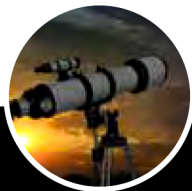


## **Moonstruck Astronomy Club**

**Cammie Fairburn**



What was the name of the first satellite to orbit the Earth? The Moon!

On Monday, April 6, the Orion spacecraft of the Artemis II lunar mission flew around the far side of the Moon. This was the second time that human eyes had seen the far side. The first time was in December 1968, by the Apollo 8 crew.

The first time the far side of the Moon had been photographed was on Oct. 7,

1959, by the Soviet Luna 3 spacecraft. That is why many of the features on the far side have Russian names, because Russian scientists named them.

It was from those first photographs that we learned that the far side of the Moon looks different from the side facing Earth (the near side). The far side is covered in impact craters and is lighter in color, while the near side has huge dark plains.

Why do we only see one side of the Moon, and why are the two sides so different? Glenn Cohen answered both questions at the club meeting in April. We only see one side of the Moon because of tidal locking, which occurs

when the Moon rotates on its axis at the same rate it orbits the Earth.

When the Moon was young, it had active volcanoes just like the Earth. Because the near side faced a young, hot Earth, magma continued to erupt on the near side of the Moon while the far side cooled faster, forming a thicker shell. That is why the Moon is so asymmetrical.

Sunday, June 21, is the summer solstice, the first day of summer in the northern hemisphere. Due to the Earth's axial tilt, on June 21 the North Pole is at its closest point to the Sun. It is Earth's tilt, not the distance from the Sun, that causes the seasons.

The Moonstruck Astronomy Club meets on the second Thursday every month from 1:30 to 3 p.m. in the Hobby Building Event Room. Our next meeting is Thursday, June 11. Residents with valid resident IDs or a Gateway of Services pass can join the club, and new members are welcome! Club dues are only \$20 per year, and they include a subscription to the quarterly Reflector Magazine.

For information or club registration, please contact club President Jim Di Paolo at [moonastroclub@gmail.com](mailto:moonastroclub@gmail.com). More information is also available at [moonstruckastronomyclub.org](http://moonstruckastronomyclub.org).

Keep looking up!