



January 2016

Editor - Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 285 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

★ I like to reflect on the past year while looking forward to the next. We have made some changes together this first year of me being in office. I'm happy we did them. We had our first long-range planning meeting. We used Skype to bring in speakers that would otherwise not be available. The topics at the monthly meetings varied from the deeply scientific to basic observation. There was a little for everyone. I'm planning more for this year with a broad range of topics and speakers.



There were some disappointments. The Air Force Base suspended its tours, but we have scheduled a free trip to the MOSI Planetarium.

Last year's Orange Blossom Star Party was wonderful. It was the best weather all week so we could view every night. Attendance was high and, by all accounts, it was a great time. This year is sure to be another great one! Be sure to reserve your spot.

2015 was a great year for discovery. Who knew that Pluto had a heart or that comets could sing? The pictures we received from

Ceres, Pluto, Charon and the other moons were absolutely amazing. We will hear more from those missions in 2016. No doubt more wonders await us.

We already have our first visible comet of 2016. I hope you all had a chance to get out and see it. These harsh Florida winters only provide a few really good nights. So put on your sweaters and closed toed shoes.

Keep looking up.

### New Members

We would like to welcome Carl Daniels, Paul & Faith Krahmer, Dugg Hadden, Bruce & Ann McCallister, Steve & Elaine Biondo, Keith Wancowicz and Ron Jones, to our family of members.

### General Meeting

This month's meeting will take place on Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 PM, at the Science Center of Pinellas County, 7701 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N, St. Petersburg, FL.

This month's meeting: What's Up There and How Do I Find It? This program is geared for the beginner. Bring your scope and we'll see what we can find.

### Upcoming Programs

**February** - Dr. Nebil Misconi, retired professor from UCF. He will be telling us about

his new book, *An Immigrant's Journey into the Cosmos*. Autographed copies will be available. Dr. Misconi's research has been in Interplanetary Dust, Comets and Asteroids. His career includes some high profile NASA missions such as Pioneer 10 and 11, Skylab and Space Shuttle Columbia. His book can be found at <http://immigrantsjourneybook.com/>

### Member Appreciation

KYLE BRINKMAN

★ Enthusiasm is contagious. It helps to be around people with enthusiasm because they inspire you to do more with greater commitment. This month I'd like to hold up a long-time member who has maintained enthusiasm as if it were his first night under the stars, Greg Shanos.

Greg has spoken to our group before about solar eclipses his travels and his telescope. Our guest speaker, Chap Percival, played for us the audio from Greg having witnessed a total solar eclipse. What fun that must have been to see the event with such wonder.

### Membership Chair Request

SHIRLEY VUILLE

★ Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about your membership. [svuille@aol.com](mailto:svuille@aol.com)

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

### Orange Blossom Special Star Party

JACK FRITZ

★ Registration is now open. Mark your calendars for our 22<sup>nd</sup> Orange Blossom Special Star Party, March 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup>. Our star party is a month after 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.

Details are available on the website. Please click [here](#) to view.

### Handbooks & Calendars

JIM HUNTER

I just received 10 RASC Handbooks and 10 calendars. I will have them with me at the New Moon Weekend and the Christmas party. Prices are the same as last year:

- Handbook \$24
- Calendar \$14

Please include \$3 for postage if you would like to receive them by mail.

### Outreach

JIM HUNTER

★ Here are our upcoming events:

Feb 18 - Stewart Middle - 1125 Spruce - Tampa - 4<sup>th</sup> year.

Feb 20 - Moccasin Lake Nature Park in Clearwater.

Please check the SPAC calendar for more details, and contact me if you can help with any of these events.

### February Astronomical Events

★ February 1 Mars will be found 3° S of the Moon and Venus will be at greatest Western Elongation, 31.4° from the Sun.

Wednesday, February 3, Saturn will be 3.8° S of the Sun

February 6 Mercury will be at greatest Western Elongation, 25.6° from the Sun.

February 16 Aldebaran will be .4° S of the Moon.

### The Moon

- New Moon - February 8, 09:38 EST
- First Quarter - February 15, 02:46 EST
- Full Moon - February 22, 01:19 EST
- Third Quarter - January 31, 22:27 EST

**NASA News**

STEVE ROBINS

Having arrived at its lowest orbit, 240 miles high, Dawn has been sending back its highest resolution photos: 1 pixel is equal to about 120 feet. What was once a point of light is now revealed to be a world with unique processes and a history we may begin to understand. NASA says, "Dawn will remain at this altitude for the rest of its mission, and indefinitely afterward."

New Horizons is still transmitting photos of Pluto taken on its closest approach, on July 14, 2015. There are still plenty to come, but last week NASA put up a 400 mile by 50 mile swath taken 15 minutes before closest approach of Sputnik Planum, the heart-shaped white ice basin. The question must be asked, how does the planet predicted to be the most boring turn out to be the most interesting of all?

Rosetta's lander, Philae, celebrated its Holiday Season at Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, by taking a breathtaking series of high resolution photographs. The resolution is amazing, under 2 meters per pixel from a distance of under 100 kilometers.

Last month, Japan's rescued spacecraft, Akatsuki, successfully attained orbit around Venus after five years of wandering the inner solar system. That it was able to do so was thanks only to a dedicated team, keeping the spacecraft stable, and trimmed for that time period. Now, through a gradual series of adjustments, Akatsuki will be guided into an elliptical orbit of about nine days' duration. Scientific observations should begin in April.

