 6" f/10.3 Dobsonian/Ken Frank ken@sfaa-astronomy.org
- 2) 8" f/7 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 3) 8.5" f/6 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 4) 10" f/8 Dobsonian/Pete Goldie
- 5) 114mm f/4 Newtonian StarBlast/Pete Goldie
- 6) 8" f/10 Celestron SCT/Annette Gabrielli/ annette@sfaa-astronomy.org
- 7) 8" f/10 Meade SCT/Stefanie Ulrey/treasurer@sfaa-astronomy.org
- 8) 9.5" f/5.6 Celestron Newtonian/Ken Frank/ ken@sfaa-astronomy.org

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. For information on the course tapes themselves:

<http://www.teach12.com/ttc/assets/coursedescriptions/180.asp>

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership is billed for each upcoming year on June 30. Members may receive no more than one bulletin after the expiration of membership.

SFAA WEBSITE AND ONLINE SERVICES

The SFAA web site at 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 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.

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 25th day of the month.** Send your articles to Editor@sfaa-astronomy.org

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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.