



January 2019

Editor -Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Our 260 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 lectures, astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

### President's Message

KYLE BRINKMAN

★ I've been going camping in my minivan for a few years at the New Moon Week-ends. Those who know me and have seen me out there know that I don't camp lightly. My Boy Scout days of sleeping on the ground and pup tents are long over. Last month my van was totaled in a car accident. Nobody was hurt, but I had to get a new car (dang it, that van was paid for). The new mustang convertible just doesn't hold the same amount of stuff as the old van.



Thankfully, we have a new clubhouse. I had the pleasure of being the first guest last weekend. It reminded me of my old college dorm room. The bathroom is a short walk away. There is no expectation of complete privacy. I didn't need to bring the cooler, heater, cot, tent, camp stove, lantern, box fan or any of the other camping gear. I had the car loaded with the telescope gear and an overnight bag. That's it.

The clubhouse has bunks to sleep on in a room separate from the common area. The bunk room is heated and air conditioned so sleeping is comfortable. You need to bring your own mattress and bedding. The bunks are

right sized for the twin bed air mattresses you can get at the Walmart for under \$10. You should leave the red light on in the common area when going to sleep in the bunk room. That way others who may still be up can come in to get a drink from the fridge or use the microwave.

When you get up in the morning to fix your coffee and pop your breakfast in the microwave there aren't bugs in any of it. The TV picks up all the major networks and almost 60 channels of broadcast TV. This is going to be a good safe place for those days or nights when the weather is not perfect.

The construction team really has put together a treasure that will enhance our club's dark sky experience. The clubhouse is ready for hosting guests. This makes it much easier for those in small cars or without camping gear to come out and enjoy the stars with us. It is a bargain at \$15 a night.

All of this came at a cost. We have donors who paid for much of it, but not all of it. The club is grateful for those donors. We continue to raise funds through the donation button on our web page at <https://www.stpe-teastronomyclub.org/>. Please consider a donation of any size. That money will be used to fully fund the clubhouse providing a social

gathering area for everybody and an opportunity for others who might not go to find a safe place to stay and enjoy the stars with us.

**New Members**

We would like to welcome Jessica & Scott Wendt, Howard Ritter, James & Janice Rutenbeck, John Stepanov, Jim & Theresa Darlington, Lee & Linda Jarvis, Patrick Hanners & Mark Rowel, Mark Ericisen, and Laura Lanier to our family of members.

**General Meeting**

This month's general meeting will take place on Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM, at St. Petersburg College, Gibbs Campus. 6605 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.

**Main Program** - *The Effect of Atmospheric Conditions on Astronomical Viewing.* By Meteorologist David Feller.

**Orange Blossom Special**

★ **You only have a few days to register** as we can't accept registrations after 5: PM on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. The late registration fee, \$20 per adult, applies.

Our annual star party, Orange Blossom Special, will be January 30<sup>th</sup> through February 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is the only New Moon Weekend of the year that you must register to attend. Registration is open and available online only. Go to [our website](#) for details and registration.

**Editor's Notes**

JACK FRITZ

★ I hope everyone had a great holiday season. The new year brings changes and that is true for our club. John O'Neill is once again our Vice President and Paul Kraemer is our newest Director-at-Large.

I'm looking for an assistant editor to help with the newsletter and eventually take over

as editor. Please contact me if you are willing to help.

**Withlacoochee River Park Clubhouse**

JACK FRITZ

★ Work on our clubhouse is complete. Our members and guests now have a comfortable place to gather and sleep during our New Moon weekends and for the annual star party.



Clubhouse

We are seeking donations to fund the project. Donations of \$100 or more will be recognized on our dedication plaque. You may donate online for our [website homepage](#) or mail a check to SPAC, 17316 Oak Ledge Dr, Lutz, FL 33549.

**National Weather Service**

SHIRLEY VUILLE

★ The National Weather Service offers Winter SkyWarn Spotter Training both online and in-person. The online course covers the basics of being a SKYWARN Spotter.



The goal of the course is to provide baseline training for all spotters through multiple modules covering the procedures for spotting (including communication and spotter report criteria) and safety considerations for all hazards. Please go to [MetEd](#) for details.

**In Person Training:**

**10:00 AM Wednesday**, February 20, 2019, Desoto County EOC - 2200 NE Roan St, Arcadia, FL 34266.

**1:00 PM Thursday**, March 7, 2019, The Villages Sumter County Public Safety Center, 7361 Powell Road, Wildwood, FL 34785. RSVP via Email at: [SumterEmComm@gmail.com](mailto:SumterEmComm@gmail.com).

Please go to [SKYWARN](#) for more details.

**RASC Handbooks & Calendars Available**

JIM HUNTER

★ I have six handbooks and five calendars as of 12/24. The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Handbooks are \$27, and the Calendars are \$17.

Contact [Jim Hunter](#) to order by email. You can pay with PayPal or a check to SPAC at 17316 Oak Ledge Dr., Lutz, FL 33549. I will have them available at the January meeting and OBS.

