

# The Refractor

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

Volume 81  
Number 5  
March 2005

## Eastbay Astronomical Society 2005 Annual Awards Dinner

With Special Guest Speaker:

**Dr. Chris McKay**

Sunday, March 13, 2005

Doors open at 5:45 pm

Chabot Space & Science Center  
Astronomy Classroom, Dellums Building

NASA's *Cassini-Huygens* probe entered Saturn's orbit in June of 2004 after a long seven year voyage, which included four gravity-assists. Since then, it has been studying and transmitting data and images about the famous ringed gas giant and its thirty moons to us, and we have learned many new and amazing things from the encounter. By the time we hold our Annual Awards Dinner, the Huygens-half of the Cassini-Huygens probe will have been sent to, and landed on, Saturn's largest moon, Titan—the second largest moon in the solar system (Jupiter's Ganymede is the largest). NASA Astrobiologist, Chris McKay, will be among the first to analyze the data, and he will tell us the very latest of what has been learned from this historic mission.

Titan is the largest moon of the planet Saturn, and is the only moon in the solar system with a substantial atmosphere. It is mostly made of nitrogen and has a pressure one and a half times greater than that of the Earth at sea level. In these respects, Titan's atmosphere makes it the Earth's closest twin.

When Dr. McKay was in school, he studied physics, and from physics gravitated toward astrophysics. In 1976 he became a first year graduate student in the department of Astrogeophysics at the University of Colorado, Boulder. That same year Viking landed on Mars. The results were most mysterious to Dr. McKay. *Here was a planet with all the elements needed to support life (CO<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>O, N<sub>2</sub>) present in its atmosphere, with evidence of liquid water in the past and yet there was no sign of life. It seems like Mars had 'the lights on but nobody home.'* He slowly became more and more interested in life and how it originates, survives and changes a planet. In 1980 Dr. McKay applied to be a NASA graduate student



A composite image of Saturn and its moon, Titan Courtesy of JPL/NASA

Planetary Biology Summer Intern. He was accepted and sent to NASA Ames working with Jim Pollack. While at Ames he met Imre Friedmann of Florida State University and became involved in microbiological work in the dry valleys of Antarctica. *I became more and more interested in life and planets and continue to this day to conduct research in this area with a special focus on Mars and with many trips to the Antarctic.*

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## Registration Form Inside

Online Registration at  
<http://www/eastbayastro.org/>

2005 Helen Pillans Award  
will be awarded to  
**Debbie Dyke**

2005 Betty Neall Youth Award of  
Merit  
will be awarded to  
**Lacey Brooke**  
(granddaughter of Ken Swagerty)

## A big change starting this April for world's astronomers

The International Astronomy Union (IAU), as the officially recognized body in charge of celestial names, has announced a change in policy that will now allow corporate naming rights, not only to stars, but also to constellations, asterisms and galaxies.

Prof. Illoa, Secretariat of the organization, which is based in Paris, explained the somewhat controversial new ruling, stating that it is a sign of the times, thoroughly consistent with the naming rights to ball parks and entertainment arenas (Network Associates Stadium, Chronicle Pavilion), and events (Southwest Airlines Chinese New Year Festival and Parade, Macys Thanksgiving Parade).

It can be no surprise that the first corporation to take advantage of the new publicity opportunity is the Ford Motor Company, with a signed contract for renaming the Zodiacal constellation *Ford* Taurus. General Motors is in negotiations to acquire trademark rights to the planet Saturn, which would preclude all other commercial interests from utilizing any representations of the planet Saturn in their advertisements without the express written permission of GM. This would even include astronomy textbooks. The Subaru Corporation has already paid millions to acquire exclusive copyright and trademark licenses to the Pleiades (which, in Japanese, translates to 'Subaru'). In Japan, the car will be known as the Subaru Suburu, or Subaru<sup>2</sup>.

