

Texas Star Party 2009

This was the first of what we hope will be many to come, Texas Star Party visits. We used this opportunity to launch Bootleg Apparel and astronomy themed products. With this being our first visit to TSP we had many people to meet. Upon our entrance we met up with Jayne Lambert who was in charge of the vending house. Upon entering the vending house we met up with venders from previous star parties including Dark Skies and Prairie Skies, Jeff Norwood, who is now carrying our Hawaiian style shirts, and Bob Summerfield who loves the concept of pirate clothing and apparel wished to carry our products as well. Sales of our shirts were very profitable especially during Hawaiian Shirt Day. But enough about our end of the trip. The area TSP 2009 was held was only 10 miles south of the Mac Donald Observatory so the skies were better no where else. The observatory held nightly tours where guests were given the opportunity to use a 36" scope, and one night people from the star party were allowed to use an 82"!!!! UNBELIEVEABLE!!!! I can only imagine what you'd be able to see through that aperture. Now being near an observatory there aren't too many shopping centers or restaurants around. The nearest town is Fort Davis about 15 minutes from the campsite with some lodging and restaurants. They have pretty much everything you would need for camping except the actual camping gear. Back to the star party, there weren't too many a.t.m.s but the ones that were there were unbelievable. Near our campsite and man had a 20" R.C. which we never had a chance to see any shots it took. It was its first field test and there was much work to be done to it before it would be ready for observing. Walking down from the venders house one afternoon we spotted an excellent Split Ring telescope. Starmaster was showing off their new 20" F-3.3 Dob with optics from Mike Lockwood. There were at least 2 36" Dobs that we saw, a handful of 30"s, and at least a dozen 25"s. Using a very nice ladys 25" Dob I had my first views ever of Omega Centauri and Centauris A. Some of the imagers there had such high end equipment that the sky was the limit.....literally. On the campsite there were adequate facilities, hot showers, a pool for escape from the brutal daytime temp. which would reach as high as 90 and then steadily begin to fall at sundown to reach temps as low as 35 at night. A hat (preferably a sombrero) is almost required during the day or you'll go blind and get 2nd degree burns on your face and neck. The TSP giveaway (I personally didn't like how it was set up) was on 2 nights, each night giving away a grand prize. If you won a prize then your ticket was put back in the drawing box. But if you won the grand prize the first night your ticket did not go back into the box (Whoopee!, one less person vs. another 450). One gentleman there won twice in a single night. One of his prizes was an Ethos 10mm. My dad (Scott) was fortunate enough to win 'The ARP Atlas of Peculiar Galaxies' autographed by Dennis Webb, one of the 2 authors of the book. Despite a 24 hour drive, 2 bad nights of viewing, nearly running

out of gas on the road, 12 hours of rainy travel, and about \$20 in tolls this is by far **THE BEST STAR PARTY EVER!** This is one that every astronomer should visit at least once. It will be the best week of your nighttime life.

Written by

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