



Heading South - Suffern, New York...

NEAF 2011 was a bit different for our Maine group this year. With our friend George Whitney, a NEAF regular for many years now working for [Astro-Physics](#), perhaps the finest business of its type in the known universe, and no longer living in Maine, and Rob Burgess driving south for only Saturday at the event, I ended up traveling with two others from our astronomy club, Southern Maine Astronomers. However, these two were the right two I might add – Ron Thompson, an avid solar observer and Forrest Sumner, our club President - we had a fun journey to Suffern and a great weekend at the event...

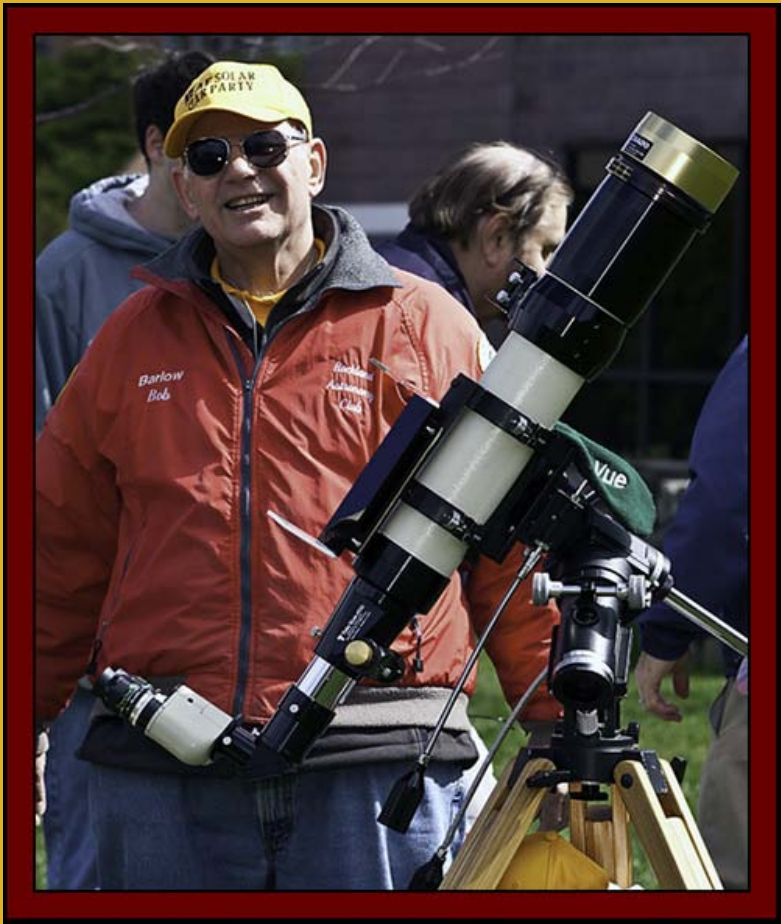
The NEAF Solar Star Party...

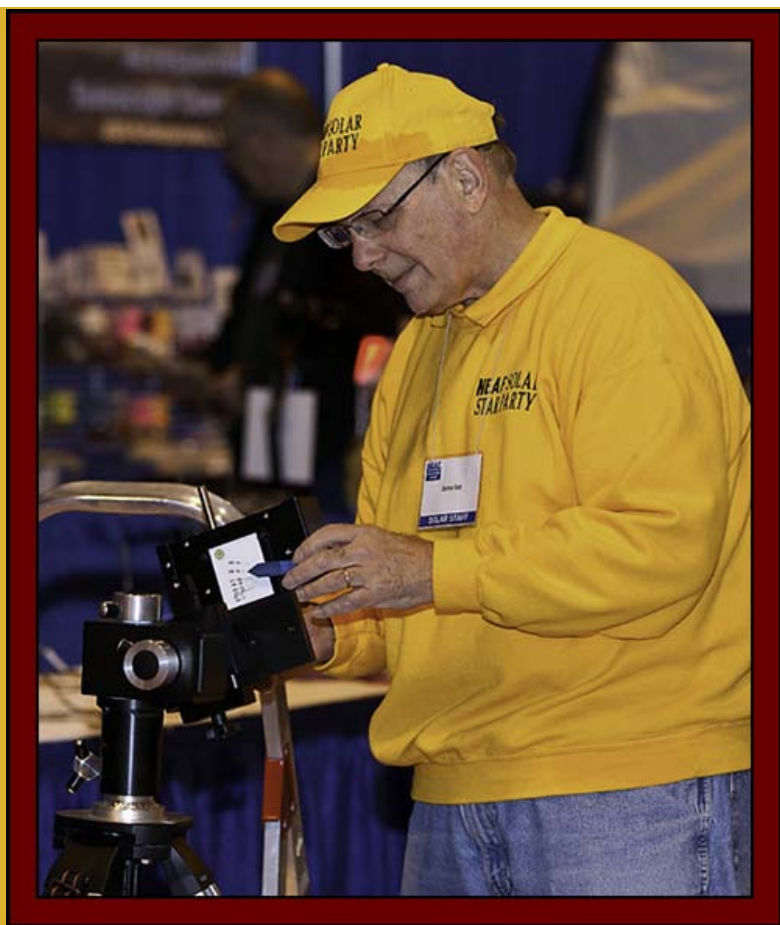
Just like the 20th year of the Northeast Astronomy Forum and Telescope Show (NEAF) main display at Rockland Community College, the NEAF Solar Star Party (NSSP) crew, aptly organized by Barlow Bob, attended the event fully equipped and ready to wow the crowds with views and information about our sun...