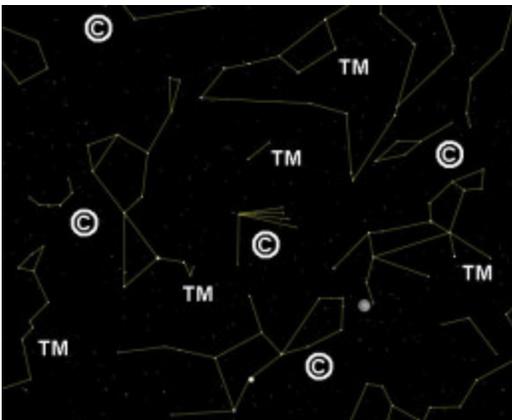
As has already been seen, it's no surprise that the prices will be astronomical. This will not be an obstacle for major corporations, however, and head of the Microsoft Corporation, Bill Gates, is reported to be considering changing the name of the brightest star in the sky from Sirius to Microsoft Gates.

There are several commercial companies, the International Star Registry for one, that presume to name a star for a modest price, pledging to have that name placed in the Library of Congress. This means only that they will publish a book of "star names," and secure a copyright for that book; an entirely meaningless gesture. Names so listed will enter obscurity and will never be officially recognized by anyone. The non-profit IAU sanction and ratification, in contrast, will be binding for all astronomers, and the proceeds from the sale of corporate

naming rights will be divided between the ESA, NASA and JAXA, the newly formed Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

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(This one's not.)



## AstronomyOutreach Network Announces 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Outreach

### AstroOscars February 18, 2005

The AstronomyOutreach Network announced the recipients of its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Outreach Awards, given for extraordinary efforts to promote astronomy. These AstroOscars were awarded at the Winter Star Party in the Florida Keys on February 11, 2005 and will be presented each year, hereafter.

**Astronomy magazine**—For support of the amateur astronomy community as well as establishment of National Astronomy Day activities through venues such as museums/science centers, observatories, and planetaria.

**Sky & Telescope magazine**—For support of the amateur astronomy community as well as National Astronomy Day activities with the Astronomical League and hundreds of clubs on an annual basis.

**Astronomical Society of the Pacific**—For establishment of astronomy outreach programs and recognition as well as programs such as Project ASTRO and Family ASTRO.

**Eastbay Astronomical Society**—Founded at Oakland's (CA) Chabot Observatory in 1924, the EAS has supported Chabot and its programs throughout the decades. Its Telescope Maker's Workshop, started in 1930, is one of the oldest continuous TMW's in the United States.

The Outreach Awards Selection Committee was again chaired by **Dr. Mike Reynolds** (astronomy professor, Executive Director Emeritus of the Chabot Space & Science Center and author), and also included **Tippy D'Auria** (Founder of the Winter Star Party and renowned lecturer), **Steve Edberg** (Director of the Riverside Telescope Makers Conference, author, and JPL staffer), and **Scott Roberts** (AstronomyOutreach Network founder). Awards were generously sponsored by **Craig Weatherwax** of Oceanside Photo & Telescope.

The AstronomyOutreach Network was created four years ago as a channel for interacting with the community and to practice outreach. The website offers information and contacts in astronomy, spotlighting those who do outreach, a news service with a java script news feed for web developers interested in offering astronomy and space-related news.

While there are many astronomy and space exploration sites on the web, there seemed to be few that spotlight the people and organizations who do outreach in astronomy and space exploration. There are also so many of those engaged in this endeavor that did not have a platform or a home to make them known to the general public. This was the primary reason to initiate the AstronomyOutreach network.

For more information on AstronomyOutreach:  
<http://www.astronomyoutreach.net/>

For more info on the Outreach Awards, contact:

Dr. Mike Reynolds ([astrogator90@comcast.net](mailto:astrogator90@comcast.net))

2347 Foxhaven Drive West

Jacksonville FL 32224

(904) 221-6704 Mobile (904) 424-2187 ★ (This one's real.)

