

Texas Star Party 2000-April 30, 2000 through May 6, 2000 at the Prude Ranch in Ft. Davis, TX. I left home on Sunday April 30 and arrived at the Prude Ranch at about 10:15 PM, too late to drive onto the ranch, so I parked on the road. It was very windy when I arrived. I walked down the road, admiring the clear sky and all the stars that you could see. I made my way to the central field, where a few brave souls had their scopes out. I was amazed that I did not remember the layout of the ranch. I also was amazed at the number of people that were already setup in the central field. After looking through a couple of scopes, I made my way up to the football field. I met a couple of people in the dark and looked thru their scopes. Called it a night about 12:30AM and slept in my truck.

Monday May 1, 2000

Started at 10:20 PM. High clouds at sunset and there are still clouds in the NW. The sky is fair to good (not really being completely dark yet).

M51            10:48P            See both galaxies (NGC 5195). Can see the field star in M51. Some hints at the spiral structure.

Omega Centauri 11:28P            Spectacular. Looked at it with all the eyepieces I had and the 19mm wide field of Leigh's gives the best view. Works well with my scope.

The sky is a huge disappointment tonight. There are obvious clouds on the horizon coming and going. Couldn't see NGC 2681 and NGC 2841 even though I was fairly certain that I had the scope on the correct part of the field.

Tuesday May 2, 2000

The sun has just set. There is a light breeze from the North. The sky is going to be beautiful tonight. There was not a cloud to be seen anywhere. It's going to be a good night.

Looked at the Orion nebula just before it set, with my new 19 mm wide field eyepiece. It looked fabulous. The sky is gorgeous. The Zodiacal light reaches up from the west thru Gemini and into Leo. The stars are steady. No wind now and you can see 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> magnitude stars popping out.

M44            10:18P            Just gorgeous. Lots of stars. Best thru the finder scope.

NGC 2841      10:24P            19mm linear shape. Long and narrow. Bright nucleus and an easily seen extended halo. On the right side of FOV there are 2 field stars in the halo. The one at the end of the halo is brighter and the one in the halo is much dimmer. Could be an oval shape, like the tilt of the Andromedia galaxy as I see it with a.v. But it definitely is linear, long and narrow. Fairly easy to see. 32mm-much smaller, but can see the bright nucleus and diffused halo of the galaxy.

While looking for next object, a satellite moved thru the finder scope. Pretty cool. Bright and just moved across the FOV of the finder scope like a satellite does.

- NGC 2681 10:48P 32mm-small, fuzzy patch with a bright nucleus. 19mm-it has a circular fuzzy halo with a bright, starlike nucleus. Very nice.
- M51 10:55P Can see the dust lanes in the spiral arms. Spectacular.
- NGC 2683 11:08P Edge-on galaxy. 32mm-fairly bright, sliver of light. 19mm-makes it bigger and easier to see. It has a bigger bulge in the middle and thinner at the edges. The nucleus is a little brighter than the edges. You can definitely see that there is a central bulge (fatter in the middle). 13mm-makes it bigger. 10mm-the galaxy extends from edge to edge of the FOV. The 13 and 10 made the galaxy of uniform brightness. Tried to see if there was a dust lane. Using a.v., didn't see any. Nice, edge-on galaxy with a little fatter middle, but the edges do not taper off to a point like you might think. It has a square, boxy look to it.
- NGC 2775 11:20P Galaxy. 32mm-small, round fuzzy with just a little bit brighter center. 19mm-circular. fairly faint, but the nucleus is just a bit (noticeably so) brighter.
- NGC 2768 11:45P 32mm-small, faint patch of light with a noticeable nucleus which is slightly brighter than the rest of the galaxy. But it is still fairly faint and small. 19mm-oval in shape. Easier to see yet still dim. You can tell that the nucleus is brighter though.
- NGC 2742 12:01A Moving the scope to the South about 1.5 FOVs of the 19mm (82 degrees), there is a small, faint oval, uniformly lit smudge. Easy to see straight on. Verifying position. There is a field star that if you put in at one edge of FOV and 2768 at the other, then move the scope to the down and to the south 1.5 FOVs, I get to this galaxy. 32mm-can see a brighter star above it and three dimmer stars to the right of it. Using the 32 mm, I would have missed this object, but now that I know where it is, it is easy to see w/a.v. in this EP.
- NGC 2782 12:12A 11.5 mag. galaxy. 32mm-small, very faint circular smudge. 19mm-tell that it has a circular shape. Fairly faint but the nucleus is brighter. Not uniform in brightness. 10mm-fairly faint. Can tell the nucleus is brighter (w/a.v.) and the galaxy is small.
- M81 and M82 12:19A 19mm (this is an excellent EP for my scope)-M81 is fairly large, with a bright nucleus and a very extended halo. M82 is a long, slender (cigar shaped) galaxy and you can see the 2 dust lanes

bisecting the galaxy. Star hopping to star 24 and then going the same distance on the other side of this star as it is away from M81 and M82, you find NGC 2787.

