



February 2015

Editor -Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 274 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

★ The Orange Blossom Star Party was fantastic this year! I heard from more than a few long time attendees that this was the best star party we hosted in many years. It wasn't only the best weather every night but good programming, food, door prizes and facilities. What I loved about the party was the relationships built there. Alex and his teen daughter were slewing through half the Messier Catalog. Our mirror lab guys made a game of challenging each other to find one dim obscure object after another on their giant Dobsonians. There was a little girl with her door prize telescope wondering "What can I see next?!" Attending OBS is a great way to feel that you belong to our community of astronomers. The same park is used for our New Moon Weekends every month. So don't wait until next year to come out and be a part of fun.



The agenda for the new year was announced at the January meeting. The response was overwhelmingly positive. This is great news because it means our club wants to explore astronomy together even more. The

next steps are to plan our expeditions to Patrick Air Force Base at Cape Kennedy. We are going to charter a bus for a day trip and tour of this part of the cape where the Air Force launches its rockets. This is not the usual visit to NASA. Another expedition is to take in a show at the Bishop Planetarium using group rates. Dates and details of both events will be announced when they can be scheduled.

The club now has an ambassador with the national weather service, Shirley Vuille. The Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador™ initiative is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) effort to formally recognize NOAA partners who are improving the nation's readiness, responsiveness, and overall resilience against extreme weather, water, and climate events.

The other part of the agenda to be announced is the use of the internet to bring in new speakers and content to our monthly meetings. Again, those in attendance were enthusiastic. That night I had the first speaker volunteer for the March meeting. Dr. Thomas Robertson of Ball State University will tell us about his studies of Red Giant stars and we'll log in for a live feed from the Kitt Peak observatory in Arizona. In April we'll have a Skype call with Dr. Chris Kelso who studies dark matter surrounding black holes. There is a board approved list of speakers to contact

on various topics. If you have an area of interest to share at one of the monthly meetings, please let me know so we can schedule you.

We are going to have a great time exploring the stars together this year.

New Members

We would like to welcome Tom & Connie Long, Bell & James Jones, Deborah and Daphne Von Cannon, Bruce & Sharon Cook, Cosmo & Hien Bloom, Earl & Wanda Ray, Alice & Garry Tenney, and Michael Terrell to our family of members.

General Meeting

This month's meeting will take place on Friday, February 27, 2015 at 8:00 PM, at the Science Center of Pinellas County, 7701 22nd Ave. N, St. Petersburg, FL.

Beginning Program - Kyle Brinkman will welcome guests and make pertinent announcements followed by an OBS Review by Jack Fritz.

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

Main Program - Telescope Discussions, led by Kyle Brinkman.

Anne Curran Passes

★ Sadly I must report the passing of long-time SPAC member, Anne Curran on February 15, 2015. Anne was the loving wife of Chris Curran, proud mother of Allison Marie Curran, and my friend. Anne's life work was caring for her mother. She was a dedicated daughter and caregiver. I am at a loss for words right now and unable to express the



JACK FRITZ

deep sadness I feel at this loss. I know that we will all miss her and our hearts and minds are with her loving family as they grieve.

Eulogy

JEFFREY NORWOOD

CCTS CAMERA CONCEPTS & TELESCOPE SOLUTIONS

★ It is with a heavy heart and the greatest of sorrow that I must inform you of the passing of one of our colleagues, Jeff Goldstein, owner and founder of Astrogizmos. Jeff was an incredibly hard working man and an indefatigable supporter of many astronomical organizations across the country for the past ten years. Unbeknownst to many people, Jeff was a fascinating individual who was accomplished in a wide variety of fields. Besides being an entrepreneur and innovator, Jeff was also a registered nurse, a computer specialist for Hewlett-Packard, and had even completed his full Jurist Doctorate of Law and all of this done in what would be much too short a life. He was a generous individual who was always willing to lend anyone a helping hand; I considered him a very close friend. He will be sorely missed.