# ***Eastbay Astronomical Society***

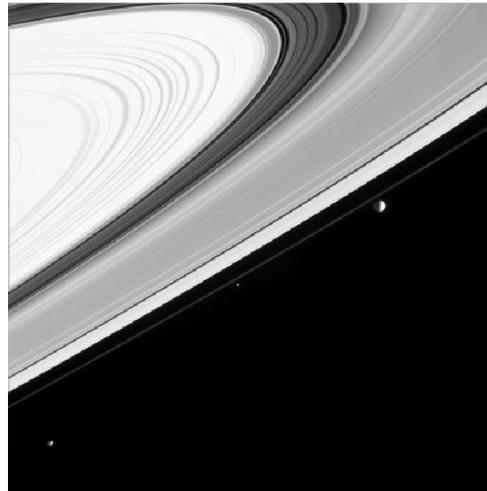
Eighty-first Anniversary Dinner

**Sunday, March 13, 2005**

**Astronomy Classroom, 2nd floor of the Dellums Building**

**Chabot Space & Science Center**

10000 Skyline Boulevard, Oakland



Main Speaker:

**Dr. Chris McKay**

Subject:

**Exploring Titan!**

The doors will open at 5:45 pm, with Dinner at 6:45 pm.

Awards presentation, door prizes and lecture about 8:00 p.m.

*Take an hour to view the new Mirror Mirror Exhibit before dinner!*

***See you there!***



Dinner will be catered by **Jessica Lasky** featuring tuscan style crispy golden chicken roasted in the under bricks, warm farfalle pasta with caramelized onions, walnuts, and arugula, caramelized vegetables with feta and oregano dressing, organic spinach salad with grilled apples, warm brie, and sherry vinaigrette, fresh fruit salad and cookies, crusty breads and rolls.

Cost per person is \$33.00. Mail your checks or money orders, payable to the EAS, OR, securely sign up online at the club website at <http://www.eastbayastro.org/>, as soon as possible with the form below, or bring it with you to the next meeting, or give it to any club officer at Chabot some Friday or Saturday evening. Get your reservation in soon to guarantee a seat. *We must give the caterer a final count by March 7th.*

Questions?  
Contact EAS Treasurer Don Stone at  
**(707) 938-1667**  
or email him at  
**ddcstone@earthlink.net**

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Eastbay Astronomical Society Annual Awards Dinner  
Sunday, March 13, 2005  
Registration Form

Number of Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount (\$33 per attendee): \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form with your check or money order (no cash, please) to:

EAS Treasurer  
19047 Robinson Road  
Sonoma, California 95476-5517



## Editor's News 'n Views

Howdy, Astro Fans! As you may have noticed, this month's newsletter is a bit *early*, and a bit smaller than usual, too. The reason being: our **Annual Awards Dinner** is just a few weeks away, so, we need to BEG you to sign up for it right away—as in, *now*. As in: what are

you still doing, reading this newsletter when you should be getting your registration form filled-out and into an already addressed and stamped envelope along with a check for the right amount? (Just kidding—sort of. You can go ahead and finish reading this newsletter, first.) We need to have at least 50 *paid* participants before we break even on the deal, and we've got a ways to go to reach that goal, yet. For the first time in the history of our illustrious club, it is now possible to register and pay for this event online via our website on the Internet(!), which makes it fast, easy, safe, and waaay cool. This year's event promises to be quite exciting, too, what with **Dr. Chris McKay** as our speaker, **Dr. Mike Reynolds** to present the Helen Pillans award to the young and beautiful (and sometimes zany) **Ms. Debbie Dyke** for her many contributions to amateur astronomy over the years; more awards, door prizes, and a chance to catch up with your friends and peers in the astro community. Believe you me—this is not an event you're going to want to miss!

How'd I do?

In other news: even as I write this, longtime EAS member, **Lewis C. Epstein** is in Zurich, Switzerland as the principal lecturer for the *Einstein Theory Centennial 1905-2005 Exhibit Show* at Technorama, the Swiss National Science Museum. Mr. Epstein wrote the book, *Relativity Visualized*, and has been a friend of Chabot Observatory for 62 years(!), and is a founding member of the SFAA. Congratulations, Lewis!