**Club Outreach**

JIM HUNTER

★ Steve Gabor Dave Pearson, Tom Spano, Wally Vasquez and I set up at Leia Davis Elementary in Clearwater on January 14<sup>th</sup>. They had several activities besides astronomy. It was the first year for the teacher, Aimee and she was impressed with our program.

Everyone had a great time under clear skies. The Moon, Mars, and the Orion Nebula were our only targets. We were kept very busy with only three scopes for 250 viewers.

**February Astronomical Events**

STEVE ROBINS

Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, the Moon will be at the southernmost part of its travels, 21.5° south of the celestial equator.

On Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Saturn will be .7° south of the Moon.

Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, the Moon is at apogee, 406,600 km from Earth. Also on that night will be an unusual ISS transit of the moon, the illuminated ISS across a dark .7% phase Moon as seen from St Pete! Check out [Transit-Finder.com](#).

Sunday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, the Beehive Cluster will be .6° north of the Moon.

Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, Saturn is 1.1° north of Venus.

Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, the Moon is at perigee, 356,800 km from Earth.

Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, Mercury is at greatest elongation, 18.1° east of the Sun, setting after the Sun in the evening.

February's full moon is the Full Snow Moon, which hopefully isn't a prediction for the weather during our Orange Blossom Special Star Party.

**February Moon Phases**

- 4<sup>th</sup> - New Moon
- 12<sup>th</sup> - First Quarter
- 19<sup>th</sup> - Full Moon
- 26<sup>th</sup> - Third Quarter

**January New Moon Weekend**

KELLY ANDERSON

★ January's New Moon Weekend got off to an early start with Jack Fritz, Tom Spano, and your intrepid Field Reporter arriving on Wednesday to finish the final details on the Clubhouse (spoiler alert: the Clubhouse is done and is ready for OBS!). That evening there were some breaks in the clouds, but my CGEM-DX mount decided to go delusional, so instead we broke out the binoculars and had a great time viewing what the cloud gods decided to reveal to us. A very enjoyable evening, even if conditions were less than ideal.

On Thursday Allen and Betsy Force joined the group. Allen diagnosed my problem to be a defective hand control. I swapped it out with a spare, and the mount worked perfectly. That

evening the clouds were a little less than Thursday, and I was able to get a nice series of exposures of M45, albeit a little hazy caused by a thin layer of one kind of cloud or another. At least the mount was working well.

Friday saw the arrival of Kyle Brinkman, Mike & Carly Partaine, Richard & Mary Garner, and Ron & Dee Wayman. The day was windy with heavy rain in the afternoon. The cloud gods decided that we'd take that evening off from astronomy. But we were all eagerly anticipating Saturday night, which was forecast to be clear after the frontal passage.

Saturday our little outpost turned into a village with the arrival of Tom Boyko, Guy Adama, Mark Anderson, Jamie Kerras, Crystal Lauderdale & Peter Masa, Joe Pellegrino, Duane Archibald (also an Amateur Radio Operator), Ray Reyes, Scott Yarley, Sharon & Mark Bruns, and Joe Canzoneri who spent the evening showing Mike how to get the best out of his new ATIK camera (welcome to the wonderful world of astro-imaging, Mikel!). Also visiting were Colin Wright and Michaela Coel. Michaela hails from London, England. Colin and Michaela are currently on walkabout, traveling the world and checking out what seems interesting. Fortunately, seeing conditions were almost ideal (just a little soupy from high altitude moisture), so we gave all our visitors a pretty good show.

Kyle was the first to use our newly fabricated and installed bunks in the Clubhouse. They're really just platforms, so air mattresses are highly recommended. Kyle reports his bunk worked just fine, and the heat pumps kept the temperature just right. Pouring the steps for the Clubhouse was done on Monday, and we have a ramp for anyone who needs a little extra help negotiating the two-foot rise. Stop by for a tour when you're next at the park. I think you'll agree we have a pretty nice facility to make our starry weekends a bit more comfortable.

I hope by now everyone has registered for the 2019 Orange Blossom Special, January 30 - February 3. Clear skies are, as usual, guaranteed.

### NASA News

STEVE ROBINS

★ China steals top billing this month for their incredible Chang'e 4 landing on the far side of the moon with [its trusty rover, Yutu 2](#). If you want space telescopes or radio astronomy from space, what better place than from the side of the moon sheltered from electromagnetic radiation and light from our own planet? [China is definitely first on the scene](#) of the greatest place in near space to do astronomy. Can the US see the necessity of establishing bases there as well? Prospects don't look good.

[Crew Dragon sits atop its Falcon 9](#) rocket for NASA's first tests of vehicles to return man to space on American vehicles since the Space Shuttle's last flight July 8, 2011. With both SpaceX and United Launch Alliance preparing great crew capsules, it looks like President Obama made the right call, in spite of the heat he took for making the decision to end the Space Shuttle program.

