



The Refractor

The Bulletin of the Eastbay Astronomical Society
 Founded in 1924 at Chabot Observatory, Oakland, California

Volume 79
 Number 5
 January 2003

Dante Alighieri and Astronomy

by Peter Lord, and...

Axel Mellinger

Astrophotographer Extraordinaire

Saturday, January 4, 2003, 7:30 pm

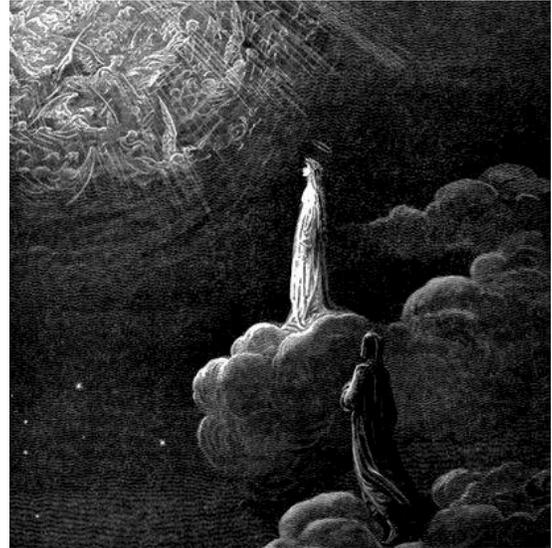
Physics Lab, 2nd Floor, Spees Bldg

Chabot Space & Science Center, Oakland

Peter will share his fascination with the astronomy of Dante Alighieri's poetic masterpiece *The Divine Comedy*. Dante's astronomy has been neglected and overlooked by scholars for nearly seven centuries. Peter will present his discovery of a rich heritage more than 2000 years old, a tradition that for the first time explains the grand vision of the epic that consumed Dante for nearly two decades. Above all else Dante's quest is that of a passionate stargazer whose mind ultimately *revolves with the love that moves the Sun, the Moon, and other Stars*.

Peter is a Systems Engineer at Space Systems/Loral. He made his own 6" telescope with the Tri Valley Stargazers, and as a member of the FPOA has given many public lectures. Peter recently earned his master's degree in Liberal Arts through Stanford University's evening program, and is currently involved in several research and writing projects related to his interest in classical and medieval astronomy. When he is not writing or studying, Peter enjoys visual observation from his back yard observatory where he peruses the Astronomical Leagues Master Observer Certificate.

Axel Mellinger is one of the world's foremost astrophotographers, who also happens to be a good friend of our own EAS members, Conrad Jung and Debbie Dyke. He's the one who traveled to, and took pictures of, the night sky from various points around the world. He then developed the software program necessary to take all those separate images and combine them into one, incredibly beautiful *single* image of the entire sky! His "all-sky" poster comes in two variations, and are available for purchase ☆



LAST CHANCE!

To renew your
 membership
 (see form on Page 3)

If the number on your address label is **1002**, *this* will be your last newsletter, unless you renew before mid-January 2003. Don't let that happen! Renew today, and stay in touch with the Eastbay Astronomical Society.

DINNER WITH THE SPEAKER

5:30 pm

Saturday, Jan 4, 2002

HUNAN YUAN

4100 Redwood Rd., #11

(next to Safeway)

Oakland

(510) 531-1415

Please call Betty Neall at
 510/533-2394 by Friday,
 January 3rd to confirm
 your place.

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Editor's News 'n Views

For the thousandth time: *Happy Holidays!* By the time you get this, it will be very close to (either just before or just after) one of the major astronomical events of the year: New Year's Day. Well, it's sort of astronomical; our planet has finished yet another circuit about the Sun, and begun its next, and although that actually occurs every second of every day, we perhaps peculiarly choose to pay special attention to this particular instant. We should be forever grateful for Time, because without it, everything would happen all at once in one spot, and what fun would that be? Time also gives us space (or is it the other way around), and space is what we amateur astronomers like to look into, so there's that aspect of it, as well. Anyways, this is a short issue, as it comes right on the heels of the last newsletter, and not all that much has happened to write about. We should have already had our annual club holiday party (on December 28th) by now, so the main purposes of this issue is to 1) announce the next meeting on January 4th; 2) to remind those who haven't renewed their membership to do so or miss receiving this absolutely *fabulous* newsletter; and 3) to say HAPPY NEW YEAR! May your skies be ever dark and clear, may you find every deepsky object you look for, and may your toes and fingers stay toasty warm on even the coldest of nights! ☆

Save March 16th on your calendar for the EAS Annual Awards Dinner! More details to be announced in the next issue, and on the club website.

