

## **Changing of the Guard (and a note about the newsletter)**

Bill Leifer

In order to have a club, there always has to be a core of interested and dedicated members who enjoy doing the tasks that make it all go. Otherwise, it falls apart. Clubs are made of people who like to share their interests, time, camaraderie and expertise or to learn a new skill or hobby from those with experience. The vast majority of club members in any club enjoy their membership on an occasional basis. All of our lives are busy, and those who are less active in a club are just as valuable and important as those who devote more time to it. Nevertheless, in any group there is a handful who enjoy serving in the leadership positions and who devote more time to it.

A successful and long-lived club goes through periods of stability and periods of change. Stability is great but also can make things fixed and lead to loss of interest, as long-term leaders can become an unintentional influence against change. This is natural, because leaders put work into certain areas and begin to feel rightful ownership and pride in their accomplishments. That which has been created from hard work begins to be seen as something to protect. Complicated structure and history discourages others from attempting to move into leadership roles. This is natural, and all those who have been involved in any organization understand that this inevitably happens. For a club to survive, new leaders must be periodically infused into the leadership roles. Fortunately for NEKAAL, we are in a period of successful transition in leadership.

NEKAAL is lucky to have some new officers willing to take on complex tasks, and we applaud the ascendance of some new people in old positions. We welcome Dan Tibbets as President and Brad Hutton as Chairman of the Board. They will both do a fantastic job and take us in new directions. We are most fortunate to have a new leader in Secretary Dale Lee, the communications nerve center of NEKAAL, a job that involves many aspects and considerable work. Dale will be a great Secretary. The new facility director of Farpoint Observatory is Scott Sackrider, who has energy and skills in maintenance, repair, and especially organization, much of it developed or refined from his experience in the military. And he lives closer to FPO than most of us.

I was able to turn over facility directorship and secretary duties to these capable new leaders, allowing me to try my hand at being editor of the new "Observer" e-newsletter, a method of newsletter production now being embraced by most non-profit organizations and utilizing the internet to achieve distribution and convenience. It is a work in progress. Russ Valentine wrote the programs that make the e-newsletter easy to create. Though it has many advantages for those with email, it is less satisfactory for those members without internet, and its format does not hold a candle to the magnificent newsletter produced by Graham Bell for years, which required mastery of desktop publication in addition to editing skills. Also, the newsletter goes to semi-monthly and will sometimes not contain all the necessary club content in every issue. As editor, I will not cajole and remind contributors to get their articles in. If some things are missing in an issue, it will be because that item was not sent in for inclusion. The quality will be

dependent on content contributed by club members who will need to send in the articles and announcements without reminders from me. I am convinced, though, that everyone will step up.

I know that NEKAAL will go on many more years. We have a special club and special observatory in a true dark sky site, with amazing capabilities and facilities for a club our size. A big thanks to the new leaders, and special gratitude to the old leaders and founders.