NGC 2787 12:25A

Very faint, elongated galaxy. It has uniform brightness. Has 2 field stars to the right of it in the FOV. 32 and 19 show uniform brightness, with the 19 making it bigger.

Omega Centauri 12:35A

Much better than last night. Last night could barely see the member stars and tonight with the 32mm, the member stars are all over the place. Very, very impressive. Just a huge ball of stars. The member stars extend out to the edge of the FOV. 19mm-it overwhelms the FOV. I think that there are planes of focus where you can focus on the member stars. Was a neat effect to rack the focus in and out and focus on different planes of stars. Stars are coming into focus all over the FOV.

Centaurus A 12:45A

32mm-Oval in shape being bisected by a darker band of dust. The top part has two field stars, one is in the dust lane and the other is in the upper part. Much easier to see with the 19mm. Easy to see the dust lane. Gives the best view. The higher powers was easier to see the dust lane.

M57 1:15A

Nice. Easy to see in Roberto's 10" scope. No central star.

M13 1:21A

Omega Centauri blows this one away but I still like it.

NGC 3079 1:30A

Edge-on galaxy. 32mm-very faint sliver of light. 19mm-thin sliver of light, uniformly lit. Doesn't dim near the edges. Its just there.

The Milky Way is in the east. Can see the bands of our arms like I have seen before. It's just glowing in the sky over the mountain. Looks like clouds and city sky glow.

NGC 2950 1:49A

Very, very hard to find. Can't use the 32mm to find these faint guys anymore. Using the 19mm and while I was sweeping thru the area, I noticed the fuzziness. Its easy to see the fuzzy contrast when the scope was moving. Centered the scope on it and it is very small. Just barely noticeable. Has a very starlike nucleus with a hint of an extended halo.

NGC 4038 2:20A

NGC 4039

Antenna Galaxy. 19mm-fairly dim. Can tell there is a particular shape. W/a.v, can see a dust lane that cuts into the middle of it. The entire structure has a comma shape. The back of the comma towards the bottom of the FOV. Can see the dark band cutting down from the top, 1/2 way into the structure.

2:30P was sweeping around the tail of Scorpio. The star cluster down the spine on the right side of the stinger. Looked at Antares and M4 and then to the SE saw a very faint star cluster that you can make out member stars with both the 32 and 19mm EPs.

Wednesday May 3, 2000

At sunset, there were clouds overhead, but now at 10 PM, the sky is very good. Right now it looks to be an awesome night. The zodiacal light is again in the west and the clouds have headed to the SE.

NGC 2548 10:23P M48-Is a loose association of stars. Doesn't have any particular shape. Best seen in the 32 mm. Very bright, blue-white stars fills the FOV. One brighter star (maybe a field star) to the right of the cluster and in the FOV. There are probably two variations of magnitude in this cluster. Many are of the brighter class and the remainder are a bit dimmer.

NGC 2811 11:03P Very hard to find because the sky is not all that good again. There is a little trapezium that this object is to the south of. Very hard to find the trapezium in the telrad (very faint stars). Used the finder scope and star hopped to the object. Faint sliver of light. W/ a.v. is has a little brighter nucleus embedded in an extended halo. It is a 11.3 mag. so I used the 19mm to find object. Fairly small and linear in shape.

Last nights' sky was rated a B, and tonights sky is a C+. The sky is steady but is not very transparent.

NGC 2859 11:15P A galaxy in Lynx. Almost 11<sup>th</sup> mag. Used the 19mm to find these objects that are 11<sup>th</sup> mag. or fainter. I moved off alpha lynx to get here. Has a very faint glow and has a starlike nucleus and a very small extended halo. Very easy to see in the FOV.

Last night I saw several nice meteors and tonight I have already seen two heading from north to south.