According to Barlow Bob's remembrances, in 1991 at the first, low-key NEAF event, he asked Al Nagler of [Tele Vue Optics](#) about demonstrating their new Solaris dedicated solar telescope with a DayStar H-alpha solar filter in the courtyard next to the atrium entrance. Al generously agreed and equipped Barlow Bob accordingly... Barlow remained outside providing solar views of our star all day and the NEAF Solar Star Party was inceptioned. Since that time it has become a significant event unto itself, bringing solar observers worldwide to the Suffern, New York event, along with some of the finest 'amateur' imagers of our sun to be found anywhere... Barlow Bob has been instrumental in NSSP all this time and much to his credit is responsible for generating a great deal of interest in his pursuit of observing our star. Much of my involvement with NEAF commenced from my long association with Barlow Bob from various star parties we've attended over the years.

Our group of three, all members of the solar star party team, worked with Barlow and associates to support this effort.

Mr. Barlow Bob...





Saturday, April 16th – An Indoor Solar Party...

We'd been monitoring the weather forecast all week leading up to the event. And it wasn't auspicious... However, it was correct – heavy rain starting during the day and into the evening followed by partial clearing. It wasn't raining first thing Saturday when the event opened but the sky was completely overcast. It didn't take long for the solar crew to recognize today would be an indoor event and they set up accordingly. The [Rockland Astronomy Club](#) organizers had provided two of the smaller booths next to each other and a display of equipment and literature was quickly placed around the tables. There would somebody at the booth all day working in shifts discussing equipment and solar topics, plus it served as our 'base of operations' for my camera gear and all the other equipment related to the solar effort. It also provided a much needed respite to take a seat from time to time during the event.

Greeting Attendees at the Booth - NSSP 2011...



Interior Solar Set-up...





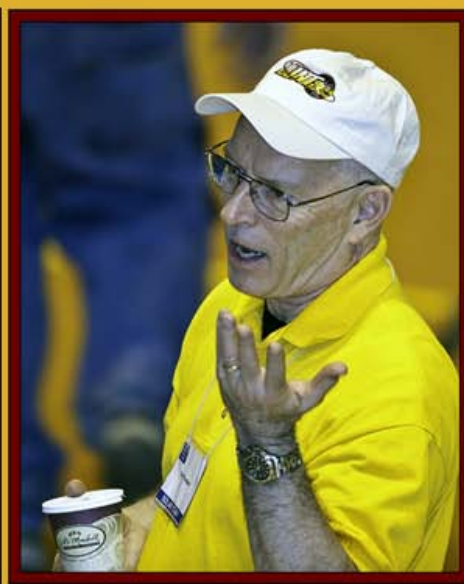
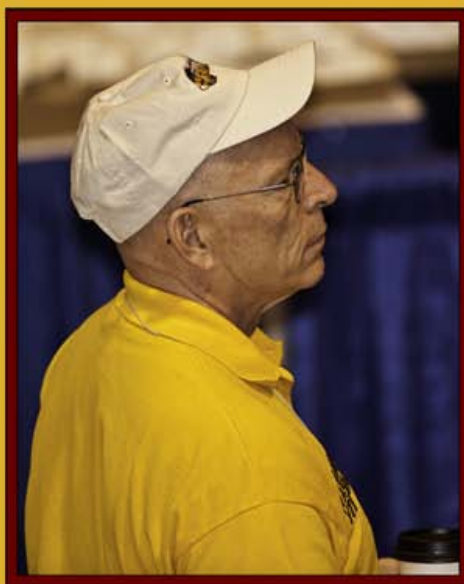
One fellow I was quite pleased to see again this year was Stephen Ramsden of the [Charlie Bates Solar Astronomy Project](#) based out of Atlanta. I didn't know Stephen from star parties in distant states but had learned at NEAF previously he is an enthusiastic solar educator and I remained impressed with his energy and how he went out of his way to engage children of all ages... I tried to speak with him multiple times during the day but he appeared to be quite busy each time I approached his booth. Not wishing to interrupt him, I simply kept moving on. Stephen's booth was on the opposite wall of the floor from the balance of the NSSP crew, about as far away as one could get, but Stephen was an instrumental part of the solar effort indoors or out. This year he had his van inside on the floor. I'll think you'll agree it makes an outstanding advertisement as viewed at left...

