



April 2016

Editor -Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 288 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

★ Have you been looking up lately? Jupiter is high in the evening, the rich region of nebulas in Orion is up and there are several big bright galaxies rising in the early evening. We had a not as hot front move through before the April New Moon Weekend clearing up the skies (Can we really claim Florida has cold fronts?). I wish I could have been there. Sometimes life circumstances interfere with astronomy.



There are plenty of distractions around us. Some of them, like family and employment, are really important. Non-astronomers might say that stargazing is a waste of time.

Then again, the natural wonder of the stars is not just idle curiosity. In fact, our very definition of time is an exercise in astronomy. What is a day if not the rotation of the earth as measured by observing the sun? There are seven days in a week because of the seven heavens (non-stellar bodies, sun, moon and planets) observed by the ancient world.

Next time you think you don't have the time to look up, just remember that those

stars and planets are the very reason we measure time as we do.

See you soon.

New Members

We would like to welcome David Hyduke, Natally Alvarado, Nakoma Hendrix & Matt Wilkinson, Patricia & Kevin Dowden, Wayne Beck & Jetaime Hires, and Tommy Sickels & Marlene Jorge to our family of members.

General Meeting

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

Mr. Jerran Freestone, Rocket System Engineer at the Kennedy Space Center, will be speaking on his new involvement in the Orion Project. **NASA's Orion** spacecraft is built to take humans farther than they've ever gone before. **Orion** will serve as the exploration vehicle that will carry the crew to space, provide emergency abort capability, sustain the crew during the space travel, and provide safe re-entry

Upcoming Programs

May - To be announced.

Member Appreciation

KYLE BRINKMAN

★ This month I'd like to hold up Wayne Trip. I had the pleasure of meeting Wayne and his family at the OBS this year. We had a talk over daiquiris and listening to his guitar. What I didn't know is that Wayne is a past president of our club and was instrumental in the construction of the observatory at the St Pete Science Center. Wayne has been a member since 1981, and served as President and Vice President for more than 10 years. Long term members, like Wayne, make our club fun and inviting.

Thank you Wayne for all you do.

Membership Chair Request

SHIRLEY VUILLE

★ Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about your membership. svuille@aol.com

Please refer to the SPAC Calendar on our website for upcoming events or rain date changes.

Spring Picnic at Withlacoochee River Park

JACK FRITZ

★ Our next New Moon Weekend at Withlacoochee will include our Spring Picnic. Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 7th at 4:00 pm. We will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, plates and utensils, and ask that you bring your choice of drink and a covered dish. Please RSVP to Shirley Vuille at svuilles-pac@gmail.com so that we can plan accordingly.

Bring your telescopes and plan to spend the evening observing with us. We look forward to seeing you there.

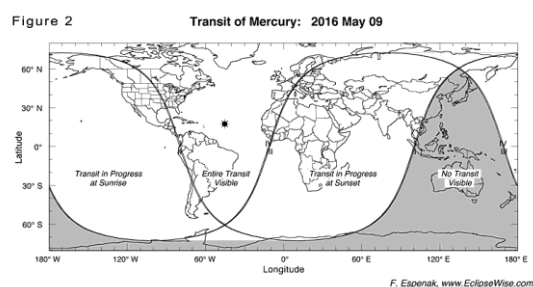
May Astronomical Events

STEVE ROBBINS

★ The evenings of May 4 and 5 is the Eta Aquarid meteor shower with a ZHR of about 60. This and October's Orionids are the two meteor showers associated with Halley's comet.

- May 8 Aldebaran will be half a degree S of the moon.
- May 9 Mercury transits the Sun.

More information on the transit is available at <http://eclipsewise.com/oh/tm2016.html>



- May 14 Regulus is 2.5° N of the moon.
- May 15 Jupiter is 2.2° N of the moon.
- Mars is at opposition on May 22.
- May's full moon is the Full Flower Moon for the fields of flowers blooming during the month in the days before we all had sterile lawns.

The Moon

- New Moon - May 6, 03:29 EDT
- First Quarter - May 13, 13:02 EDT
- Full Moon - May 21, 17:14 EDT
- Third Quarter - May 29, 08:11 EDT

NASA News

STEVE ROBBINS

★ Back on track with an ambitious launch schedule, SpaceX is going to be delivering a pressurized expandable [Bigelow Expandable Activity Module](#) (BEAM) to ISS. Basically an inflatable bag, this stores in a very small container in the Dragon capsule, but on attachment and inflation yields a habitable environment 13' long and 10.5' in diameter. Its durability, radiation shielding, and thermal

performance will be tested over the next 24 months.

Although interplanetary space is over a thousand times emptier than the best laboratory vacuums attainable on Earth, it is not empty. It is primarily occupied by particles expelled during solar activity called collectively the solar wind. Traveling through areas of the solar system not studied since the Voyager missions, [New Horizons plugs the gap](#) between the inner planetary probes and the two Voyagers, two and three times farther from the Sun.

