



February 2019

Editors - Jack Fritz & Guy Earle

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Our 262 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

★ The Orange Blossom Special Star Party was another great success. There were 125 registered attendees and plenty of good times. The skies were OK a couple of nights, so we had some good entries in the photo contest. I empathize with those who stayed Saturday night for the rainstorm. I sure hope your equipment dried out without damage. We do have a good time. Someone said to me that seeing all their old friends is as much of a joy as a good night of viewing.



A special thanks is due to Make Partain who coordinated the OBS. It takes a lot of work to put it all together and make sure the volunteers are in place doing their parts. Doing all that takes a team effort and our team made it work. Thanks also to all those who came out early to setup, organized or lead an activity and stayed late to clean up. We had a great time and look forward to next year.

It was my pleasure to present Bill and Nancy Huff with the dedication of the new clubhouse. This was an emotional moment for them and a joy in the life of our club. I have been a part of various organizations over the

years. It is rare that you find someone who will put in all that time over so many years. So many of us move or change interests. Bill and Nancy have been with SPAC for over 25 years. It is only fitting that the new Huff House bears their names. I hope it brings as much joy to today's members as they have enjoyed so far.

The clubhouse maintenance will be funded by its guests on New Moon Weekend. Now that we've seen how well it turned out I hope to see those bunks used often. The fundraiser for the Huff House is still ongoing. Your donations will go toward making this clubhouse a central part of our club experience. You can give to our capital campaign through the club website. Please do. Any amount helps.

New Members

We would like to welcome Ozzie Baruday & Cookie Alexander to our family of members.

General Meeting

This month's general meeting will take place on Friday, February 22nd at 8:00 PM, at St. Petersburg College, Gibbs Campus. 6605 5th Avenue North.

Main Program - *The Carmen, Galactic Red Shift.* By NASA Astrobiologist, Dr Madhan Tirumalia.

Editor's Notes

JACK FRITZ

★ Last month I asked for someone to help me as assistant editor. Guy Earle stepped up and agreed to assume that role. He has also agreed to take over as editor on April 1st. I plan to remain on his staff for the remainder of this calendar year.

Withlacoochee River Park Clubhouse

JACK FRITZ

★ The clubhouse was officially named "The Huff House" during the closing ceremonies of OBS. Bill and Nancy Huff have dedicated 25+ years of service to the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club and we thank them for that service.

The board has established a Dark Sky Site Committee. Jack Fritz, Chair, Mike Partain, Kelly Anderson, and Doug Sliman have agreed to serve. We will be responsible for:

1. Coordinating our activities with the park.
2. Collecting camping and Huff House fees and forwarding them to our treasurer.
3. Opening and closing the Huff House on New Moon weekends.
4. Reporting any issues to the board and taking corrective action when necessary.

We are woefully short of the donations necessary to pay the cost of renovating the clubhouse and are seeking more donations. You may donate online for our [website homepage](#) or mail a check to SPAC, 17316 Oak Ledge Dr, Lutz, FL 33549.

Club Outreach

BRAD PERRYMAN

★ On Saturday, February 9th, the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center hosted their annual Star Party.

Tom Spano, Steve Gaber, Jack Brockhurst, Wally Vazquez, Ron Jones and I brought our telescopes to the public viewing, despite the unfavorable forecast. To our surprise, the blanket of fluffy white and gray clouds that covered the sky for most of the day started breaking apart around sunset. Unfortunately, the chance of rain kept most of the participants, who signed up for the sold-out event, away. The first object to peek through a tiny window was the moon, which inspired many 'oohs' and 'ahs' from those peering through telescopes. Then, as the sky opened a little more, we were able to spot the ISS streak across the sky. By twilight's end, you could hardly find a cloud in the sky.

I personally shared views of the Orion Nebula, the double cluster in Perseus, and the Andromeda galaxy to those who were interested. Before shutting down for the night, I set my sight on the Pleiades and noticed a slow-moving object passing through the stars. How exciting! My first UFO using the new telescope. It wasn't traveling very fast, only about one degree per minute. I tracked the object for about ten minutes while it headed towards zenith. What could it be? More than likely it was a very high satellite, considering its speed and brightness, even though I couldn't find one on any of my astronomy apps. Still, I would like to think that I discovered a new inner solar system object. Isn't that one of the reasons why we love this hobby?

