

January 2015 Editor - Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 253 adult members are dedicated to promoting and sharing the wonders and science of astronomy. We host dark-sky and local star parties, telescope-making workshops, science / astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

President's Message

KYLE BRINKMAN

2014 was an exciting year for space exploration. We enjoyed the fresh images that are still coming in from Mars pathfinder; The EU landed a probe on a comet; China's jade rabbit explored the moon; India landed a probe on Mars; and NASA successfully launched the next generation heavy lift rocket that will one day bring Americans to Mars. Then there were disappointments such as the not so stellar comets, and the tragedy of the Virgin Galactic Spaceship Two crash.

2015 is already starting out as a great year for exploration. We will be seeing our first close up images of Pluto and the dwarf planet Ceres. The Kepler scope continues to find exoplanets at a surprising rate. Our club has been staying current on all these events, and more, through our Facebook page and monthly meetings.

I'd like to start my term of office by thanking our former president, John O'Neil, for his hard work and dedication to the club. I intend to keep up the work of providing quality programming at the monthly meetings and actively promoting the activities of the club. Astronomy is a great hobby that is within the reach of anyone who looks up at the sky with wonder.

I am looking forward to a great new year. We are starting off with our annual star party, the Orange Blossom Special. Jack Fritz has been leading our team of volunteers. They have worked diligently for much of the year lining up the facilities, programming, food and vendors. Time is running out, so please make your reservations soon if you haven't already.

Our club is going to be the club we make it. I want to lead in the direction we want to go. Not every idea will be implemented, but every idea will be heard. If you have ideas for outreach, topics of interest, speakers, or even expeditions, please let me know by writing to browncongo@yahoo.com.

New Members

We would like to welcome Steve & Tracey Smithson, Jim Tam & Matie Krebs, Victor & Jessica Couture, Lynda Monchak, Michael Coate, Stephanie Larson and Scott Coke to our family of members.

General Meeting

This month's meeting will take place on Friday, January 23, 2015 at 8:00 PM, at the Science Center of Pinellas County, 7701 22nd Ave. N, St. Petersburg, FL.

<u>Beginning Program</u> - Kyle Brinkman will welcome guests and make pertinent announcements.

<u>Break & Sidewalk Astronomy</u> - Snack Time & Sidewalk Astronomy. Paul McNabb, our provider of all good eats, will lead a walk outside to observe and discuss the night sky.

<u>Main Program</u> - This month's feature is a video presentation on space exploration.

Editor's Note

JACK FRITZ

Jim Hunter, our Treasurer, has asked me to remind you that all checks should be made out to SPAC or St. Petersburg Astronomy Club and not to Jim Hunter. It's not his money. He also asked that you include a cover letter to let him know what the money is for.

February Astronomical Events

STEVE ROBBINS

February starts off on the 1st with an unusual conjunction of Venus and Neptune 0.8° apart. Photo opportunity!

Jupiter shows off at opposition on February 6, distance only 4.345 AU.

February 12th the Moon and Saturn will be only 2.3° apart, and on the 17th, the Moon and Mercury will be separated by 3.5°.

The Moon will be dancing with Venus and Mars in a spectacular conjunction February 20 with Mars 1° and Venus 1.5° from the Moon and only 43 arc minutes from each other!

Mercury is at greatest Western elongation from the Sun on February 24, 27°.

February 25^{th} the Moon and Aldebaran are separated by only 1° .

February's Full Moon is the Full Snow Moon, as the greatest snowfall of the year happens then.

Lunar Phases

- Full Moon February 3, 18:09 EST
- Third Quarter February 11, 10:50 EST
- New Moon February 18, 18:47 EST
- First Quarter February 25, 12:14 EST

Outreach

JIM HUNTER

At the Carl Sagan Day event put on by the Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason in Clearwater, I gave a short presentation on astronomy, and mirror grinding followed by solar observing. There were about 50-60 folks in attendance. The main speaker was the Prof Emeritus Jack Robinson of FSU, now retired. There were lively discussions about global warming and other related topics. There was one SPAC member, Jordan Williams who joined last month.