FYI: Exploring Mars

Recent Discoveries and Upcoming Missions
By Michael H. Carr, Planetary Geologist

Thursday, January 30, 2003, at 7:00 pm
345 Middlefield Rd, Bldg 3, 2nd floor, Conf Rm A
Menlo Park, CA, 94025

- Thirty years of Mars exploration have revealed a spectacularly diverse planet
- Dry river valleys and layered sediments suggest a warm, wet past
- Huge floods may have created transient oceans
- Towering volcanoes, deep canyons, and global fracture systems dwarf their counterparts on Earth
- Two US rovers and a European lander, to be launched this May and reach Mars in January 2004, are expected to shed new light on how the planet evolved

USGS Public Events Calendar (Recorded Message)
(650) 329-5000 For additional information on the USGS Evening Public Lecture Series please contact Amelia Barales: abarales2@usgs.gov or telephone (650) 329-5136.

FYI: National Dark Sky Week

From: Jennifer Barlow <astronomer107@comcast.net>
Subject: National Dark Sky Week

National Dark Sky Week occurs from April 12th to April 19th from 10-12 pm (Eastern and Mountain Times) and 9-11 pm (Central and Pacific times). National Dark Sky Week (NDSW) gives people a chance to see the sky as our ancestors saw it hundreds of years ago. The sky has long since been forgotten by many and it is my wish that every person in America will be awed by the splendor of the universe.

In order to participate in this event, spread the word, turn out your lights, and see the greatest show the universe has to offer!

Jennifer E. Barlow
Director and Founder of NDSW ☆



Spare Shots

◀ Ken Swagerty and Don Saito doing minor repairs on Rachel

▼ EAS Annual Awards Dinner in Chabot's Planetary Landscapes hall



◀ What happens when you take off the solar filter before moving the scope off the sun!

EAS 2003 Election

December 2002

Elections were held at the December meeting. The following were elected:

President: **Carter Roberts**, Vice President: **Phil Crabbe II**, Secretary: **Linda Lazzereti**, Treasurer: **Don Stone**. Board: **Anne Creese, Franklyn Creese, Alan R. Fisher, Terry R. Galloway, Paul Hoy, Conrad Jung, Betty Neall, Kenny Oslund, Louise Predovic, Alan Roche, Dave Rodrigues, George Roush, Don Saito, Bruce Skelly, Ken Swagerty, Paul Zurakowski.** **Natasha Cayco-Gajic** will occupy the student position.

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday, January 9th at 7:30pm in the Soda Board Room at Chabot. ★

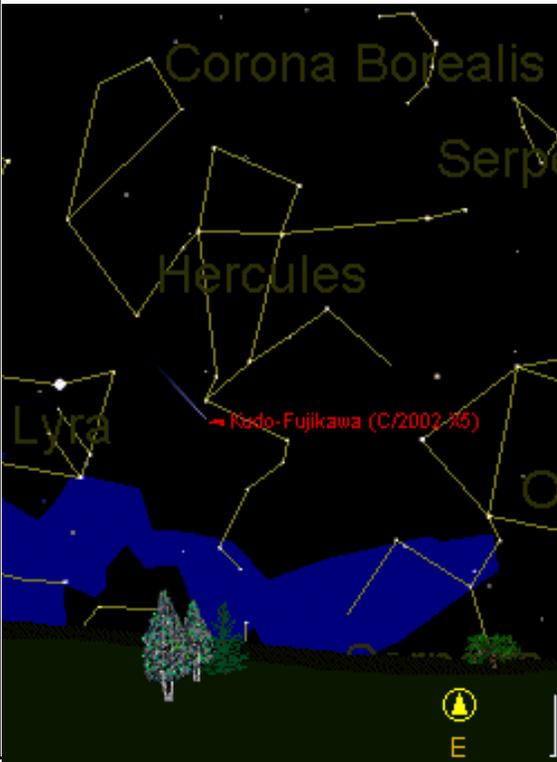
New Comet Discovered!

by Mark Gingrich

There's a newly discovered comet in the pre-dawn sky - now officially dubbed Comet Kudo-Fujikawa (C/2002 X5) - that aims to brighten to almost naked-eye detectability by early January. The following website has an ephemeris:

<http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iauc/08000/08033.html#Item1>

Slightly brighter than magnitude 8, it currently dwells in the constellation Hercules; this northerly declination may allow it to be glimpsed later this month in both the post-sunset and pre-sunrise skies, though the latter will be the more favorable circumstance. Kudos... er... congratulations to the discoverers! ★



◀A view from *Starry Night Pro* showing the location of comet Kudo-Fujikawa as of January 1st at 05:42 AM. It is moving toward the constellation Cygnus which, unfortunately, brings it closer and closer to the Sun.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(Please print clearly)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Day Phone: _____

Eve Phone: _____

Do not print address in Membership Directory listing

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

- Regular..... \$24
- Family \$36
- Contributing \$40
- Sustaining..... \$60 or more
- Student (digital newsletter only)... \$10

Optional discounted magazine subscription:

- Sky & Telescope \$29.95
- Astronomy \$29.00

Optional tax deductible donations:

- Burns Library \$ _____
- General Fund \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

To help save the club money, I prefer to receive the newsletter in digital format.