From its position high on Knudsen Ridge, Opportunity capitalized on a rare [opportunity to photograph](#) a Martian dust devil in the valley below. A common sight for its sister rover, Spirit, dust devils have been a rare find for Opportunity. On its way climbing to Knudsen Ridge, Opportunity climbed the steepest slopes ever attempted by a planetary rover, 32°!

Who has a worse track record than ESA sending probes to Mars? That would be Roscosmos of Russia, of course. So it is fitting that the two have joined forces to turn their fortunes around. The [ExoMars mission](#) marries ESA lander and methane sniffing orbiter with a Russian Proton rocket for a mission that promises to redeem the Mars reputations of both agencies.

Mirror Lab

★ Everyone is back from the OBS star party and getting back to work. Thanks to Mike for doing the mirror grinding demo. Richard, finished his 10" mirror and is now building his telescope. Our Nex-Gen grinder, Devon, is in now in fine grinding with his 10" mirror and should be polishing it soon.



We had a visit from Jeremy who is in the Coast Guard and moves around every few years. He had an 8" he had been working on for several years and was close to being finished. He managed to put the final figure in it and finish the mirror in one day at the lab.



Jeremy Clark w/Complete Mirror

Mike has been experimenting with improving his molds for making his hex backed mirror blanks. He had some impressive molds made out of silicone he brought in for us to look at.



Mike's silicon mirror mold.

More pictures on the mirror lab web page at: <http://www.telescopelab.com/> and on Mike Davis's web page at: <http://www.mdpub.com/> and also on Allen Maroney's web page <http://www.knology.net/amaroney/>.

Outstanding Service Award

RALPH CRAIG

★ Shirley Vuille was the well-deserved recipient of this year's Outstanding Service Award that would have been presented at OBS had she been able to attend. Shirley participates in SPAC outreach events throughout the year, is our Weather Ambassador with the National Weather Service, and our Membership Chair. She epitomizes all that is great about membership in the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club.



Shirley Vuille receives
Outstanding Service Award

New Moon at Withlacoochee

JACK FRITZ

★ We were treated to great conditions for viewing this month. Joe Canzoneri arrived on Thursday while Bill & Nancy Huff, Ron & Dee Wayman, Franklin Matos, and a few others came on Friday. The days were cool and clear and it got a little below cool at night. We added a few more attendees on Saturday.

Astro-photography seems to dominate our New Moon Weekends now. Only Sam and Shirley Vuille had eyepieces in their telescope. This is quite a change, as visual observing was the predominate activity for all of the years I have been attending.



West End

Several of our regulars were attending the Spring Picnic at Chiefland this month. They were also treated to great viewing and I understand the food was good also.



East End



Time to Relax

Saturday afternoon is a great time to get together and share stories. I'm really looking forward to next month, and hope to see you all there. We have our Spring Picnic and our regular reporter will return.

Outreach

JIM HUNTER

★ March and the end of standard time, marks the end to the school outreach season. On March 10, Northwest Elementary School had about 150 viewers. Kelly Anderson, Tom Spano, Wally and I set up scopes and Jack added to the information flow.

On 3/12 Brooker Creek Preserve had about 50 viewers for their astronomy and nature walk. Steve, Tom, a Brooker member and I set up scopes. We had an unexpected visit from a large barred owl, flying over us twice and then sitting on a sign about 6 feet away.

I want to again thank the members who show up regularly for our outreach events. Kelly Anderson, Jack Fritz, Steve Gabor, Tom Spano, Wally Vasquez, Shirley Vuille and Dave Pearson. I regret to say I have not joined the members who are active in the Gulfport sidewalk events. I know Shirley, Gregg Simpson, and Scott Walsh have been committed to these events for years. SPAC thanks all of you.



Viewers at Greg's Scope

Scott Walsh reports from Gulfport: "Friday March 4th was fantastic. The weather was

cool and clear. Many people, young and old enjoyed Jupiter and its four Moons, lined up like ducks in a row, on one side of the planet. Also viewed M42 and Sirius.



We had our table set up with free astronomy magazines, and a giant Cosmos book. Also had music playing, Sci-fi movie music, cosmos series music, and soundscapes. It just does not get any better."

Chiefland Observers Annual Picnic

JOHN O'NEILL

★ The Chiefland Observers Group had their annual picnic April 9th on the Billy Dodd Memorial Field, in Chiefland Florida. It was well attended with many members of our club in attendance.

One thing that surprised me was the number of old members, many not seen for years,

showed up. It was really fun seeing the old faces of members from the old days. I for one had a great time reminiscing about the good old days, or should I say the good old nights.

Chiefland is famous for their dark skies and for two nights out of three, the skies were spectacular. Allen Force was able to get a spectacular shot of the Whirlpool Galaxy and (thanks to Allen for reminding me of the Jellyfish Nebula) I was able to get a narrow band image of this very distinctive nebula.

Astrophotography

Here are some great photographs taken this weekend by our own members.