OSIRUS-Rex set new records in its rendezvous and orbiting of asteroid Bennu, [the smallest object ever orbited](#) by a spacecraft. Bennu is only half the 1 km diameter of Ryugu, orbited by Hyabusa 2 and even comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko, at 4.1 x 3.2 km.

Don't forget New Horizons, so far away that it will take 18 months to receive all the data collected during the pass. All we have now is the "insurance" photos taken and sent back in case of a catastrophic failure near the dual-lobed [Kuiper Belt object known as Ultima Thule](#). Similar to the comet, Churyumov-Gerasimenko (love to say that name), it shows that contact binaries, unimaginable a few

years ago, may be quite common in the Kuiper Belt.

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### **For Sale**

★ Our SPAC utility trailer is for sale. We used it to store and transport OBS equipment for several years. We are asking \$1,800. Please contact [Jack Fritz](#) at 813 508-5680.

★ Celestron SC-11 f/10 optical tube with hard case, Losmandy G-11 mount on 8" aluminum pier with wheels, dove-tail plate with tube rings to carry a 4-inch refractor side by side, Model 492 digital drive kit still in box, Lots more to go with it, color filter wheel etc. Need to sell it all in one transaction, \$2,500. Contact [Mark Schroeder](#) at 727 433-8535.

★ Celestron Heavy Duty tripod and modified JMI Wheeley Bar. Tripod was supplied with NexStar 11 GPS and will accommodate 'scopes up to C 14 - perfect condition. Wheeley Bar has had leg levelers and caster brakes removed but is perfectly serviceable. Asking \$225. Contact [Steve Rush](#) at 727 289-3868.

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**SPAC Business Meeting** 

Our next business meeting is Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 PM at SPC Gibbs Campus, Natural Science Building, Room 139. 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	<a href="#">Kyle Brinkman</a>	727 455-6931
Vice Pres.	<a href="#">John O'Neill</a>	727 637-5945
Secretary	<a href="#">Shirley Vuille</a>	727 864-2624
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Librarian	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>	727 384-2086
Club Webmaster	<a href="#">Chris Curran</a>	813 653-2604

Click on the name to send email

**Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors:**

Clifford B. Benham	Benefactor
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor
David & Tara Pearson	Benefactor
John Stepanov	Benefactor
Gus Waffen	Benefactor
Andy Demartini	Patron
Anthony Staiano	Patron
Brad & Lisa Perryman	Patron
Joe Bradley & Diane Ortiz	Patron
Kyle Brinkman	Patron
Matt Labadie	Patron
Peter & Jaclynn Dimmitt	Patron
Robert Myers	Patron
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**Examiner Staff**

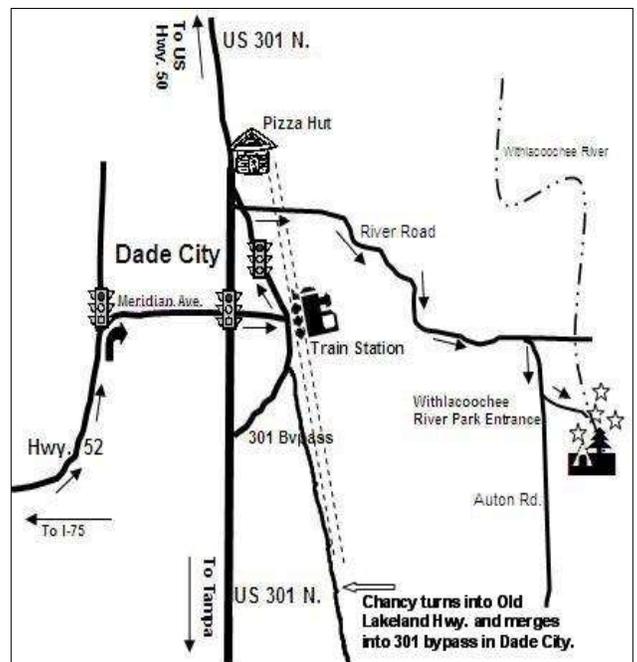
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Reporter	<a href="#">Kelly Anderson</a>	813 672-2751
In the News	<a href="#">Steve Robbins</a>	386 736-9123
Mirror Lab	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>	727 384-2086

**Withlacoochee New Moon Weekends**

There's no need for reservations. However, the park closes at sundown, so you will need to arrive before then. The park rangers will give you the gate-code once you're inside the park. Please do not call for the gate code as they are not allowed to give it out over the phone.

Reservations are not necessary. Please print and display our [Friends-Of-The-Park Pass](#) on your dashboard.

Please join us! All astronomy enthusiasts are welcome. You do not need to be a club member to attend. Please refer to our [Club Calendar](#) for details and scheduled dates.



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



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**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Single: [ ] \$ 30.00/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.

Family: [ ] \$ 35.00/YR. Includes two adults, minor children and the above rights and privileges.

Student: [ ] Free. Expected date of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

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.