



On the road: A visit to Tele Vue Optics



Posted by [David Eicher](#)
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On Monday, October 22, I had a great visit with one of the legendary families of the astronomy world when I hooked up with Al Nagler, David Nagler, and Sandy Nagler, at Tele Vue Optics in Chester, New York. The visit followed the big and successful Urban Starfest held in Central Park in the city, in which the Naglers participated with a battery of telescopes. ([See my previous blog post for coverage of that event.](#))

Prior to going on my New York trip, Al Nagler, who I've known since I was 16 years old, offered to give me a behind-the-scenes tour of Tele Vue. It was a thrill, especially coming off our mutual star party event. Al picked me up in the city at 10 a.m., and we spent about an hour moving north along the parkway, making our way to Chester. Once we arrived, Al, David, Sandy, and I engaged in some lively and interesting discussions about the astronomy world, events in amateur astronomy, and where the whole thing is going. (Al's lovely wife, Judi, retired about four years ago.) The Naglers then treated me to the special tour of their large facility, which incorporates manufacturing, testing, assembly, and warehouse capabilities all in the same large and attractive building, capped by the Tele Vue trademark "evergreen" colored roof.

I must tell you that, even though I had been to see parts of the building some years earlier, I was really struck by the thorough tour and explanation of the whole process that goes into their telescopes, eyepieces, and other accessories. Amateur astronomers have been long familiar with the company's high standard of quality and amazing line of eyepieces — the Nagler eyepiece



David, Sandy, and Al Nagler pose in their offices at Tele Vue Optics in Chester, New York, October 22, 2012. // All images by David J. Eicher



Eyepieces undergo a rigorous final testing process at Tele Vue Optics, Chester, New York, October 22, 2012.

practically revolutionized the hobby when it first appeared. (See “The eyepiece that changed observing,” by Michael Bakich, *Astronomy*, December 2005.) The company’s hallmarks are long established — extraordinary quality, sharp flat fields of view, and heavy-duty construction. Any experienced observer at a star party knows the words Nagler, Delos, Ethos, Paracorr. On Monday, I saw for the first time why the process works so well for the Naglers. Each individual component is tested, and then tested in combination, and then checked by others in the company, and then tested and custom-matched to make the absolute finest product in the end.

It’s a painstaking process. But it goes in line with what Al Nagler has preached for years — to produce the best quality optical equipment without compromise. I could not photograph the many optical benches I saw. The testing equipment allows individual lenses and elements to be mated and even rotated microscopically to produce optimum performance. But it all makes sense when one sees it — the system of checks and balances to ensure that optics and mechanics work at a high level.

It was an incredible day. I hope to visit other manufacturers’ facilities in the coming months and to report on how they are doing, as well. I can tell you that in visiting Al, David, and Sandy, and getting the full look at Tele Vue, I had a most amazing start in this experience.



Nagler eyepieces have a reputation for their impressive size, as playfully shown in this depiction of Al Nagler from the 1980s.



Tele Vue founder Al Nagler poses outside the company's offices in Chester, New York, October 22, 2012.