



March 2019

Editors - Guy Earle & 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*



The street in front of my house runs East and West. Each morning last month I drove into work with the sun rising right down my street. The sunrise has a way of interacting with the morning dew on my windshield that completely obscures the outside world. This means I have to wait for the defrost cycle to clear the glass. Now we just set the clocks back an hour and I get to enjoy the slow start to my day all over again.

It didn't used to be this way. Back in 2007 daylight savings time started later and ended earlier. The sun was in a different position in the sky so the one-hour shift wasn't so bad. There were changes throughout the last century in America. Some states opt out of daylight time while others observed it. Once the switch occurred the night before Easter. That resulted in people oversleeping services and



reducing attendance. Protests were launched against daylight time as being against "God's time". The day after the clocks change remains a low attendance service in churches today.

Time used to be measured locally. People would set a sundial to know when local noon was and base all time off of that one reference. The railroad industry was first to propose 24 time zones. They needed to make schedules and could not base arrival times on local solar noon. It is tough enough on today's traveler to be off an hour or more. Even more complicated if you are off by minutes as well as hours.

Last year our governor signed a bill for Florida to abandon standard time and be on daylight time year-round. This would fix my driving into the sun twice problem. It has some problems. Georgia might remain on standard time with the rest of the east coast. This will make travel scheduling confusing. The benefits are dubious claims of energy savings and increased leisure time with daylight. Fears of crop failure from the

additional hour of sunlight have proven unwarranted.

Our hobby means we are waiting on the sunset. We also have devices that must be programmed with the correct time in order to work. Go-to telescope mounts count on having the right time for calibration. When it is wrong, it won't find the objects we want to see. It is a good thing we are resourceful. I'm sure we will figure a way to make these tools work. We must adjust our sleep schedules to start later.

The night is just as long, and the sun shines the same hours no matter what our political leaders vote. We just have to adjust our sleep schedules to start later or rise earlier. I suppose I could do the same with my morning commute.

**New Members**

We would like to welcome Jeremy Stanton & Kindall Edwards, and Jerrod Simpson to our family of members.

**General Meeting**

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

**Main Program** - *Introduction to Astronomy* by SPAC Vice President John O'Neill.

**Editor's Notes**

*JACK FRITZ*

★ This is my last month as your SPACE editor. It has truly been a pleasure serving in this capacity. I will continue to serve the club in any way that I am able to help.

**Withlacoochee River Park Clubhouse**

*GUY EARLE*

★ The SPAC clubhouse, named "The Huff House" for long-time members Bill and Nancy Huff for their dedicated 25+ years of service to the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, is finished and ready for members.

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



**Club Outreach**

*JIM HUNTER*

★ Brad Perryman, Wally, Tom and I did the last school scheduled this year. It was our third visit to Brooker Creek Elementary in Tarpon. They had about 60 viewers and we had decent seeing.

This was a poor year as the weather was bad. I have a large rain gauge and reported 66.5 inches of rain for 2018.

I gave the solar program at a new school - St Paul's in Clearwater. It was for about fifty 4th and 5th graders. It was rushed

so not very satisfying for me. We had cancelled a star party there earlier but will have one in the fall.

I want to thank all the Outreachers for all their help again this year and welcome Brad Perryman to our wayward bunch. It includes Dave Pearson, Kelly Anderson, Steve Gabor, Tom Spano, and Wally Vasquez as regulars.

I don't know who else helps Greg Simpson in Gulfport but they do the most outreach, as it is scheduled and has a long history. Thanks to Greg and his merry men.

I just booked a solar program May 13 at the Aging Center in Clearwater, and have done it several times.

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### April Astronomical Events

*GUY EARLE*

While the last of Florida's mildly warm weather, otherwise known as "winter," leaves us in March, there are still many favorite constellations of wintertime in the early evening, such as Orion, Canis Major, and Gemini.

If you are new to the hobby, then maybe you got the chance to work on your Messier list of 110 bright deep-sky objects, which are the targets of beginning and seasoned astronomers alike. Look to the constellation Corvus, passing due south around midnight and try for NGC 5139, otherwise known as Omega Centauri. While very low on the horizon, a good view is worth any effort to catch a glimpse of this awesome globular cluster. Hang around Corvus and look for M104, the Sombrero Galaxy. On April 15<sup>th</sup> the Whirlpool Galaxy, M51, will be well-placed off the handle of the Big Dipper.

Mercury will be at its greatest western elongation of 27.7 degrees from the Sun on April 11<sup>th</sup>, which will be at its highest point above the horizon in the eastern sky just before sunrise.

### April Moon Phases

5<sup>th</sup> – New Moon

12<sup>th</sup> – First Quarter

19<sup>th</sup> – Full Moon

26<sup>th</sup> – Third Quarter

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### March New Moon Weekend

*KELLY ANDERSON*

★ The New Moon Weekend for the first of March proved to be well attended, and the skies were, if not the clearest imaginable, at least filled with stars and not so much with clouds ... until it wasn't.



Scopes set up, awaiting darkness

On Friday your intrepid Field Reporter arrived to find Jack & Ronnie Fritz and Joe Canzoneri already plugged in to their respective electrical outlets. Later that day we were joined by Bob Stelmock, Mike Partain, Jamie Kenas, Chris Curran and Ron & Dee Wayman. That evening started out

cloudy, but the combined wishful thinking of the attending crowd proved to be fairly effective in clearing out the clouds about 9:30. Moisture aloft tended to fuzz images out a tad, especially closer to the horizon, but astronomy happened!