I want to take a moment to thank our gracious hosts, Mark and Nancy Yeager, for organizing and inviting us to a wonderfully successful stellar party. Their dedication in protecting the natural environment at the BCPEEC will help future generations enjoy the beauty Brooker Creek has to offer. I look forward to Mark and Nancy's next event.

Orange Blossom Special

January 30th – February 3rd

KELLY ANDERSON



★ The event started several days early because the setup team had lots to do for final preparation. The team consisted of Kyle Brinkman, Jack Fritz, Tom Spano, Joe Canzoneri, Doug Sliman, Jim Hunter, Mike Partain, Allen Force, and your intrepid Field Reporter. The Withlacoochee River Park's Chief Ranger, Sam Scarborough, stopped by on Tuesday and helped set up the Hospitality Tent.



Crepuscular Rays decorating Saturday morning's sunrise.

Kyle and I were the first to arrive on Sunday, the others having the good sense to stay home because the weather was awful. Since Kyle was sleeping in a tent, he elected to weather the storm in a motel in Dade City, leaving me to hold the fort. I was comfy, but it was a bit lonely. Monday morning dawned bright and sunny. Jim, Tom, and Jack arrived to greet the contractors bringing us the port-a-potties and golf carts. Another crew set up the Lecture and Mirror Lab shelters. The rest of the Setup Team arrived a bit later in the morning and we began by setting up the Welcome Tent.

The skies stayed reasonably clear Monday night for some observing up until about 10:00 pm, but it was chilly enough to chase us into our respective shelters early. Tuesday morning greeted us with a hard frost covering everything. The ice on windshields was hard enough to defeat the credit card window scraping technique. Later in the morning it warmed up to the chilly regime. Your intrepid Setup Team defied the elements by erecting the hospitality tent with aplomb. Not sure

what that means, but we did get it up with much less trouble than the prior day's effort (Keystone Kops redux). The contractors left a stack of 100 folding chairs in the Lecture Tent. We arranged the chairs and ran the circumscribing string of red LED lights. A dozen or so RVs and tent dwellers arrived on Tuesday turning our encampment into a village.



Saturday's telescope walkabout.

Wednesday ... OBS formally begins! The population of our little star city grows to well over 100 people who look up often. At dusk a small sucker hole in the clouds began expanding. By 10:30 the sky became mostly clear with the occasional cloud passing through. The stars remained (mostly) visible for about three hours although the high level of moisture aloft made seeing conditions kind of soupy. It was still chilly, but not nearly as cold as the previous day. A festive atmosphere developed throughout the viewing area, with the occasional strange beverage being shared with whomever decided they needed a lemony libation.

Thursday dawned completely overcast, and it stayed that way all day. Very few cases of sunstroke were reported. Frostbite declined slightly due to a steady warming trend. About 9:00 that evening the clouds parted from a large area of sky making observing a fun game of looking quickly before another cloud covered the area of interest. Agility proved to be the key to success.

A frontal passage was the major weather event for Friday. The front brought with it a solid overcast which didn't clear at all. We all hoped the front would have clearing weather behind it to give us one more night of observing. Well, it did bring clearing weather ... on Monday. Before that, it brought heavy rain. Cold rain. Very cold rain.

So not such a good event for observing, although some pretty good images were obtained for the photo contest. Winners for the Deep Field and Wide Field categories were Jamie Kenas (Leo Triplet) and Kyle Brinkman (Orion & Flame Nebulae), respectively. The 2019 Outstanding Service Award went to ... well ... me (go figure) but it was announced that this was not a Dobson Award because I hadn't yet built a telescope.



Shirley and her very significant binoculars.



Bill and Nancy Huff honored by the Club for over a quarter-century of dedication.

But the highlight of the week was the dedication of the new Clubhouse as the "Huff House," in recognition of Bill & Nancy's more than 25 years of contributions to SPAC. I can't think of a more fitting award. Thanks, Bill and Nancy, for all you've done for us!

