



December 2018

Editor -Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 246 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

★ Happy Holidays! Have you ever wondered why that is that so many cultures celebrate this time of year and how their traditions somehow wind up with similar outcomes? The winter solstice is upon us and looking around you will realize that there are many world traditions that celebrate this time of year. Not only that, they celebrate by eating too much with their families.



North American Indian tribes were particularly attuned to nature. They knew the seasons well and understood the movement of the stars. They also had a celebration around the winter solstice with feasting. The reasons behind that were simple. Livestock consume food that is no longer growing. Eating some of the livestock preserved food for the remainder of the animals, thus ensuring the survival of both the herd and the people who depended on it. Alcohol has a lower freezing point than water. Maintaining a proper blood alcohol level will help you make it through rough winters. Could it be that the roots of all northern hemisphere traditions have a similar pragmatic origin?

Astronomers are also attuned to nature. The winter solstice is also the longest night of the year. The cold is upon us and that clears out the viewing. That is wonderful! We can start our viewing early in the evening and late into the morning. This is the best time of year to practice our hobby. The holidays (which ever you like) are also a great excuse and a good time to shop for new equipment.

We have some things going on this year so be sure to get out there. There is a comet, 46P Wirtanen, in Taurus that is expected to reach magnitude 3. Check out NASA because there is a new lander on Mars and a close up of asteroid Bennu. The only way to get closer to Bennu is to wait 150 years for it to hit Earth.

You must take care of yourself when you are out observing in cold weather. Be sure to bundle up. You also need to maintain your nutrition. Fortunately, empty calories weigh less than full calories. So don't skip the Christmas cookies if you want to maintain your weight.

New Members

We would like to welcome Bob & Karen Scott, Joe & Pamela Faubion and Jan McNeil to our family of members.

General Meeting

This month's general meeting and annual

Christmas party will take place on Friday, December 14th at 7:00 PM, at St. Petersburg College, Gibbs Campus. 6605 5th Avenue North.

The club will provide the main meat dish and members should bring a covered dish.

Note: Please note we meet at 7:00 PM, for our Christmas party.

Orange Blossom Special



Our annual star party, Orange Blossom Special, will be January 30th through February 3rd. This is the only New Moon Weekend of the year that you must register to attend. Registration is open and available online only. **You must register and pay prior to 5:00 PM January 2nd.** Go to <https://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/obs.php> for details and registration.

Withlacoochee River Park Clubhouse

JACK FRITZ



Work on our clubhouse continues. When completed, our members and guests will have a comfortable place to gather and sleep during our New Moon weekends and for the annual star party.

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



Volunteer as a NWS SKYWARN Spotter. Training opportunities take place through the winter months online or in-person classes. More information: <https://www.weather.gov/tbw/skywarn>



January Astronomical Events

JACK FRITZ

January 3rd and 4th - Quadrantids Meteor Shower. The Quadrantids is an above average shower, with up to 40 meteors per hour at its peak.

January 6th - Venus at Greatest Western Elongation. The planet Venus reaches greatest eastern elongation of 47 degrees from the Sun.

January 21st - Supermoon and total lunar eclipse. The eclipse will be visible throughout most of North America.

January 22nd - Conjunction of Venus and Jupiter.

January Moon Phases

- 5th - New Moon
- 14th - First Quarter
- 21st - Full Moon
- 27th - Third Quarter

November New Moon Weekend

KELLY ANDERSON



The weekend got off on an early start when Allen and Betsy Force, Jack Fritz, Tom Spano and your intrepid Field Reporter arrived on Wednesday, December 5, to put in some work on the Clubhouse. We made great progress this weekend and should be close to finished as we return later in the week to install cabinets and bunks.

As it turned out, Wednesday was a pretty good night for astronomy as well. The temperature encouraged us to put on a few more layers, but the skies were fairly clear, although the dew was out in full force and moisture aloft made for some spectacularly long contrails. It was particularly fun to see our favorite winter constellations arrive on schedule. Even Jack brought his telescope, so we had a pretty good array of optics to play with.

On Thursday we were joined by Blake Harding, Joe Canzoneri, Barry Fox, Mike Partain and Guy Earl. The seeing was even better, but I had to turn the space heater in my shelter up to full power! I'm guessing we had to contend with temps in the mid-40s. But the humidity was down a bit and we enjoyed some excellent seeing.

More folks arrived on Friday. Doug Sliman and Kyle Brinkman joined the Clubhouse Work Party. Arriving later in the day were first timers Pam and Joe Faubian, and Jan & John McNeil and their son David. Mike Partain and Guy Earl returned for another evening of astronomical excellence. I'd like to say we had another excellent evening of stellar wonders. I'd like to say that, but I can't. After a day of stunningly clear skies, the cloud gods chuckled and sent us scattered alto cumulus, but we could still point our scopes at the many holes that gave us good, but fleeting views. As the evening wore on the cloud cover got thicker until we were limited to exchanging tales of past evenings and other topics.

I'm proud to report that we made up a convivial group that turned a lousy night of viewing into a great night of conversation and laughter. No matter the weather, you just can't miss having a good time at a SPAC weekend.

Ron & Dee Wayman joined us Saturday morning, while Mike Partain made another trip to Withlacoochee, this time to help us on the Clubhouse. Chris Curran brought his new dog, Petey, in his Porsche. Nice car, but no good for towing trailers. Petey was a delight, loving all the petting he got. The viewing that night was even worse than Friday, and with the forecast of a storm front approaching we put away our scopes and booked out first thing Sunday morning.

Still and all another fun weekend. Mark your calendars for January 4 - 6 for our next New Moon Weekend, where, as usual, clear

skies are guaranteed. And don't forget, the next Orange Blossom Special is January 30 - February 3. Keep smiling!

For Sale

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" 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 727-433-8535, audr3yschr03d3r@gmail.com in Largo.

SPAC Business Meeting 

Our next business meeting is Wednesday, January 9th, 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.

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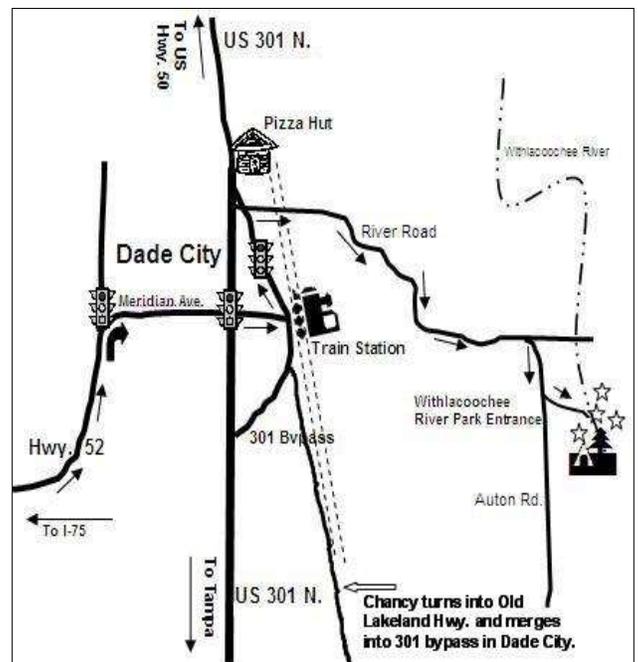
Withlacoochee New Moon Weekends

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



15406 Stonecreek Lane
Tampa, FL 33613

LAST MAILED EDITION

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.