

Telescope review 1 – The Questar

I really can't say much about this telescope. Most of my memories of that night were trying to look again and again at the orange-red dot that was centered in the telescopes field of view. I was 5 or 6 years old. My sisters were bigger than me at that time. Why bring this up now, since it won't be of any use for those looking to buy a telescope? The answer is simple. This is the scope that focused my attention on all things in the night sky.

For the record, I did find out (when I was much older) that this was a 3.5 inch Questar scope. It was a production test scope with a brand new mirror material (called "Cervit"). My father worked for O-I in the 60's as part of the quality control of various telescope mirrors made with "Cervit". The Questar company was looking into the possibility of using this material for their scopes. Questar telescopes have a history of being a "Quality Scope", so I was probably looking through a good one. I will have to check the histories to see if Questar ever put the Cervit mirrors into production. I know that they now use a different zero-expansion material. Might be fun trying to find one.

On to the review, from the memories of a 49 year old trying to remember something at the age of 6.

I was frustrated (mad) that I didn't get to look through the scope as much as I wanted. I remember being told that if I didn't settle down, I wouldn't be able to look again. I think I sat as still as I ever did. I got to look a lot. My sisters then complained I was "hogging" it. I didn't care.

The color of whatever I was looking are still clear in my mind. After years of looking through other scopes the only

thing that comes close is Mars or one of the red stars of similar color. I can't remember if it was a disk or a dot, so that is of no help I just remember a bright red-orange object in the middle of the blackest background I ever saw. I just was drawn to that telescope. Unfortunately, my father took the scope back. I had to survive, my growing fascination with space, with any books or magazines I could find. At that time, it was hard to find them for my reading level.

I forced myself to learn to read better, because I wanted to understand all I could. I thought if I really applied myself, my dad would bring back the telescope, or maybe get another. That was never meant to be. Dad noticed I was interested in space, but never put a connection with that one night with a telescope. It was the middle of the space race, so the apparent assumption was that I was interested in rockets. Those were cool to, so I didn't complain.

Jump forward a few years... Just after my mother died, I took my dad to the Ritter Planetarium and Brooks Observatory at the University of Toledo. This was the closest mirror made with 'Cervit'. Yes, my dad was on the quality control team for that mirror. It was too cloudy to actually look through the scope that evening, but we did get to look at it. Dad was in center stage, explaining how the mirror was made, and all the problems they had casting "good" glass. I also explained that evening about how much I remembered the scope that one summer evening so long ago.

I was never able to get back out the the observatory when they had open view with the 'Cervit' scope when Dad was alive, but I did go again shortly after he died. Do you know the object we looked at was the planet Mars. It was red-orange in the middle of a deep black sky. Oh how the memories just came flooding back. A wonderful evening.

Later a review or two of scopes I actually use...