NGC 2964 11:29P A very faint, smudge, pretty uniformly lit. Used the 19mm to find it. It seems to coincide with the stars on chart 48-6 except its closer to field star in the FOV than on the chart.

Antenna Galaxy is now on the meridan.

NGC 4038 11:39P Looked as it did last night in the 19mm. A backwards comma with

NGC 4039

the fatter part of the head down and the tail of the comma up. You can see it swirls and the tail of the comma is up at the top of the FOV. You can see the dust lane that makes the comma shape.

NGC 4027 11:42P Moved 1 FOV of the 19mm to this object. Very faint, uniformly lit, circular shaped galaxy. There is a field star you can see at the bottom of the object, almost in the extended halo of the galaxy. Maybe it is a little elongated, fatter part to the right of FOV.

NGC 3962 11:48P Telrad points to the correct part of the sky of the finder card and the field stars seem to line up with what is in the star chart. It is a small, circular galaxy with a relatively brighter nucleus (but not starlike) and dims quickly into the halo. It is very small in the FOV. Pretty sharp.

Sometimes the details on the star charts are not as accurate as I would like them to be. When I was looking for that galaxy (I found earlier) in Leo, I was sweeping thru the area and noted 5 or 6 very faint smudges. These were galaxies that are at the limit of my scope.

NGC 3242 12:41A Ghost of Jupiter-32mm-it's a noticeable, fuzzy, blue-green oval. 19mm-its fairly circular in shape. Definitely has a blue-green color. And I see it uniformly lit. No central star seen, no ring structure seen.

The seeing tonight is not all that great!!!

M4 12:52A Very nice globular cluster. 19mm can see many, many member stars. Roughly circular in shape, with a denser, brighter nucleus and many stars in the extended halo.

NGC 6144 Faint glow (a globular). Can't see member stars tonight. There are some field stars in the area. It definitely is a lot less contrast than there was last night when I looked at this object.

Omega Centauri 12:58A Fills whole FOV with stars. Very impressive.

Thursday May 4, 2000

It was cloudy at sunset so I set the alarm for 2 AM and now thw sky is good. Roberto said the sky cleared up about 1:30AM.

M104 2:42A Sombrero Galaxy. 19mm the dust lane is very evident and the halo is above the dust lane. The galaxy extends along the dust lane out to the edge of the FOV farther than I have ever seen it do before.

- M57 2:56A Trying to see the central star. Every once in a while, the middle of the ring got a little denser. Most of the time it was of a uniform brightness. Never saw a starlike object in the middle. The 10mm gave a nice view of this object. Easy to see but no central star. The seeing has improved to a B- now.
- M80 2:58A 32mm-nice cluster-spews off to the right side. 19mm easy to see the member stars.
- NGC6144 3:15A 32mm-Very faint smudge but now I can see some member stars w/a.v. There is a brighter field star to the left of the cluster. 19mm-its still very dim but can see member stars. The field star in the FOV is very obvious now. Roughly circular in shape (a meteor just shot across the EP-very fast).

Looking at the Milky Way tonight is just awesome. Looking at Rho Scorpio is quite obvious. Can see the different parts of our spiral arms. Over by Aquila is a gap of the 1<sup>st</sup> spiral arm.

- NGC 6171 3:28A M107-32mm-is a round, globular situated in the middle of 3 field stars that form a nice triangle. Can see the speckling of the member stars. Fairly easy to see. Brighter nucleus and a dimmer halo. 19mm-easier to see. Member stars are easier to see. Now you can see that it extends out of the right side to 2 of the field stars. The extended halo is dim, but is easy to see. It dominated the FOV and is fairly circular in shape. The 19mm gives a nice contrast to the background sky...makes the sky black. There is a lot of mottling in this area beyond those 2 field stars, so this cluster may extend farther out than one can easily see.
- NGC 6207 3:35A Galaxy next to M13. Going to have to look at M13. The object is in the dobsonian hole. M13 is spectacular as always. 19mm-put M13 at the bottom left, this galaxy is at the top right. It's very faint but has a starlike nucleus. The extended halo is easy to see. Can't tell if this is an edge-on galaxy or a galaxy with a slight tilt to my line-of-sight, so it's a little oval in shape. Its easy to see if you stare at it w/a.v. for a while and the oval shape comes in and out.
- NGC 6496 4:33A Very faint globular-sweeping thru the area and found this. Very small, compact globular. Fairly dim but easy to see the member stars. 19mm gives the best view.
- M8 & M20 4:39A 19mm-Trifid nebula-fills FOV-easy to see the 3 parts with the dust lanes in-between. Just awesome. Down below there is a star embedded in some nebulosity. The whole area is mottled and is as wide as the trifid. Going to the Lagoon nebula. There are 2 bright