Editor's Note

JACK FRITZ

★ The 2015 Orange Blossom Special Star Party was the best ever. We had four nights of clear skies with no clouds to tell us when to go to bed. As usual the attendees were what made it great. Mr. D's Mobile Catering provides excellent food and services, and we have invited him back again next year. I would like to thank our vendors; Camera Concepts, Teeter Telescopes, and Howie Glatte for their participation this year. We hope they will be able to return next year.

I also need to thank Chris Curran, Wally Vazquez, John O'Neil, Kyle Brinkman, Bruce Sinclair and others who helped with set-up and tear-down. Nancy Huff always keeps me

on track and both her and Roni Fritz handle arrival and check-in. Chris Curran handles on-line registration and Wally Vazquez takes care of soliciting all of the door prizes. Their participation on the OBS Committee is vital for a successful event. We are looking for one additional volunteer to serve on the committee. He or she will take responsibility for the guest speakers and activity schedule and also be in training to take over the committee leadership. Please contact me if you are willing to help.

The 2015 International Observe the Moon Night date has been set for September 15, 2015. Please plan on participating somewhere in your part of town. Jim Hunter or any of our club officers, can help with handouts and signs. InOMN Save-the-Date card has been posted to the website! These post cards will help your visitors (and you!) remember the date of the 2015 InOMN. You can find the Save-the-Date card on the Event Materials page at <http://observethemoon-night.org/materials/>.

March Astronomical Events

STEVE ROBBINS

★ Mercury will be at aphelion, its greatest separation from the Sun, on March 6th. Don't forget to spring forward on Sunday morning, March 8th. NGC 3532, an open cluster in Carina, will be well placed for observing on March 9th.

March 12th brings us a nice conjunction between the Moon and Saturn.

The vernal equinox falls on March 20th at 18:41 EDT.

March's Full Moon is the Full Worm Moon as the ground softens and the earthworm casts reappear inviting the return of the robins. Our New Moon may be called a Black Moon as it will be a Super Moon.

Lunar Phases

- Full Moon - March 5, 13:07 EST
- Third Quarter - March 13, 13:49 EDT
- New Moon - March 20, 05:37 EDT
- First Quarter - March 27, 03:44 EDT

Outreach

JIM HUNTER

★ We had three star parties in the last week of January which featured clear dry skies.

On January 27th, Wally Vazquez, Jack Fritz and I set up at Tampa's Literacy Leadership Technology Academy. LLT Academy is an award winning K through 8 charter school located in Tampa. I had done the Great American Teach-in there in the Fall and this was their first star party.

We had around 50 students, parents and teachers attending. We were under some pretty bright lights but at least the sky was clear and crisp. The Moon, Venus, Orion and Jupiter were our targets for the evening.

John O'Neill and Francisco Amanti attended the Bauder Elementary School's Science Fair on Thursday night, January 29th. John writes, "They usually have a good-sized group come out to look through the scopes but we were slammed this time. I was blown away by the precociousness of some of the students; they knew all about Jupiter and could tell me the names of the four moons that were visible. This is one of my favorite outreaches. Join me next time."

Chris Curran, Jack Fritz, Penny Hunter and I set up telescopes on January 29th at Turner/Bartels K-8. There were at least 150 students, parents and teachers in attendance. Several attendees came with their own telescopes. We began with views of the Moon even before sunset. Chris writes, "They came prepared too - they had clip-boards, notes where taken, etc. A blast was had by all, including myself!"

Coming Outreach Events

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

- 2/25 - Jimmie Keel Library, North Tampa - Jim Hunter
- 2/26 - Northwest Elementary School, North Hillsborough - Jack Fritz
- 3/5 - Reading Under the Stars at Eisenhower Elementary - Jim Hunter
- 3/6 - Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy - Greg Simpson
- 3/7 Boyd Hill Nature Preserve in St. Petersburg - Greg Simpson
- 3/24 - Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy - Greg Simpson
- 4/3 - Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy - Greg Simpson
- 4/18 - Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy - Greg Simpson
- 5/1 - Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy - Greg Simpson
- 5/16 - Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy - Greg Simpson
- 9/19 International Observe the Moon Night - TBD

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.