**Mirror Lab**

★ We had a surprise visit from Charlie Mullin over the Christmas holidays.



Charlie was one of our founding mirror grinders and long-time club member before he moved out to Albuquerque, New Mexico, on a new set of tires he won at the OBS star party. He is involved in the Albuquerque Astronomical Society out there and you can see what they are up to at [www.taas.org](http://www.taas.org).



Charlie Mullin and Paul McNabb

Our new grinder, Richard, is in final stages of polishing his mirror and will start figuring it soon. Brent is working on building his new 10" telescope and hopes to have it ready for this year's OBS star party. Paul is also busy cutting the wood for the tube of his new 10" telescope he is making with the BVC mirror he finished.

More pictures are available on the mirror lab web page at: [www.telescopelab.com](http://www.telescopelab.com), on Mike Davis's web page at: [www.mdpub.com](http://www.mdpub.com), and also on Allen Maroney's web page: [www.knology.net/amaroney](http://www.knology.net/amaroney).

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 parts, the mirror lab could use them for various projects.

### Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend

KELLY ANDERSON

★ This month's Dark of the Moon report includes both the December and January sessions. That's because the publication deadline for the December Newsletter was the Friday before the DOTM, so you get a double report this month.

The **December** meeting was almost like a mini-Orange Blossom Special! Here's a snapshot of "Star City" taken from Joe's drone. Yes, Joe has a drone and it takes pictures. Joining the party were Allen & Betsy, Laura, Richard & Mary, Dave and Mina, Joe, Ron, Jack, and Jim & Penny. Oh yeah, I was there too.



December's Mini OBS

Friday night was pretty dewy, and the seeing was a bit challenging, but at least it was clear. I got my first fairly good image of the Horsehead and Flame Nebulae, with Alnitak in the middle. Pretty awesome neighborhood. Friday night was better, with less moisture in the air to roil things up. We got in some pretty good observing, and the temperature was comfortable. Bugs weren't too bad either. Saturday evening was pretty much of a bust, with a heavy overcast, so we enjoyed each other's company.

The **January** session was a bit less kindly. Friday evening was hit and miss, although I did

get a fair shot of M78, and the Bubble Nebula was coming along nicely, but after 37 30-second images the cloud monster decided that was enough. That wasn't nearly enough exposure time to bring out the Bubble. Oh well, maybe next time. Joe was able to get a piece of the Crab Nebula between the clouds. Joining me for the weekend were Jack, Joe, Bill & Nancy, and Allen & Betsy.

Jack and I conducted a survey of all the electrical outlets and found a few that need repairs. This we can accomplish during February's DOTM, so we'll be in fine shape for OBS.

Saturday evening we were treated to intermittent light rain showers, and the overcast was unrelenting, even into Sunday morning. We were thinking of staying over Sunday night based on an earlier forecast of clearing skies, but by late afternoon we concluded that wasn't happening. One thing that made the evening more interesting was the flies ... there were swarms of these pesky critters. They didn't bite, but enjoyed walking on me at every opportunity. They did provide some entertainment by virtue of my tennis racquet-shaped bug zapper. In life, you take what pleasure you can from an adverse universe!

The February DOTM will be the run up to the Orange Blossom Special, so let's get out and fine-tune our instruments in preparation for the Big Event. Jack has personally guaranteed there to be excellent viewing weather, so we look forward to another big weekend.

### For Sale

Orion Deep Space Explorer Dobsonian telescope, Sirlus plossi 26 mm 1.25" w/eye-guard. Contact Jim Elwood at (352) 445-3950.

**SPAC Business Meeting** 

The Business Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 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**

|                  |                                |              |
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| Club Webmaster:  | <a href="#">Chris Curran</a>   | 813 653-2604 |

Click on the name to send email

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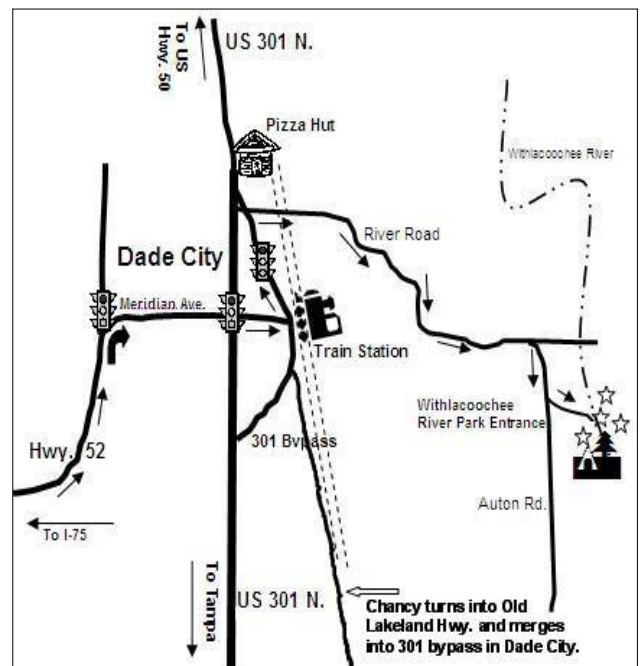
**Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend (Cont.)**

Our next New Moon Weekend falls on January 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>.

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](mailto:starhopr3@msn.com) or 813 621-3606.



**Withlacoochee River Park - Dade City, FL**  
 Detailed directions can be found at:  
[www.StPeteAstronomyClub.org](http://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.