Charlie Bates Solar Astronomy Project Van





Working the Booth and Walking the Floor on a Rainy Day...



The Twentieth Anniversary of NEAF brought in record numbers of people in attendance... It was a hectic, crazy and fun day that flew by. Soon enough the exhibits were closing and the equipment was corralled for the evening as we went our separate ways in preparation for tomorrow...

***John Raymond, Richmond,
Virginia - Talking about His
Astro-Physics Telescope Set up
for Solar Viewing - NSSP 2011...***







There were other exhibits at NEAF 2011 dealing with solar issues of course, perhaps several not listed in this account. At left is a photograph of the image display of Alan Friedman and Greg Piepol. Even at this scale it's easy to ascertain the quality of the work



these imagers are producing...

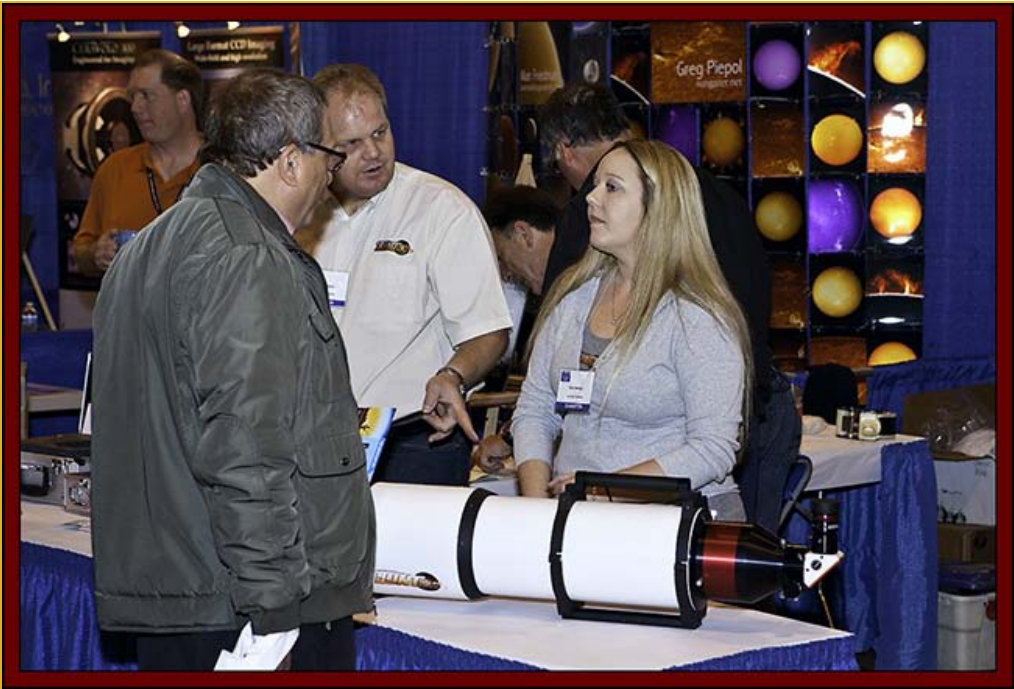
Image Display by Alan Friedman and Greg Piepol...



All the solar crew was excited about getting over to visit the Lunt Solar Systems booth...

Ron had carried along his solar telescope to have the blocking filter checked – he wasted little time in dropping it off as he wished to bring it home Sunday. Having contacted Lunt Solar ahead of time, Brian transported a glass filter element to the event to make the repair on the spot – great service by any measure...

Rikki Hocking and Brian Stephens in the Lunt Solar Systems Booth...



And of course Daystar Filters, the regenerated version of one of the early solar firms in the industry.