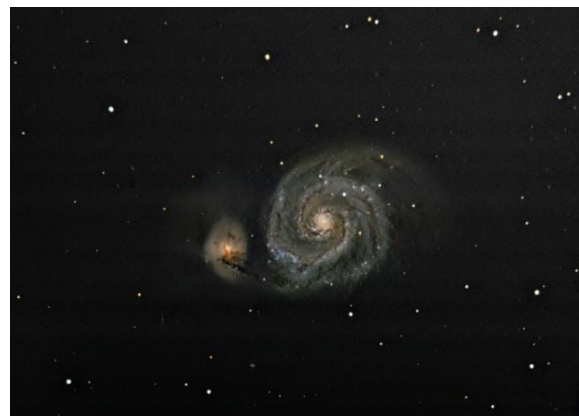
Joe's Trio in Leo



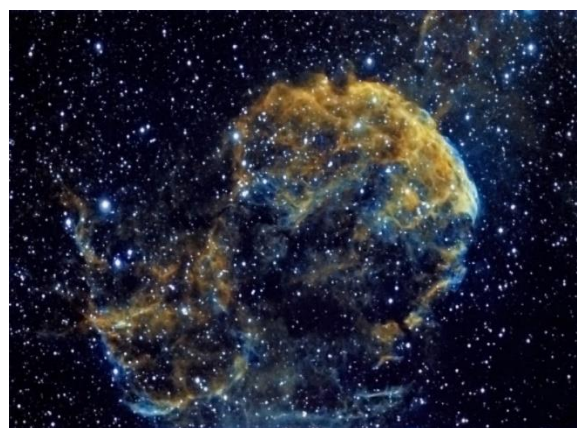
Joe's M-104



Joe's M-1



Allen's Whirlpool Galaxy



John's Jellyfish Nebula

SPAC Business Meeting

The Business Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is Wednesday, May 11th, at 8:00 PM at the Science Center. 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
Secretary:	Paul McNabb	727 345-5713
Treasurer:	Jim Hunter	813 909-7013
Dir.-at-Large:	Mike Davis	727 474-6785
Dir.-at-Large:	David Pearson	727 791-4241
Dir.-at-Large:	Allen Maroney	727 867-4781
SPACE Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Public Relations	John O'Neill	727 637-5945
Membership Chair	Shirley Vuille	727 864-2624
Outreach Chair:	Jim Hunter	813 909-7013
Librarian:	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086
Club Webmaster:	Chris Curran	813 653-2604

Click on the name to send email

Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors:

Clifford B. Benham	Benefactor
David & Mina Swan	Benefactor
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor
Antonio & Cherish Paris	Benefactor
Tommy & Amy Ming	Benefactor
Alexie & Yanira Velez	Patron
Anthony Staiano	Patron
Gustav J. Waffan	Patron
Joe Ortiz-Bradley	Patron
Kyle Brinkman	Patron
Lindsey & Alyssa McKeown	Patron
Matt Labadie	Patron
Robert Myers	Patron
Robert & Debora Csere	Patron
Ruggero & Carla Santilli	Patron
Thomas Tobin	Patron

Examiner Staff

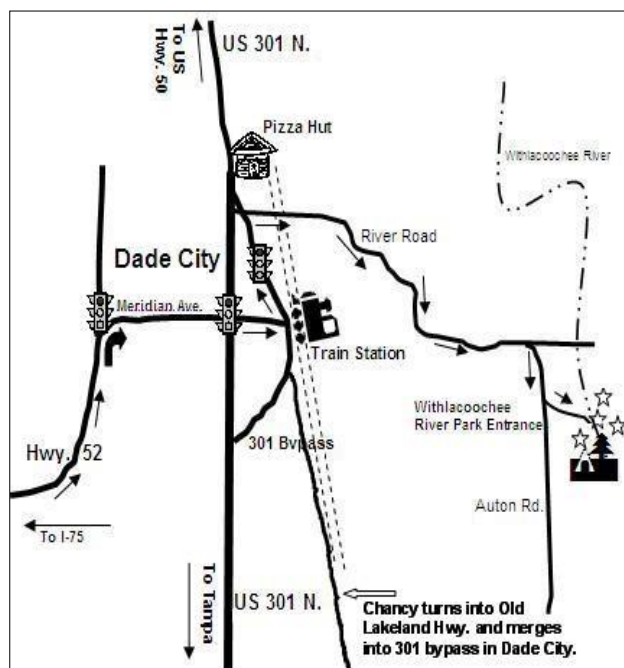
Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Assistant Editor	Nancy Huff	813 621-3606
Reporter	Kelly Anderson	813 672-2751
In the News	Steve Robbins	386 736-9123
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend

Our next New Moon Weekend falls on May 6th & 7th.

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: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Spouse: _____ Children (*Under 18*): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ St. ____ Zip: _____

E-Mail address: _____ Newsletter Preference: Email ☐ US Mail ☐

Single: ☐ \$ 20.00/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.

Family: ☐ \$ 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.

Benefactor: ☐ \$100.00/YR. A Benefactor member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.