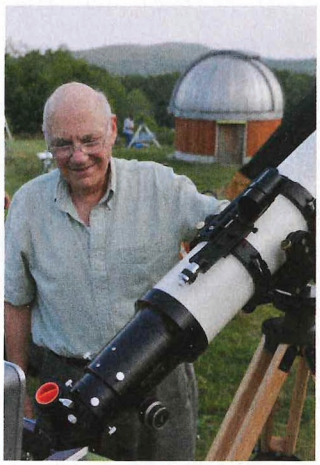
An Ethos of Largesse

EACH OF US WHO enjoys going to star parties probably has a different reason why he or she most likes to attend. For many it will be the coal-dark skies. For others the camaraderie. For still others maybe the chance to try out a really big scope. (See Rod Mollise's feature article on page 34 for still other whys and wherefores.)

For my part, one of the qualities I most look forward to experiencing is the generosity of spirit.

A case in point was late Friday evening at Stellafane last August. Black-bottomed clouds marched across most of the sky over Breezy Hill in Springfield, Vermont. Many scopes I could see around me were covered up, their owners elsewhere. While a few folks did have their instruments at the ready, most were waiting for better conditions.

But one person was actively seeking openings overhead and encouraging anyone who cared to have a look to bend over his 5-inch scope — and quite a few did so. When someone asked if he thought it would clear, the man said, "We have enough sucker holes to keep us going." I could see his smile in the warm glow from my red flashlight.



DENNIS DI CICCO

Al Nagler at Stellafane, 2010

The man was Al Nagler, then celebrating six decades since his first visit to Stellafane in 1955. The guru of Tele Vue, who turned 80 years old in 2015, was as enthusiastic a participant as you'd want to find at this 80th iteration of the "Shrine to the Stars" convention. Most octogenarians would have been snug in their beds by that time of night. Not Al: too much magnanimous zest to bestow on interested bystanders.

Despite the general overcast, Al managed to pull M22 and M24 in Sagittarius into view and, a little later, the Great Globular Cluster in Hercules. He searched the sky; he swung his scope around; he switched eyepieces. He just wasn't going to take "no" for an answer. As a visitor peered at the E.T. Cluster that Al had just centered in his eyepiece, Al said, "It's upside down. See the eyes? It's very cute!"

Just before retiring for the night around midnight, Al glanced at the heavens and said, to no one in particular, "You're seeing the Milky Way against dark cloud. That's beautiful. You don't see that all the time."

Al Nagler exemplifies the selfless goodwill that abounds in amateur astronomy. This quality stood out for me as soon as I joined *S&T* in 2014 and began attending star parties and other events: those in our hobby are extremely *nice* people, and they like nothing more than sharing the beauties of the night sky with whoever wishes to see. ✦

Peter

Editor in Chief

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