Sunday, April 17th – And the Sun Shone Forth...

Although the exhibit floor didn't open until 1000 hours on Sunday, Ron, Forrest and I arrived at Rockland Community College before 0800.

This turned out to be fortuitous as we were able to walk the floor unimpeded and I photographed booths and equipment of interest employing a tripod, which would have been a bit problematic when the isles were inundated with people viewing the exhibits. I was bit weary from the drive Friday and long day yesterday. After dinner back at the hotel Saturday I spent several hours downloading the media cards, backing up the shoot data and combining the sequence shots taken Saturday in Photoshop. The point being to make certain at least one of the panoramic views would work for a large scale print for Alan Traino, Barlow Bob and the Rockland Astronomy Club. Although I thought what I had obtained would serve to satisfy this task, I knew I'd be back on the mezzanine today trying different focal lengths and lenses.

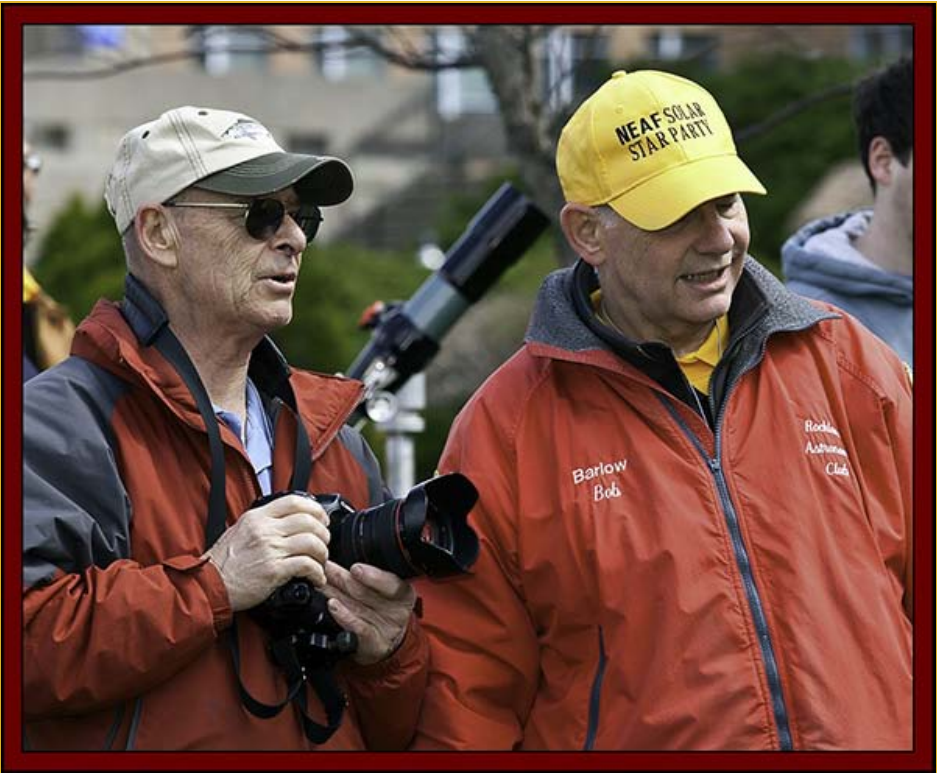


The solar group was pleased when they arrived at the site and found the sun could actually be observed this morning. Everyone starting preparing their equipment for relocation to the courtyard and soon enough the exterior solar star party was underway... Alan Traino indicated he was responsible for the sun returning in time for the Sunday observing session. This cannot be ascertained with certainty, but with what I've seen him orchestrating over the years I didn't doubt it...

Preparing Solar Telescopes in the Courtyard...

On Saturday Forrest had precluded much of his shopping and walking the exhibits choosing to stay with me to assist in moving the camera gear and aiding the photographic effort. I'm quite familiar with carrying two or more cameras and lugging around a heavy-duty tripod and long lens alone in the field when shooting for my [Bird Photography Index](#), landscapes or other nature shots, however Forrest's assistance was a far greater asset than I first suspected and it worked out well. I had him put away his pocket 'point and shoot' camera and set up a Canon 5d body and 24~105 f/4L lens for him, along with providing some instruction for shooting in the terrible lighting the site offered. By Sunday morning he was prepared and ready to face any photographic challenge...

Forrest Sumner and Barlow Bob on the Solar Field...



