

VIC MENARD - Bradenton, Florida

“The following list is a result of too many nights racing through Messier marathons, wandering through the Herschel 400, scanning the southern horizon for unexpected treasures, star-hopping for invisible faint fuzzies, and finally, finding myself at the helm of a 22-inch Go-To telescope, not knowing what to look for next! You’ll no doubt recognize many of the objects I’ve included. Many are the finest, most visited, destinations in the night sky. Some are the best in their class, although they may still seem a challenge with apertures under 20 inches. A few will make you yearn for your old 3-inch refractor, or dark skies from your earliest deep sky memories.”

These are the words of astro-observer extraordinaire Vic Menard in the Summer 2001 edition of “Amateur Astronomy” magazine referring to his list of 400 favorite deep-sky objects. Vic is considered by many to be one of the best deep-sky visual observers and gets my vote as the #1 most knowledgeable tour guide of the night sky. It is no accident that Vic and his wife Lynne are prominently displayed at the beginning of a chapter named “Finding Your Way Around the Sky” in the book The Backyard Astronomer’s Guide by veterans Dickinson and Dyer. Vic has written a book of his own, namely the fifth edition New Perspectives on Newtonian Collimation. This book is the most comprehensive text ever written on Newtonian collimation and is based on his classic Newtonian reference manual originally produced in conjunction with collimation czar Tippy D’Auria.

Vic’s beginnings can be traced back to 1983 when he, with Dennis Plews, founded The Local Group of Deep Sky Observers. This group was an experiment conceived with the concept of an astronomy club without officers, without by-laws, and with no agenda other than to enjoy the deep sky. It worked. The group continues today to provide a venue for amateur astronomers to “commit astronomy”.

We are honored to have Vic Menard share his knowledge of Newtonian collimation techniques and commit astronomy at the 2009 Nova Sedis CSPG Star Party.