

THE HERMAN FAST AWARD by William J. Cherrington

Instituted in 1987 in honor of the memory of Herman Fast, the Board of directors of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers voted unanimously in favor of establishing the Herman Fast Award. The recipient would have to show a significant contribution to amateur astronomy and be a member of San Francisco Amateur Astronomers.

Herman Fast was born June 17th, 1914. He became interested in astronomy at an early age. While in his teens, he organized the Junior Astronomy Club of San Francisco, at his home in San Francisco in the Mission District, and served as the Secretary through its years of existence.

Herman was camp astronomer at the CCC camp in Modoc County in the 1930s. He made weekend trips to Mount Hamilton in the 1940s to view the heavens with his home-built 8" reflector. In many cases, he made his own star charts, as none were available on the local markets to the amateur community.

In October of 1952 Herman attended the first meeting of SFAA at the Josephine D. Randall Jr. Museum and served as a Board Member most of the years until his passing in 1986. Year after year, Herman would bring the coffee and cookies which so many of us have enjoyed over the years, and paid for it out of his own pocket.

Herman was a frequent attendee of the Wallace Telescope Makers Workshop, and completed 17 mirrors. He assisted beginners at star parties, and always had something constructive about to say about every telescope. He also made his spectroscope and other instruments, including sundials, Foucault testers, etc.

In 1980, SFAA presented to Herman an award for his 50 years in amateur astronomy, and observations of over 8,000 double stars. That same year he received the AANC Messier Award. In the early 1980s, he also received the AANC Amateur Award.

Herman was fortunate enough to see the return of Halley's Comet, which was one of his dreams. In September 1985, Herman and his friends first observed the 15th magnitude comet through the telescope named Evergreen at Fiddletown Observatory. In the Fall/Spring of 85/86, Herman and Edwina Cherrington organized the publicity for the Halley Star Parties on Mt. Tamalpais. Herman was on Mt Tam when over 10,000 people observed the Comet and other celestial wonders through Club telescopes.

On Monday, December 16th, 1986 Herman attended the SFAA monthly meeting in the Goethe Room of the California Academy of Science in Golden Gate Park. The speaker was Fr. Richard Spohn, S.J. on the topic of Primitive Astronomy and Stonehenge. The attendance was 82. That evening, as I took Herman home, he had nothing but astronomy on his mind. On the 17th, Herman passed through transition.

On Sunday, Jan. 11th, 1987, at the memorial service in honor of Herman Fast, people came as far away as Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz. Over 200 people attended the service at the Unitarian Church at Franklin and Geary St. A memorable time was had by all those attending

and sharing a large table of food provided by members and a large Memorial Cake to SFAA's own Double Star.

The greatest tribute to Herman Fast was the spreading of his ashes atop Mt. Hamilton, far away from city lights. Here his earthly remains will forever rest under the clear dark skies that he loved so well - an eternal home amongst the eternal stars.

Edwina Cherrington was given the first Herman Fast Award in 1987.

Bill Cherrington was given the Herman Fast Award in 1988.