Ron had presented a talk on 'Safe Solar Viewing' yesterday, an important issue for those wishing to observe our star, as well as spending time working in the solar booth. He'd done a version of the same presentation last year to ensure people would understand safety issues involved in viewing the Sun, along with an explanation of what they would or could observe through a solar telescope. The staff must have appreciated his talk as they wished him to do it again this year and plan to schedule him for 2012. Today he was planning to do this presentation again at noon, so at times he was with us or on the solar field aiding the effort. I would have given him a camera as well, but Forrest, our club president, said no...

Ron Thompson Presenting...

On the Solar Observing Field...









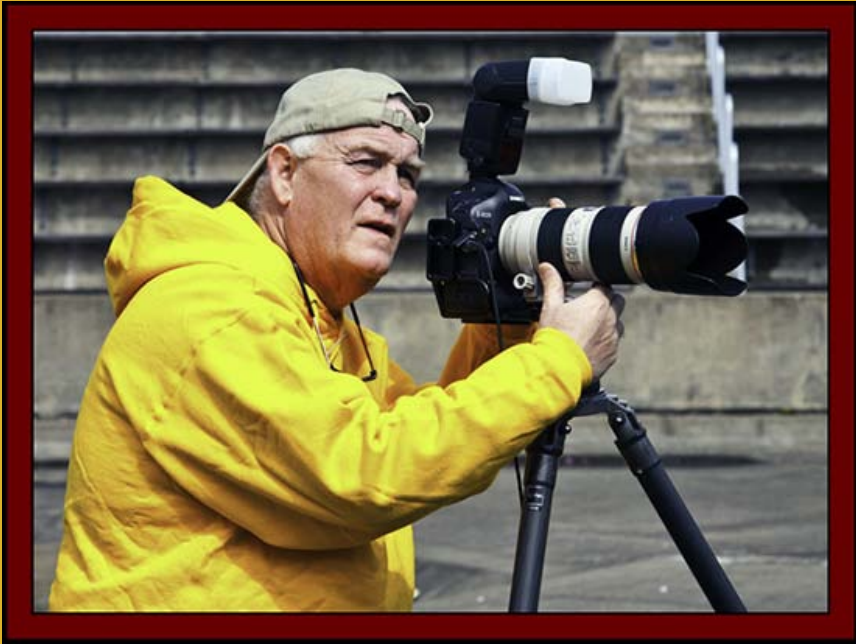
Much like star parties, NEAF is an opportunity to see friends and acquaintances from over the years involved with astronomy endeavors. Most of these people I only see once a year nowadays at this event; my schedule these days doesn't permit much travel with my telescopes and imaging systems for extended periods. One fellow I was quite pleased to see this year was Ralph Marantino, aka the Grand Pooh-Bah. We first met years ago at the RAC Sumer Star Party, held in Massachusetts, and I'm always pleased to get caught up when we meet...

Ralph Marantino - NSSP 2011...





Barlow Bob had graciously provided me with some new solar star party 'day and evening wear' this year. One article included a hooded sweatshirt in the now famous solar yellow. Actually I was pleased to have this on today. Outside it was a bit chilly and blustery as the storm front moved out and the ground was soaked from the rain – not much getting low or on the ground for photography today. This sweatshirt was perfect for these conditions and I could tell many of the public attendees weren't all that comfortable with the conditions. But the sun was being observed in many instruments, which made it a good day. Barlow also gave me a solar golf shirt and new hat. When he handed over the hat, he indicated his clothing guy in Hooterville had made a mistake on the text. The new batch had the first vertical strike in the letter N of NEAF missing; it read 'VEAF Solar Star Party'. Wow – that's different I thought... I indicated to Barlow Bob this would be a treasure – just like a miss-struck coin from the national mint – someday it may just be considered priceless...



