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ISSUE NO.51

JANUARY 2012

WWW.AAVSO.ORG

# AAVSO Newsletter



Celebrating  
100 years



1911–2011

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

**ARNE A. HENDEN (HQA)**



2011 is history! What an exciting year. The Centennial Celebration was of course the featured “act,” and I think everyone had fun at the party in October. There will be a wrap-up article about the Centennial on the web, in the *Annual Report* and even in this

newsletter, so I won't say much more about it now, except to say that September and October were really, really busy around here!

The end of the year at HQ would seem like it would be a quiet time, but that is never the case. Usually we start our fiscal year audit, which involves an external accounting firm that comes in and looks over our financial records. They request lots of information, from receipts to copies of grant proposals to contracts for health insurance. It causes a three-fold effort on behalf of the HQ staff, as we have to find the records for the auditor, make copies and corrections as requested, and then return the paperwork after they are finished. Linda, Lauren, and I are kept busy from our end, and Jane Caton (our contract bookkeeper) has extra work involved as well.

In addition to the audit, we have other administrative work. The health insurance contract is renewed on December 1, and we have to review options. The FSA accounts for the employees have to be re-filled by December

31. Our membership renewal period is now moved to a calendar year basis, and so we have to bug all of you to send in your dues.

November is also a busy month for Aaron, Matt, and myself. NSF has a November 15 deadline for most science proposals, which means we are busy writing grant applications and working with our co-investigators to produce the best possible proposals. There are other grant deadlines, such as for informal science education, that occur in December and January, so we continue writing throughout the whole period. Aaron, Matt, Mike Simonsen, and I also went to the AAS meeting in Austin in January, so had to prepare posters and oral talks for that.

The rest of the staff is just as busy. Rebecca wasn't able to make the Centennial meeting for family reasons, but had to prepare detailed instructions as to the meeting logistics. She also has grant duties, turning in quarterly science and financial reports for Citizen Sky, Matt's NASA and NSF grants, and now Aaron's Two Eyes, 3D grant. Elizabeth and Sara were working on most of the awards that were given out (and then had to be shipped to the people who did not attend the meeting). Elizabeth and Mike Saladyga have to work on the next *Journal* issue—the special 100th anniversary issue, create this newsletter, and work on the *Annual Report*. Lauren created a new on-line store with clothing merchandise, and has handled all of the mailings (such as the several-thousand-piece holiday mailing). Sara also helped me prepare the

*SINCE 1911...*

*The AAVSO is an international non-profit organization of variable star observers whose mission is: to observe and analyze variable stars; to collect and archive observations for worldwide access; and to forge strong collaborations and mentoring between amateurs and professionals that promote both scientific research and education on variable sources.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**MARIO MOTTA, M.D. (MMX)**



In this my first newsletter as president, I wish to thank the council and members of the AAVSO for entrusting me to become the 49th president of the AAVSO. I am truly humbled to be in a position of leadership in an organization I have admired all of my life. I pledge to do whatever I can to improve and support the AAVSO over my two years in office, and I look forward to working with the membership. For those who attended our fabulous 100th year anniversary meeting this past October, we were in fact treated to numerous reminders of the faith and dedication of our many members over the past 100 years who got us through many difficult moments in our history and who brought the AAVSO to the level of success we now enjoy. I am honored to be the first president of the second century, and look forward to even greater AAVSO success in the future.

I especially want to thank all our member observers who contribute of their time and energy

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE CONTINUED...

next APASS data release. Will has been really busy adding features to the website. Doc is always busy keeping our computer systems running smoothly. And of course, Mike Simonsen has all of the year-end donation and reporting tasks to handle.

Being busy doesn't mean that we can't enjoy the holidays. I particularly liked following the CTIO all-sky camera images in December, seeing Comet Lovejoy in all of its glory before it faded. Many people send us a kind note in response to receiving the holiday card, and we pass those notes around

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED...

to make the AAVSO the success it is. We start off our second century with 21 million observations in our data banks. As many who follow the rate of increasing observations per year can attest, our rate of growth is phenomenal. This is partially attributable to the great dedication of our observers, but also to the continued ability of the AAVSO to grow and evolve to meet the new challenges and opportunities that present themselves through the years. Back in 1911, observations were placed on scraps of paper, and entered into log books. Certainly many changes had to occur through the years to allow us

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so that everyone can read about what is happening in our members'/observers' lives. The Christmas Party was fun and the weather was great—while not a white Christmas this year, we had warm, sunny days instead—a fair trade, if you ask me!