Thanks to Mike Partain and his stalwart team for putting on OBS this year. Mark your calendars for next year's OBS scheduled for February 19th through February 23rd. I have it on good authority that clear skies will prevail.

March Astronomical Events

JACK FRITZ

Wednesday, March 20th the Sun will cross the equator making almost equal day and night. In the northern hemisphere it is called the Vernal or Spring Equinox.

March 21st brings another Super Full Moon, meaning the Moon will be both full and at its closest approach to Earth. This full moon was known by early Native American tribes as the Full Worm Moon because this was the time of year when the ground would begin to soften, and the earthworms would re-appear.

February Moon Phases

- 6th - New Moon
- 14th - First Quarter
- 20th - Full Moon
- 28th - Third Quarter

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.

NASA's Opportunity Rover Mission on Mars Comes to End

JACK FRITZ



Opportunity's shadow as photographed by the hazard-avoidance camera

One of the most successful and enduring feats of interplanetary exploration, NASA's Opportunity rover mission is at an end after almost 15 years exploring the surface of Mars and helping lay the groundwork for NASA's return to the Red Planet.

The Opportunity rover stopped communicating with Earth when a severe [Mars-wide dust storm](#) blanketed its location in June 2018. After more than a thousand commands to restore contact, engineers in the Space Flight Operations Facility at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) made their last attempt to revive Opportunity Tuesday, to no avail. The solar-powered rover's final communication was received June 10.

Designed to last just 90 Martian days and travel 1,100 yards (1,000 meters), Opportunity vastly surpassed all expectations in its endurance, scientific value and longevity. In addition to exceeding its life expectancy by 60 times, the rover traveled more than 28 miles (45 kilometers) by the time it reached its most appropriate final resting spot on Mars — Perseverance Valley.

SPAC Business Meeting 

Note: Our business meeting has moved for this month because the Gibbs Campus is closed

Our next business meeting is Wednesday, March 13th, at 8:00 PM at TBD.

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.	John O'Neill	727 637-5945
Secretary	Shirley Vuille	727 864-2624
Treasurer	Jim Hunter	813 507-8415
Dir.-at-Large	Paul Krahmer	727-535-5827
Dir.-at-Large	David Pearson	727-215-
1526Dir.-at-Large	David Richmond	727 692-9831
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	813 507-8415
Star Party Chair	Mike Partain	859-339-0828
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
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
Wally & Ramona Vazquez	Patron

Examiner Staff

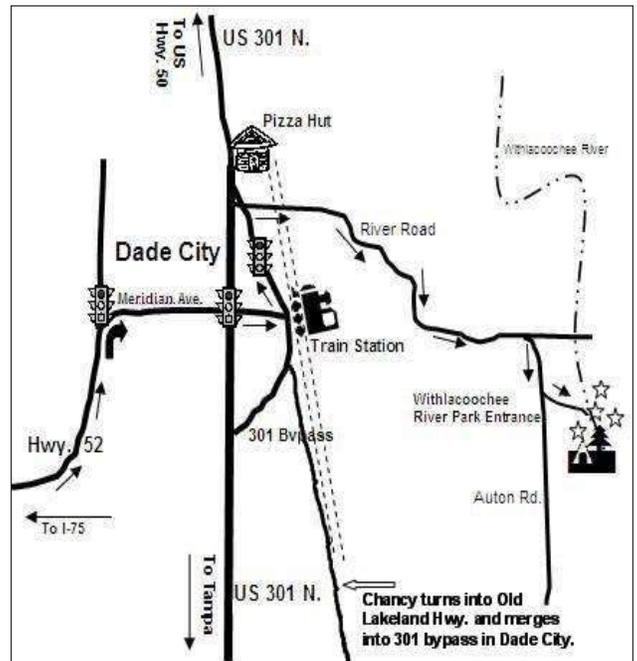
Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Assistant Editor	Guy Earle	813 785-1972
Reporter	Kelly Anderson	813 672-2751
In the News	Steve Robbins	386 736-9123
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

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



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.