Please cut out and mail this form and your check or money order payable to:

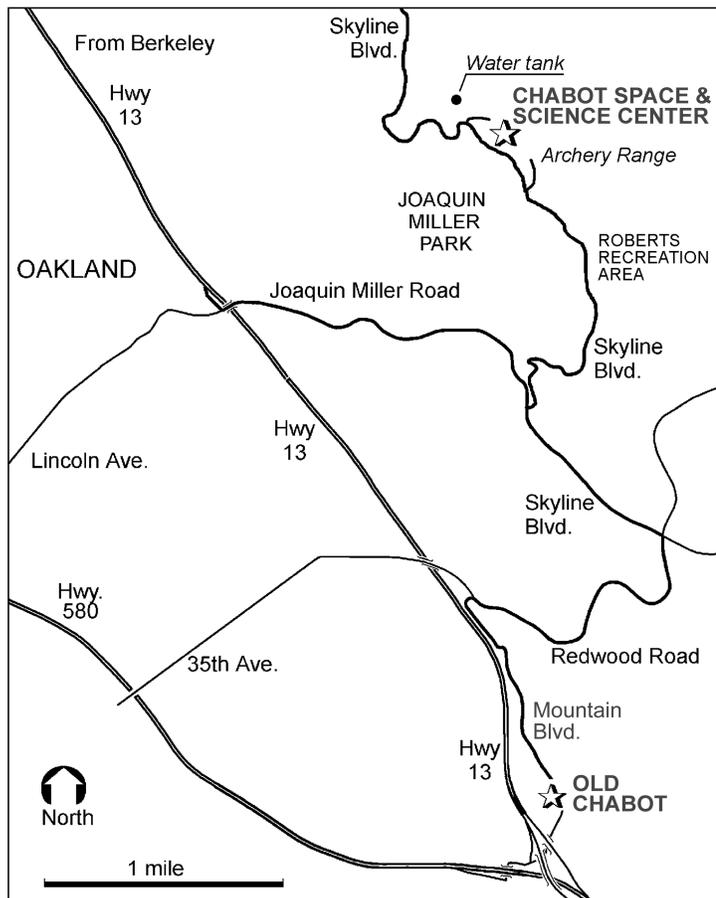
Eastbay Astronomical Society
19047 Robinson Road
Sonoma, CA 95476-5517

For more information, contact Treasurer Don Stone at: (707) 938-1667, or ddcstone@earthlink.net, or the address above.

Eastbay Astronomical Society

At Chabot Space & Science Center
10000 Skyline Boulevard ● Oakland, CA 94619

January 2003
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



FUTURE CONJUNCTIONS

- Jan 04 6:30pm EAS General Meeting
 05 6:30pm EAS Member's Only View Night at Chabot*
 09 7:30pm EAS Board Meeting at Chabot
 11 2-5pm EAS Library work party, Chabot
 18 2-5pm EAS Library work party, Chabot
 Feb 08 2-5pm EAS Library work party, Chabot
 09 6:30pm EAS Member's Only View Night at Chabot*
 13 7:30pm EAS Board Meeting at Chabot
 15 7:30pm EAS General Meeting at Chabot
 22 2-5pm EAS Library work party, Chabot

*Weather permitting – if in doubt, call Don Saito at 510 482-2913

Eastbay Astronomical Society

President: Carter Roberts (510) 524-2146
 cwroberts@earthlink.net
 Vice President: Phil Crabbe II (510) 655-4772
 Treasurer, Membership: Don Stone (707) 938-1667
 ddcstone@earthlink.net

Articles and photos for *The Refractor* are encouraged. Deadline for the February issue is January 25, 2003. Items may be submitted by mail to the editor, Don Saito, 3514 Randolph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602-1228. Internet email address: donsaito@pacbell.net Hm: (510) 482-2913.

Join the Eastbay Astronomical Society

- Regular, \$24/year
- Family, \$36/year
- Contributing, \$40/year
- Student, \$15/year (digital newsletter, only)
- Sustaining, \$60/year or more

Contact: Don Stone, EAS Membership Registrar

Telephone: (707) 938-1667 Email: ddcstone@earthlink.net

Mail: 19047 Robinson Road, Sonoma, CA 95476-5517