2012 looks almost as exciting to me as 2011. We have a joint meeting coming up with the Society for Astronomical Sciences (SAS) in May, just a couple of days after the annular solar eclipse that goes through the American Southwest. Then the AAS is holding its summer meeting in Anchorage, a few days after the transit of Venus (that will be visible in its entirety in Alaska). We have

to record and store 21,000,000 observations. If we did not evolve, our organization would've become obsolete many years ago. Instead we have grown, adapted with the times, and in the process developed a valuable store house of data prized by researchers the world over.

Going forward, we need to keep in mind the prior history of how we became who we are, that of a dynamic evolving organization that keeps pace with the needs of the astronomical community. It is only by continuing in this proud tradition of growth and evolution can we insure that the AAVSO organization of our descendents at our 200th anniversary will still enjoy the same respect and collegial cooperation with the professional research brethren that we have now.

It seems that every year since the CCD chip first became available to AAVSO members in the 1990s, we have a recurring discussion over whether visual observations will continue to have value, and that occurred this past year on several discussion formats. I say to all members as loudly and clearly as I can, that we have need of all observations of all types at all times. All observations are valued. All observers and members are valued. Cultivating observers and collecting observations is the essence of what we do. I urge all not to fear change or further evolution of the AAVSO, but rather to embrace the change that will inevitably come. As should be clear to all, in this day and age, we simply cannot do things as they were done back in 1911. The astronomical observational needs will slowly change. There are large surveys that will be undertaken that will do much of the long-term routine data collection of slowly evolving and long term variable stars. If you are a long-term red giant observer, you should not fear this. To quote the late famous astronomer Carl Sagan, "there are billions and billions out there." Modern astronomical research will need large statistical samples for further growth in

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proposed a third workshop for Citizen Sky that we hope will be accepted, and are planning a CCD School in July. New visual observing campaigns will be announced shortly, and new telescopes will come on-line for AAVSONet. We're hoping to get several students here in the summer to help on staff projects. Mike Simonsen is chairing a first-ever AAVSO Star Party event at the Winter Star Party in Florida. The Sun keeps getting more spotted every day. We're living in a golden era, and I hope it continues for a long time to come! ★

*Ed. note: the Spanish language version of Arne's message can be found on page 17.*

## THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF VARIABLE STAR OBSERVERS

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### NEWSLETTER

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DEVELOPMENT	Mike Simonsen

The *AAVSO Newsletter* is published in January, April, July, and October. Items of general interest to be considered for the *Newsletter* should be sent to [cowaagen@aavso.org](mailto:cowaagen@aavso.org). Photos in this issue courtesy of Carol Beaman, Sara Beck, John O'Neill, and A. Gonzalo Vargas B.

Membership in the AAVSO is open to anyone who is interested in variable stars and in contributing to the support of valuable research. Members include professional astronomers, amateur astronomers, researchers, educators, students, and those who love variable star astronomy.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED...

research and understanding of the universe. Rather than putting visual observers out of business, I predict the need for dedicated observers will significantly increase. The surveys will find many new variables, and discover new stars that are in need of more intensive observations. The surveys will note when something unusual is happening, and that will require urgent and intensive response by observers, both visual and CCD.

The needs of future researchers will require large surveys to discover more of the nature of our universe. Our core mission has always been to collect, catalog, and distribute useful data to observers and researchers worldwide. That will not change though the methods may. I envision a future where surveys do much of the grunt work of monitoring thousands of stars on a periodic basis. When an anomaly shows up during this monitoring, AAVSO staff or members

will note this anomaly, and will send out alerts to members to intensively monitor by any means a particular change or event. Thus I predict we will gradually—gradually, not rapidly—evolve from long-term monitoring to short-term rapid response teams and special events observers. The number of events that may need quick response may in fact become overwhelming. We very likely will have need for more observers that we have now to handle the volume of special observations. It is a big universe out there, and there are so few of us who have the interest, equipment, and skill to monitor it. The AAVSO will remain a vibrant organization and maintain a vital role in the astronomical research community, and will do so only by the continued strong and unrelenting efforts of its dedicated members. ★

*Ed. note: the Spanish language version of Mario's message can be found on page 17.*

## SPRING MEETING NOTICE

### 101ST SPRING MEETING OF THE AAVSO

The AAVSO will hold its 101st Spring Meeting in Big Bear, California, May 22–24, 2012. This meeting will be a joint one with the Society of Astronomical Sciences (SAS).