Mirror Lab

RALPH CRAIG

★ The grinding crew was preparing for the OBS star party this month. Paul pulled his 10" black vitrified ceramic blank out of storage to do the grinding demo which attracted a lot of the high school science class students.



Mike Davis, Paul, Allen and I all upgraded our collimating tools at the Howie Glatter vendor tent. Between us we got some of the parallizers and the tuBlugs which will make it easier to collimate the telescopes with which we help people. At the lab we have Brent and Joey, Mike, and Dimitri all working on mirrors in various stages of completion. More pictures on the mirror lab web page at: www.telescopelab.com and also on Mike Davis's web page at: 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.

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend

JACK FRITZ

★ Since my last report in the January newsletter, we have had two New Moon Weekends at Withlacoochee. In January, we had a regular weekend with about 16 members present. It was the first time in a while that we had clear skies on at least one night. Bill and Nancy came out for a visit on Saturday. I'm pleased to say that Bill is looking and feeling good considering all he is going through. As usual, a good time was had by all.

Our February New Moon Weekend was our annual star party, The Orange Blossom Special. You will want to read and look through Steve's report that is included in this newsletter.

Orange Blossom Special 2015 Retrospective

Steve Robins

Wednesday, Feb 11

This year was going to be different. I would arrive mid-morning to set up my tent and avoid the sunset rain dance from 2014. It worked out great and the relaxation time meeting old and new friends before observing time was great.

I encountered John O'Neill at the food trailer, talking about how snow was great the first day, okay the second, but by the end of the week was the worst thing that had ever happened.

The evening's observing was different from any in OBS recent history, not a cloud in the sky! We literally did more astronomy in the first hour than in all of OBS last year!

Thursday, Feb 12

After a great breakfast at the food trailer, we all met at the lecture tent for the John O'Neill moderated Meet and Greet.

After lunch it was time for the Mirror Lab demo and present was a middle school astronomy class with their teacher. It was refreshing to see their interest and great questions about the details of mirror grinding.



Paul's Mirror Grinding Demonstration

Then it was on to Tom Crowley's lecture, *Amateur's Hunt for Super Novae*. With great humor, a bit of math, some teamwork and informative lecture skills, Tom lead us to a new understanding of the trials and opportunities an amateur supernova team encounters and the pride of personal discovery.

Observing Thursday night was again completely cloud-free but the seeing was twice as good as the night before. If we live through this star party we'll never forget it.



Vendor Area

Peter Haviland had a guest at the eyepiece of his 12" Dobsonian scope saying, "These are great views. The collimation is perfect!", to which Peter said, "Thank God for Howie Glatter." His guest muttered something about "embarrassing me" and wandered off to leave Peter to be filled in by an observer, who noted "You know who you were just talking to? HOWIE GLATTER!" Made both Peter's and Howie's night—mine also. This kind of connection is priceless.

Friday, Feb 13

A great breakfast for early risers, followed by the nature walk/bike ride at 9:30. Not enough bicycles showed up so we agreed to dismount and combine events. Mike Davis led a fascinating walk through park trails while we reminisced about the old days and Dan Bricker's "death marches" to the Hickory Hill waterfall.

OBS Retrospective

This was followed by the ultra-secret ritual of the ladies' luncheon, of which we mere men were permitted no part. However Roni Fritz writes: "It's not just lunch, there's also fellowship, followed by browsing, and shopping. Be sure to sign up next year."



On top of the world at Withlacoochee

After lunch, Rob Teeter, of Teeter Telescopes gave a fascinating talk of how he and his father partnered to start building custom Dobsonian telescopes. Every one of his scopes is unique, built to the taste of the customer. Rob brought a prototype of his 11" lightweight travel scope, telling us that his target price was around \$2,500. If he can meet that he may find himself unable to build any other telescopes than that one!

Then (ho hum!) another great dinner from our food trailer!

What? Another night with no clouds? Yes! And the seeing was again much better than the preceding night. Galaxies were great on Friday the 13th. Featured in the early evening sky was NGC 2419, Robert Burnham's Intergalactic Tramp, one of only two globular clusters visible before about midnight.