stars in the lagoon. There is a left and right part. The left part has many stars embedded deep in the nebulosity, lighting it and giving some areas a brighter appearance than others. There is a dust lane separating the two pieces right down the middle of the object. Easy to see this dust lane. The right part is mottled. Fills FOV nicely. The nebulosity trails off to the bottom of the EP. There is a star cluster associated with this object. To the right of the cluster, there is a relatively bright field star embedded in the nebulosity. Can move the telescope around in this area, and like the Orion Nebula, you can see and chase nebulosity all over the place. Probably 1 ½ times the FOV. Above the Lagoon, the nebulosity tapers off quickly.

Just saw many short, fairly faint meteors to the west of Scorpio in Virgo.

5:07A Just saw a tumbling satellite with my binoculars. It was dim then bright, then dim...

NGC 6235 5:14A While looking in the finder scope, I saw a faint meteor shoot across the FOV and left a nice smoke trail. There is a field star near it. 19mm-Fairly faint globular. 10.4 mag. It has a relatively brighter nucleus and a dim halo. It is very small. Can't see any member stars in it. It matches the object on the finder card and is about the right magnitude, awful faint and very small.

Move telescope to the east to find NCG 6287.

NGC 6287 5:21A 19mm-Little brighter than 6235. Circular in nature. Telrad is pointing to the correct orientation of Theta Ophiuchus and the star above it. It is of uniform brightness, fairly dim across the circular part. w/a.v. can see the speckling of the member stars.

NGC 6369 5:42A 19mm-very faint, planetary. Oval in shape. Uniform brightness. w/a.v., I thought I saw a faint ring structure. The OIII did not add any contrast to this object. 10mm and a.v. could see a faint hint of a ring structure. 19mm is awesome. w/a.v. I could tell that there was a ring structure. While the object drifted across the FOV, I let the image soak in my a.v. (a hint from Larry Mitchell) and the central star popped in. It winked and then it was gone. It was very bright star.

While looking at 6369, a bright satellite moved thru the FOV. I moved the scope to follow it across the sky until I was at the limit of standing on the ladder. I couldn't see any detail of the satellite but it did have angular displacement, so it must have been large. I followed it up thru the zenith from the south. It was not star like, going from south to north.

I noticed that if I look to the right and use the left side of my cones (my a.v.) it is easier to see things than looking in the opposite direction.

NGC 6401 5:58A Very faint globular. Circular in nature. Had an intense starlike nucleus. Relatively bright. Looked like a field star in the middle.

The east is starting to glow. The ground is starting to light up and the Milky Way is disappearing.

Friday May 5, 2000

Put my scope away after dinner and before the presentation. The sky was cloudy at sunset. As the evening progressed, it clear up a bit. I went up and hung out all night at Larry Mitchell's 36" f5.5 telescope. First he put it on the Whirlpool galaxy and I have never seen this galaxy like this. You could see the spiral arms and separation between the arms. Vaguely see the bridge. Then he moved it to the Ghost of Jupiter. This is a planetary with the ring a rose-red color and the middle of the ring was a blue-green color. Then he moved to a globular in Scorpio. It was out of focus but there were clouds over there at the time. Then he put in on 6309. Fairly easy to see. Then we saw the central star in M57. Then we saw one of his multiple ring galaxies. I was able to see both faint smudges. Then we looked at Abell 70, a galaxy that shown thru a faint ring nebula. You could see that the right side of the ring was brighter with the galaxy shining thru in from beyond. I enjoyed watching him star hop with his 8" RFT telescope with a cross-hair EP with the intersection of the cross-hairs missing so you could see the object. He used a music stand with red light attached to hold his star chas while he star hopped. He also had an easel with red lights that he could hang on the ladder with a chart mounted in it. He also had some battleship binoculars that I swept across the Milky Way. What a view they gave.

Saturday May 6, 2000

The evening was overcast so I just went to bed.

Sunday May 7, 2000

Broke camp and left the Prude Ranch about 7:15A and headed home. I have a great time at this years' TSP. Can't wait till next year.