John O'Neil writes: "We had a very successful outreach to Weedon Island Preserve (great place to visit by the way). It was in con-



junction with a lavish Christmas Party put on by a large firm of engineers and lawyers, all dressed up to the nines. Shirley Vuille, Wally Vazquez and myself had our hands full showing objects of interest to the many attendees. The preserve has a nice third floor outdoor viewing deck, so setting up was a breeze with plenty of room and nice 360 deg. views. It so happened that this was the best night for viewing the Geminids Meteor shower. Even with the light pollution, we did see quite a few

nice meteors. For some of the younger attendees, this was the first time they had ever seen a meteor and their excitement was quite evident. Speaking for the three of us, I just want to say that of all the outreach's I have done, I enjoyed this one the most. You would be hard pressed to find a nicer group of people, who asked intelligent questions and took great interest in what we were showing them. I hope they call us again next year."

Please send a brief description and photographs of any outreach events you participate in to <u>Jim Hunter</u> for inclusion in the next newsletter.

Coming Outreach Events

Please contact the event coordinator if you can help with these events:

- 1/21 St Pete Beach Library John O'Neill is coordinating.
- 1/27 Literacy Academy E Tampa/Brandon - Jim Hunter.
- 1/28 Forrest Lake Oldsmar rescheduled
- 1/29 Bartles Middle School New Tampa - Jim Hunter
- 1/29 Bauder Elementary School in Seminole - Greg Simpson
- 2/6 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy Greg Simpson
- 2/19 Stewart Middle School star party
- 2/21 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy Greg Simpson
- 2/24 Scouts Tampa
- 3/5 Reading Under the Stars at Eisenhower Elementary Jim Hunter
- 3/7 Boyd Hill Nature Preserve in St. Petersburg Greg Simpson

Event Coordinators

*GS Greg Simpson 727 896-9410
 *JH Jim Hunter 813 507-8415
 *JO John O'Neill 727 637-5945

Please send a brief description of any events you are planning to Jim Hunter for inclusion in the newsletter.

NASA News

STEVE ROBBINS

Since the discovery of Sagittarius A*, the massive 4.5 million solar mass black hole at the center of the Milky, scientists have measured radiation indicating mass being eaten by the black hole. NASA announced January 5 that they had detected the largest flare since discovery, with an X-ray flare 400 times as intense as Sgr A*'s normal quiet state.

SpaceX kicks off a very busy 2015 as the only private launch contractor active after last year's Antares disaster. They are scheduled to launch between 12 and 15 launches to the ISS, along with tests of the Falcon Heavy, the most powerful rocket since the Saturn V. NASA has been working very closely with SpaceX as they are counting on keeping American supply lines to ISS open.

Five years ago, NASA's Fermi Gamma Ray Telescope discovered that the Milky Way has two giant bubbles of gas north and south of the galactic nucleus. But it took the Hubble Space Telescope and its Cosmic Origins Spectrograph, with the help of a distant quasar to measure the expansion of the bubbles at 2 million miles per hour. Rongmon Bordoloi of the Space Telescope Science Institute said that this is exactly what they would expect to see from a bipolar mass outflow from Sagittarius A*, the black hole at the center of the Milky Way.

Mirror Lab

RALPH CRAIG

The grinding crew is back to work after taking a break for weeks over the holidays. Mike Davis also bought a house which sucked him into



a black hole for a while. Mike is in final figuring of his 12.5" hex-backed mirror. Brent and Joey Hilker have their 10" f/5 polished and are ready to figure it. Dimitri is also polishing his a 6" f/6. We have a new grinding couple which should be starting this month who are eyeing one of Mike's 10" blanks he makes in his kiln.

Many thanks to Dimitri for running the auction at the November club meeting. Our storeroom really appreciates it and is ready for any donations people would like to make for the future auctions.

More pictures on the mirror lab web page at: http://www.telescopelab.com/, and also on his web page at: http://www.mdpub.com/.

The award winning Mirror Lab welcomes interested visitors to their facility at the Science Center's rear annex. The lab is open on Saturdays between noon and 4:00 pm. Several experienced and skilled tutors are there to give you support, help & instruction. For more information call Ralph Craig (727) 384-2086; Paul McNabb (727) 345-5713; or Allen Maroney (727) 867-4781

If you have any surplus telescope, the mirror lab could use them for various projects.

Orange Blossom Special 2015

Registration closes on January 24th for our 21st Orange Blossom Special Star Party, February 11th through the 15th. Our star party is just before the Winter Star Party and therefore, you could attend both.

You must register on line just like last year. You will be able to pay on line or by check

if you prefer. You will want to register early this year, as we are expecting a sell-out. Last year we had 181 registered adults, and every electrical outlet was utilized.