Saturday, Feb 14

After breakfast, John O'Neill and cohorts assembled to judge the first OBS astrophotography contest, announcing that they would accept entries after the previously announced deadline of 10:00 AM.

Then Mike Davis led the traditional Telescope Walk-about. There were more

scopes out than any previous walk-about, so many that we saw only about a quarter of the scopes on the field before running out of time. More time for that next year!

Do you have too much money and not enough things? The Swap Table could fix that with can't pass it up deals on telescopes, eyepieces, books, whole telescopes, binoculars, Hey, YOU NEED THIS! It was great this year.

Then it was the kids' favorite, the Hee Haw Hay ride. Thanks to our great park rangers all the kids, and some adults, had a great time taking a tour of the park.

At 2:00 PM, our keynote speaker, Dr MacKay, presented a mathematics studded, humor enriched, empirical, yet philosophical talk on supernovae. Treading not one bit on the content of Tom Crowley's earlier presentation, Dr MacKay presented the mechanics and underlying principles of the different types of supernovae, and then launched into a fabulous section "what can we thank them for." He connected the dots, revealing the connection between supernovae and all elements heavier than iron in the universe. Our hands are made from bits of exploded stars.

Afterwards, at 3:30 began the Awards Presentation. With the John Dobson award being given again this year, the 50-50 drawing, the best prizes ever, the kids' prizes (a special thanks to one donator of a telescope for that) it was the best awards presentation ever.

Then Saturday night's observing was the best night of the star party with everything looking great for exhausted but happy survivors of OBS 2015.

We look forward to seeing you at next year's Orange Blossom Special Star Party.

SPAC Business Meeting

The Business Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is Thursday, March 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
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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:

Sean Bates	Benefactor
Clifford B. Benham	Benefactor
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor
David & Tara Pearson	Benefactor
David & Mina Swan	Benefactor
Joe Ortiz-Bradley	Patron
Matt Labadie	Patron
Andre' & Joan Medvedeff	Patron
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John O'Neill	Patron
Robert & Debora Csere	Patron
Thomas Tobin	Patron
Alexie & Yanira Velez	Patron
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Examiner Staff

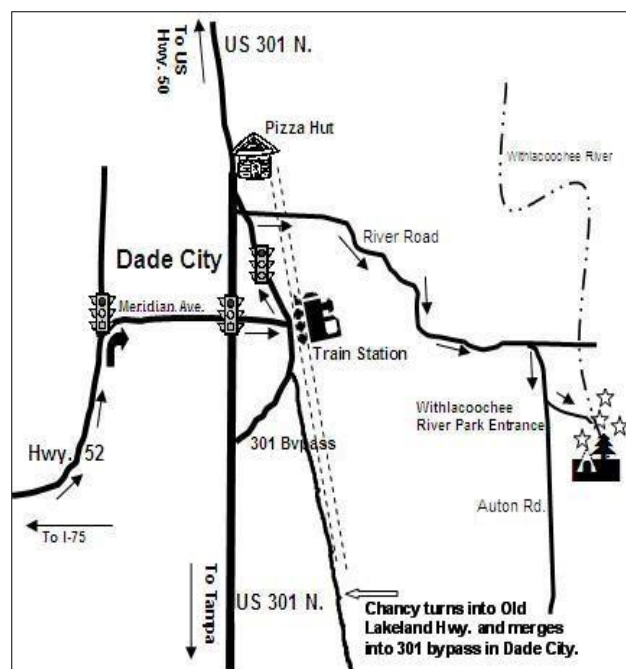
Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
In the News	Steve Robbins	386 736-9123
Assistant Editor	Nancy Huff	813 621-3606
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend (Cont.)

Our next New Moon Weekend falls on March 20th and 21th. 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: _____ 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.

OPTIONAL DISCOUNTED MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS AS A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP:

Sky & Telescope Magazine: ☐ \$32.95/Yr.

Astronomy Magazine: ☐ \$34.00/Yr.