Workshops will be held on Tuesday, May 22 [topics: Small Telescope Spectroscopy (morning), Using VPhot (afternoon)], paper sessions will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, May 23 and 24, the AAVSO Membership Meeting will be held Thursday afternoon, and the closing banquet will be held Thursday evening. (The AAVSO Council Meeting will be held on Friday, May 25, 2012.)

Registration will be handled through the SAS website (<http://socastrosci.org/home.html>); SAS plans to have online registration available in early February.

As more information is available we will announce it on the AAVSO website (<http://www.aavso.org>) and link to the appropriate pages on the SAS website.

Please join us as we launch our second century!



### BY POPULAR DEMAND!

A set of twenty pdf commemorative posters exhibited at AAVSO Headquarters is available for downloading from our ftp site.

The posters show portraits of the AAVSO's Directors, Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, Council members, and Staff from 1911 to 2011, and the top Visual, CCD, PEP, and Photographic/Photovisual observers. For more information go to:

<http://www.aavso.org/aavso-100th-anniversary-commemorative-posters>

## THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!

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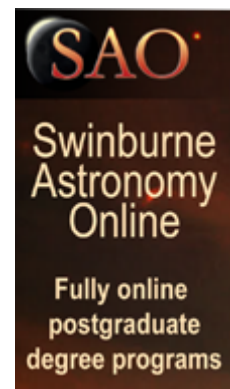
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## IN MEMORIAM

MEMBERS, OBSERVERS, COLLEAGUES,  
AND FRIENDS OF THE AAVSO



*John Sanford*

**JOHN SANFORD (SNN)**, AAVSO observer since 2000, died December 11, 2011, at the age of 72. John contributed 88 visual observations to the AAVSO International Database. John was by profession a professor of photography at Orange Coast College in California for over thirty years, and, interested in astronomy since viewing his first solar eclipse when he was eight, he was a successful professional photographer of astronomical images. It was John who made the re-entry video of the Columbia on 2003 February 1 as the space shuttle started to disintegrate that was used by NASA to help analyze the failure. John was a U.S. Army veteran, serving in the Vietnam War as an Army photographer. An avid amateur astronomer, he was a member and past president of the Orange County Astronomers in southern California. Extensively involved in mentoring and public outreach, he was the recipient of the G. Bruce Blair medal from the Western Amateur Astronomers for his contributions to amateur astronomy as astrophotographer, teacher, and author, and of the Clifford W. Holmes award from the Riverside Telescope Makers Conference for making a major contribution to popularizing astronomy. His books include *Observing the Constellations: an A to Z Guide for the Amateur Astronomer*. A true lover of the heavens, his license plate read SKYGZR.



*Yuri Sergeevich Efimov*

**YURI SERGEEVICH EFIMOV**, astrophysicist and variable star astronomer, died October 21, 2011, at the age of 76. On the staff/faculty of the Crimean Astrophysical Observatory and Stanford University, his areas of research included magnetic and non-magnetic cataclysmic variables, Mira variables, T Tauri stars, and active galactic nuclei. He was an award-winning pioneer in the development of polarimetry in astrophysics. He was a member of the International Astronomical Union Division IX (Optical and Infrared Techniques) and of Division IX Commission 25 (Stellar Photometry and Polarimetry). Minor planet (8781) *Yurka* was named in honor of Yuri Efimov (*Yurka* is a nickname for Yuri). He was also a respected poet.

## TALKING ABOUT THE AAVSO

### ELIZABETH O. WAAGEN (WEO) AAVSO HQ

**Events**—AAVSO members, observers, and friends have given or are giving presentations about the AAVSO at the following venues:

September 22, 2011—**Horace Smith** (SHA, East Lansing, Michigan) gave a talk at Abrams Planetarium on the Michigan State University campus about the two summer supernovae in M51 and M101, highlighting AAVSO observations of the stars and the centennial of the organization.

