My First Okie-Tex on the “Dark Side”

By Brad Young, Astronomy Club of Tulsa

> "If once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Consume you it will..." — Yoda

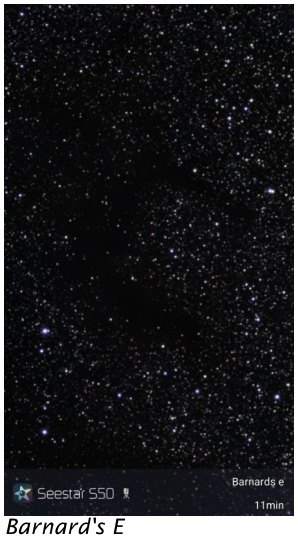
For 18 years (except twice when I went to another star party) I have been to Okie-Tex and loved every trip. I always enjoyed it visually until this year, bringing first a 12” Dob then my 22” Dob I have now. I used my time there to see the objects I might never see without its pristine dark skies and was able to finish the NGC objects in the north because of it. Besides that, I enjoyed meeting old and new friends, seeing the folks I rent a room from, the staff and volunteers. And I enjoyed annoying imagers with sarcastic comments about their time there, holed up asleep all night while the scope did all the work. Sometimes I would stay up all night and see them sleepily covering their scopes before going to breakfast while I walked up the road to get in my car and go to my room and crash.

Well, after bringing a Seestar with me for the first time, I now understand some of what they do. This year was warm and rather clear the first three nights, and we had one half night before a cold front came through, with rain and storms. Fearing damage, I packed up Dob and waited for Thursday night. Now with just a Seestar, I sat freezing in my chair until it hit me – I don’t have to be here! Just like the previous Thursday night when I arrived, I went back to my room, sat in a warm bed and ran images with the scope outside. Friday night, I didn’t even bother, just packed up the last of my stuff and went back to the room. I have truly crossed over, and understand the unavoidable lure of imaging. I still enjoy using the big scope visually, but when it’s cold or windy or hot or still or dark, I may be inside running plans now.

> When I want to run away, I drive off in my car
> But whichever way I go
> I come back to the place you are –
> *“In Your Eyes”* Peter Gabriel

This doesn’t mean I won’t still be going to Okie-Tex every year. But it does give me more time and energy to just enjoy the beautiful skies there, the people, the talks, and the whole experience.

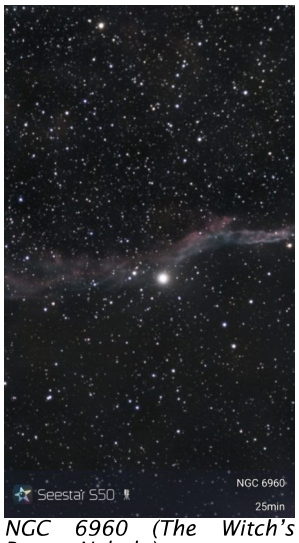
A few images from my trip:



Barnard's E



NGC 7635 (Bubble Nebula)



NGC 6960 (The Witch’s Broom Nebula)



IC 5146 (Caldwell 19, The Cocoon Nebula)



NGC 6992 (The Eastern Veil Nebula)