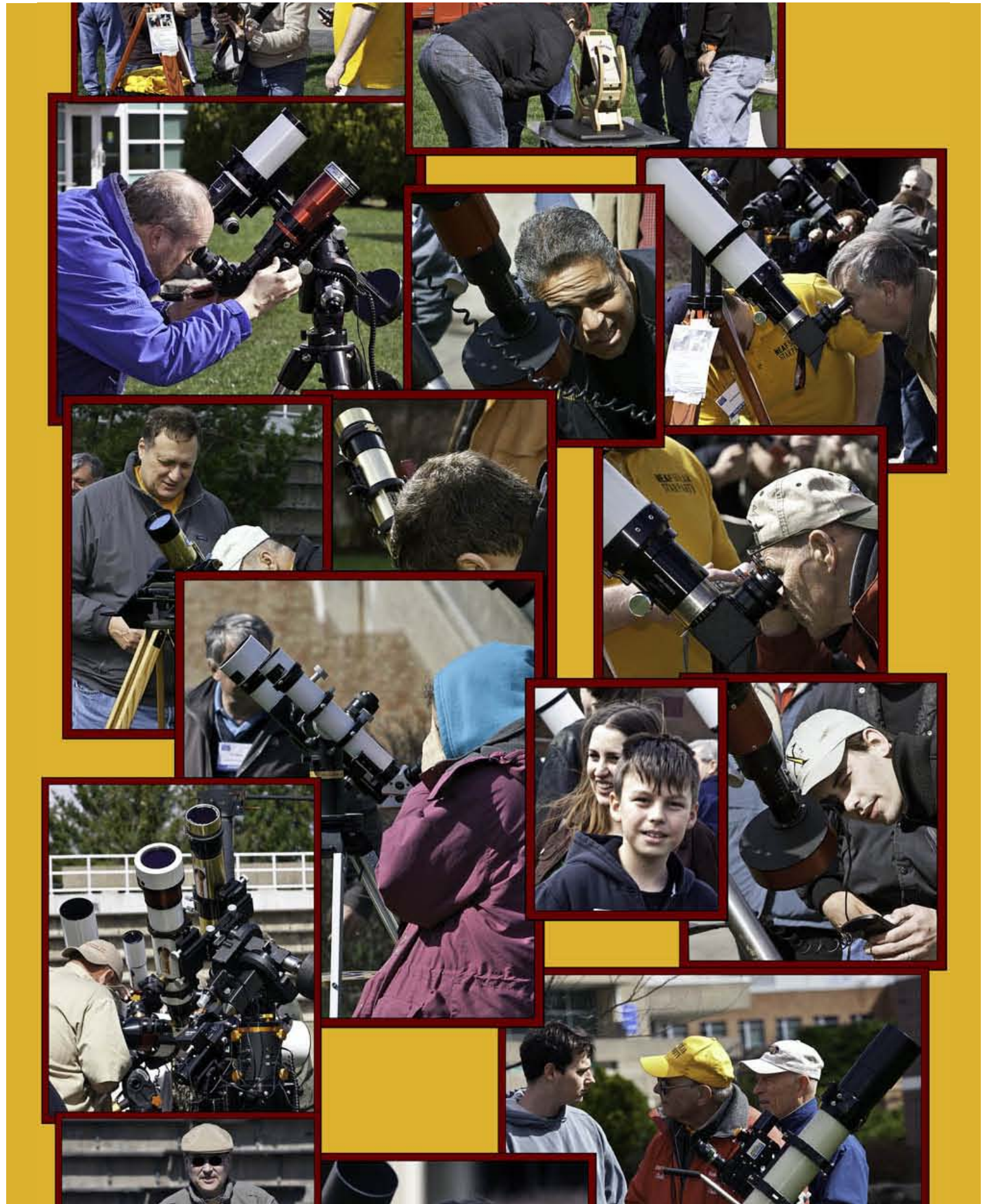
Kirk Rogers with Camera on the Solar Field...

John traveled north from Richmond with his solar mascots and today they were on the observing field. While walking around the scopes I viewed the pair and decided it was time for their NSSP close-up. The end result can be viewed below...



NSSP 2011...







People of NSSP 2011...





There is little doubt that having the sun available to view on Sunday made the solar star party work this year. The 20th NEAF anniversary overall was a rousing success and the NEAF Solar Star party followed suite. Interest in the event was significant and the attendance was record breaking by count.

Attending and documenting the event was a pleasure for me and as always, I was pleased to have made the trip. This humble account is dedicated to Barlow Bob – solar observer extraordinaire. It's been a long and

fortuitous twenty years Mr. Barlow... In that time you've done much to promote solar observing – so much so in fact that Barlow Bob has become a household name in East Coast astronomy and beyond. Now let us see what you have planned for the next twenty...

***Kiro and Barlow Bob -
NEAF Solar Star Party...***



***Kiro
April 2011***

A note about the photography...All images in this account are by the author. Any images viewed that are digitally framed and labeled have been added to my collection of works for sale. These are displayed when at shows and events either packaged on foam core, professionally framed or ArtiPlaq™ mounted as a final for purchase. The web versions are nice, but a full resolution print significantly enhances the beauty of these images; all are ©2011 Photography by Kirk M. Rogers - any reproduction, publication or transmission of this content without the written consent of the author is prohibited. Please contact me should you have an interest in obtaining any of the images.

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