On March 12, at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Burlingame (next to San Francisco Airport), the Scientific and Technical Antique and Collectible Show will be held starting at 10am and going until 2pm. Call (310) 476-6277 for details on admission and parking fees. This is a unique one-day gathering of knowledgeable dealers specializing in instruments and tools. Thousands of antiques and collectables including Laboratory, Medical, Nautical, Astronomical, Surveying, Drafting, Calculating, Weights, Measures, Scales, Industrial Devices, Hand Tools & Other Items of Unique Interest. Friendly and enthusiastic people offering pieces in all price ranges from different disciplines and eras. From Roman medical instruments, to superbly crafted 18th century microscopes, to fascinating slide rules, all in one place for just one day a year. Sounds like fun!

Our upcoming **Members' Only View Nights** are on Sun Mar 6, 6-11pm, Sun, Apr 10, 7-11pm, and Sun, May 15, 8-11:45pm. Call Don at (510) 482-2913 to confirm IF the weather is iffy.

Don't forget! Sign up for our EAS Annual Awards Dinner, and, March is **Messier Marathon Month**—the best night being Thursday, March 10 (New Moon).

That's it for now. See you – IN THE FUTURE! ☆

## Spare Shots

All photos by Don Saito

► *Debbie Dyke always seems to have a "leg up" on all the other volunteers, literally and figuratively, as far as her unmatched dedication to public astronomy over the years has shown*



◀ *Carter Roberts: EAS club President, CSSC Board member, Chabot Historian, lumberjack. Shown here hacking back light and life sapping foliage so a nearby Pallid Manzanita can have a fighting chance at survival*

► *Eric Havel, Carter Roberts, and two Galaxy Explorer volunteers, working to improve the manzanita grove below Chabot*



*That's it for this month! ☆*



# Eastbay Astronomical Society

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

**March 2005**  
*RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED*

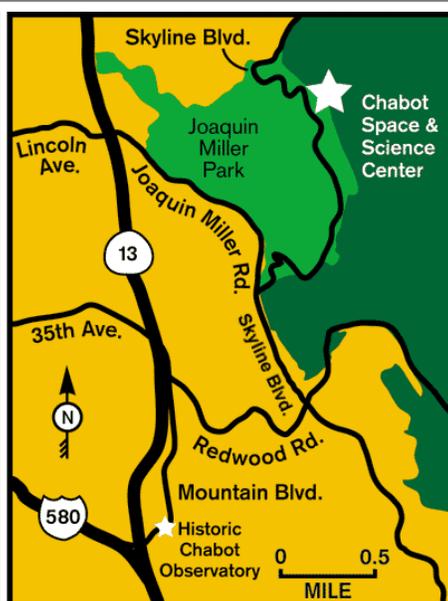
## Eastbay Astronomical Society

President: Carter Roberts (510) 524-2146  
Treasurer: Don Stone (707) 938-1667  
Secretary: Linda Lazzaretti (510) 633-2488

cwroberts@earthlink.net  
ddcstone@earthlink.net

Vice President: Phil Crabbe II (510) 655-4772  
Membership Reg: Bruce Skelly bjskelly@yahoo.com  
Events Coord: Dave Rodrigues (510) 483-9191

Articles and photos for *The Refractor* are encouraged. Deadline for the April 2005 issue is March 26, 2005. Items may be submitted by mail to:  
Editor - 3514 Randolph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602-1228. Internet email address: donsaito@comcast.net Hm: (510) 482-2913.



### FUTURE CONJUNCTIONS

- Mar 6 Members' Only View Night at Chabot 6-11pm
- 10 EAS Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm
- 13 EAS Annual Awards Dinner, Astronomy Classroom, Dellums Bldg, doors open 5:45pm (details inside)
- Apr 10 Members' Only View Night at Chabot 7-11pm
- 16 EAS General Meeting, Chabot, Physics Lab
- 21 EAS Board Meeting, Chabot, Soda Board Rm, 7:30pm

### Join the Eastbay Astronomical Society

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

Contact: Don Stone, EAS Membership Registrar  
Telephone: (707) 938-1667 Email: ddcstone@earthlink.net  
Mail: 19047 Robinson Road, Sonoma, CA 95476-5517

Secure sign-up online at <http://www.eastbayastro.org/>