Saturday afternoon, Bill & Nancy Huff joined us for a fun afternoon get together. Larry Barr, Alan Polansky, Shane Eigell and Doug Sliman put their stakes in the ground in anticipation of better seeing. There were also about a half-dozen USF students in the crowd. Bob Stelmock brought a new telescope (a major faux pas, to be sure) but apparently Jinx wasn't paying attention. We were rewarded with better seeing than the previous evening, with cloud-free skies and lower moisture content. This lasted until (I was told) about 1:00 am.

Our next New Moon Weekend will be April 4 - 6, featuring the SPAC Spring Picnic on Saturday. Bring a side dish or dessert along with your appetites. Shirley's Famous Burgers will be making a return engagement, along with tube steaks cooked to order. Which is to say, we cook 'em, you eat 'em, and nobody gets hurt. Even if you're not staying the weekend, join us for an afternoon of gustatorial delights.



Last Year's Spring Picnic featuring Shirley's Famous Burgers

### SPAC Astrophotography

*GUY EARLE*

While I'm a visual observer, often seen with my face crammed into my binoviewer, I am always awed by the stunning astrophotos of our talented SPAC members. I would like to share a few each month, and encourage you to submit them for future newsletters. Here is a sampling from our March New Moon weekend, while more can see on our [SPAC Facebook page](#).



Thor's Helmet, NGC 2359 by Joe Canzoneri 1



The Rosette Nebula by John O'Neill



M101 and friends by Jamie Kenas

**SPAC Mirror Lab**

*BRAD PERRYMAN*

★ We had two new visitors show up to the lab this month. Richard with a 13" BVC blank at an f/6 ratio which he wants to bring down to an f/4.5. The other was Steve Maiaroto, from the villages. Steve brought in an 8" piece of glass that he polished and figured years ago. We put it on the Foucault machine to measure the surface and it came out to sixth wave, which is better than our minimum requirement of quarter wave.

Unfortunately, we detected a polishing issue that needed addressing. Periodic marks were rubbed into the glass as seen in picture A, which can contribute to scattering and distortion. The most likely causes for this issue are aggressive rubbing and/or lack of randomness. We poured a new pitch lap and decide on the best stroke to work out the pattern without affecting the shape. It took about 2-1/2 hours of rubbing to get the results you see in image b. Great job Steve!

Demitri had a little scare with his glass. We thought there was a scratched his polished mirror, but it turned out to be dried cerium on the surface. It is so important to wet the glass and clean it immediately after a polishing session to prevent cerium from sticking to your glass. Lesson learned.

Paul McNabb was able to work a little bit on his telescope in between providing his indispensable instruction for the lab.

Three new tools were made for grinding 10" diameter glass. Now we need some enthusiastic astronomers to get down and dirty, hogging out some glass. Who's interested?



Richard is making progress on his 13" BVC. Mike Davis is fine grinding a 10" glass that he slumped in his kiln. Bill Small is back at the lab, building a telescope around the mirror he finished last year. Bill bought a Sonotube, Ralph Craig helped cut it to size

and Paul help paint the inside of it black to prevent stray light from affecting the images. I made a tool for a 14" diameter 3/4" thick mirror that I plan on figuring to an f/4.8.



Steve came back to build a dew heater controller designed by our own Allen Maroney. It is a popular item with club members.

In Closing, we had an extraordinarily productive month which is leading into what looks like a very busy spring.

**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.



★ Meade LX200R-8 scope in excellent condition. It includes an extra eyepiece, 2" 32mm, a 2" flip mirror, a hard shell carrying case, and the original shipping boxes. In addition, there is a Meade aluminum dew shield, a plastic focusing grid, a Meade Deep Sky Imager Pro, and two portable power supplies; an emergency charger from harbor Freight and a 17A Celestron power station. Please contact [John Pearson](#) at the email link above.

★ We Celestron Heavy Duty tripod and modified JMI Wheeley Bar. Tripod was supplied with NexStar 11 GPS and will accommodate 'scopes up to C14-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.

**SPAC Business Meeting** 

Our next business meeting is Wednesday, April 10<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**

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Click on the name to send email

**Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors:**

Clifford B. Benham	Benefactor
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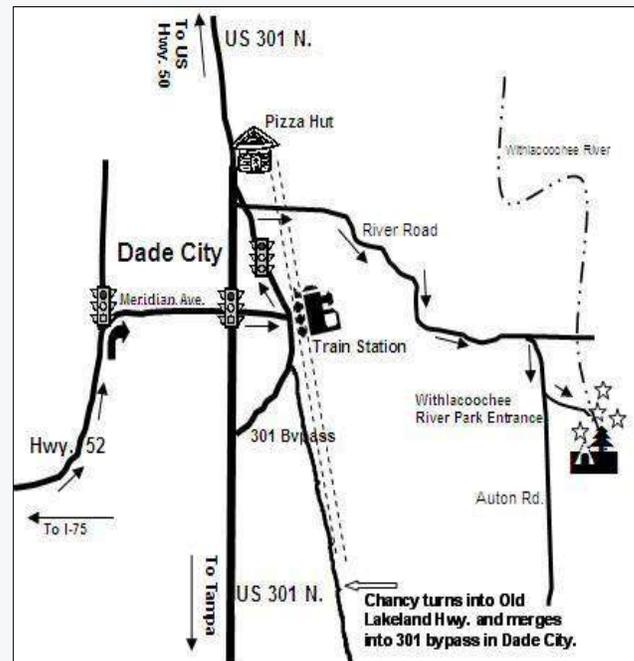
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Mirror Lab	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>	727 384-2086

**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.