Details are available on the website. Please click here to view.

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend

JACK FRITZ

The December New Moon weekend was pretty much like November's. We had a few breaks, but were dodging clouds all night every night. We did have a good time however.

Around a dozen members showed up for the weekend and Bill and Nancy came out for a visit.

For Sale

LX 200, SCT, 8", f10, Goto; with tripod, 8x50 viewfinder, keypad, dew shield & heat strip for collector plate, scope cover, AC power adapter & DC power cord, 1.25 diagonal + 26mm & 40mm eyepieces, manual & astro. book of targets + star chart. Complete package for \$500. Note: Electronics work intermittently, but still a fine scope for observing! Contact Bill Pritchett at 727-347-0125, or buffalo0743@msn.com.

Older but lightly-used Meade ETX-90EC with tripod, right-angle viewfinder, erecting prism, and the following Plossl eyepieces: 6.4, 12.4, 15, 26, 32 mm. Please contact Dave Koster at 719 351-6054 or dnkoster@yahoo.com.

SPAC Business Meeting



The Business Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is Thursday, February 12th, at 8:00 PM at the Withlacoochee River Park. All interested members are invited to attend. All club business decisions are made at the business meeting so as not to encumber the general meeting.

Officers & Directors

President: Kyle Brinkman 727 455-6931 Vice Pres.: Jack Fritz 813 508-5680 Paul McNabb 727 345-5713 Secretary: Treasurer: Jim Hunter 813 909-7013 Mike Davis Dir.-at-Large: 727 474-6785 David Pearson 727 791-4241 Dir.-at-Large: Dir.-at-Large: Allen Maroney 727 867-4781 Jack Fritz SPACE Editor 813 508-5680 Shirley Vuille Membership Chair 727 864-2624 Outreach Chair: Jim Hunter 813 909-7013 Librarian: Ralph Craig 727 384-2086 Club Webmaster: Chris Curran 813 653-2604

Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors:

Click on the name to send email

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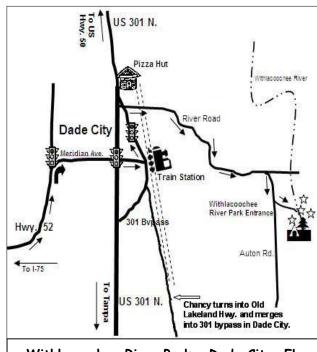
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Assistant Editor	Nancy Huff	813 621-3606
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend (Cont.)

Our next New Moon Weekend falls on March 16^{th} and 17^{th} . I hope to see you all there.

The park gate is locked at Sundown, so you will need to arrive before then. The year-round camping fee with electrical use is \$10/night for club members, and \$20 for non-members. Tent camping without electric is \$5/night.

Be reminded that if you are not camping, you must pay the \$2/vehicle fee. Vehicles displaying the handicap parking tag are exempt. For further information, contact Bill or Nancy Huff. starhopr3@msn.com or 813 621-3606.



Withlacoochee River Park - Dade City, FL
Detailed directions can be found at:
www.StPeteAstronomyClub.org



15406 Stonecreek Lane Tampa, FL 33613

SPAC, INC. MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership in St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc. is open to anyone, regardless of age, who is interested in astronomy. Dues are considered donations and are non-refundable. Membership options are available as listed below:

To join or renew your membership:

Complete the following form and return it with your payment to: Jim Hunter - Treasurer, 17316 Oak Ledge Dr., Lutz, FL 33549-7626 - Telephone number (813) 909-7013 (checks should be made payable to SPAC, Inc.)

Name:			Telepho	Telephone Number:				
Spouse: _	Children (<i>Under 18</i>):							
Address:			City:		St	Zip:		
E-Mail ad	dress	:	Newsletter	Preference:	Email []	US Mail []		
Single:	[]	\$ 20.00/YR.	0/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.					
Family:	[]	\$ 25.00/YR.	25.00/YR. Includes two adults, minor children and the above rights and privileges.					
Patron:	[]	[] \$ 50.00/YR. A Patron member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.						
Benefacto	r: []	\$100.00/YR	A Benefactor member is entitled to the above rights	and privileg	es.			
		OPTION	AL DISCOUNTED MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS AS A BENEFT	T OF MEMBER	RSHIP:			
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