November 2, 2011—**Chuck Pullen** (PCH, Wilton, California) gave a talk on the origin and facts related to the 2012 Mayan “Prediction” of the End of the World. He says, “Not particularly related to Variable Stars (except for Betelgeuse going SNe or a wandering black hole consuming the Solar System), but very related to how the Science of Astronomy (and Archeology) actually work and can be perverted by the unscrupulous to sell books and get people to watch cable TV ‘documentaries.’ The host was the Lincoln Hills Astronomy Society, Lincoln, California. This talk was done under the community outreach program of the Sierra College Astronomy Department, Rocklin, California.” *Ed. note: not directly about the AAVSO, but an important issue for public education.*

December 6, 2011—**Roger Kolman** (KRS, Glen Ellyn, Illinois) of Harper College gave a talk to the Naperville Astronomical Association in Naperville, Illinois, entitled “The Case for Visual Observations of Variable Stars.” Roger reports it was well received and well attended (there were over fifty in attendance).

February 10, 2012—**Roger Kolman** (KRS, Glen Ellyn, Illinois) will be giving a talk (similar to his December one) to the Northwest Suburban Amateurs in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. The meeting is open to the public and will begin at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 10 at Willow Recreation Center, 3600 Lexington Drive, Hoffman Estates.

Thank you, speakers!

Let us help you spread the word! Send us information about your event (upcoming or past) for inclusion in the April 2012 *AAVSO Newsletter* (submission deadline March 15). Many thanks for your education and outreach efforts on behalf of the AAVSO and variable star observing! ★

## DORRIT'S DOGS ET AL.

If you've read Dorrit Hoffleit's autobiography, *Misfortunes as Blessings in Disguise*, you'll know that Dorrit was very fond of dogs. Among the books she left at AAVSO Headquarters during a September 2001 visit are several pertaining to her favorite non-astronomical subject, DOGS! The books appear to be gifts Dorrit received over the years. Anyone who is interested may have one, some, or all of these books for the cost of postage. There may be collector's items among them—*first come, first served!*

*Meet Fred Basset*, by "Graham" (paperback, 1969)

*Red Dog*, by Louis de Bernieres (hardcover, 2001)

scrapbook of Fred Bassett comic strip clippings (28 pp., circa 1960s, 1970s)

*Millie's Book*, as dictated to Barbara Bush (hardcover, 1990)

*C. Fred's Story: a Dog's Life*, by C. Fred Bush, edited slightly by Barbara Bush (hardcover, 1984)

A few non-dog items from Dorrit are also available for the cost of postage:

*Wittgenstein's Vienna*, by A. Janik and S. Toulmin (paperback, 1973)

Collection of miscellaneous European museum-art and tourist postcards (19 cards, all but 1 are black and white)

Collection of miscellaneous astronomical post cards, mostly from Lick Observatory (9 cards, black and white) ★

## VARIABLES CAN KEEP YOU UP AT NIGHT, FOR SURE

Chris Stephan (SET) lives in Florida, where the nights may be warm but the bugs are plentiful. He sends the following:

*"I really don't believe it was telescoping that put a bad taste in my mouth the other night. However, the bad taste was powerful. I had an open soda can half full sitting on the work bench in the observatory. I went in and took a swig, and instantly gagged. Yet the taste was familiar to a scent I have smelled many times here in Florida. I instantly thought, "Oh No!". The scent I refer to is when one steps on and squishes a big roach. Sure enough, I pored out the rest and heard the sound*

*like a coin jingling in the can. I tapped it several times on the floor, and out comes a 1-1/2-inch long roach. I about lost it. Yes I stepped on the roach. I had to go up to the house and have Liz get the antiseptic mouth wash for me to gargle.*

*"All of that without missing an observation. What a night!!!"*

*Ed. note: We don't usually advertise, but Plastic Soda Can Caps from Jokari (find them on the internet) have a built-in screen over the opening. Sounds tasty to us.... ★*

## AAVSO VISUAL OBSERVING MANUAL

*The AAVSO Manual for Visual Observing of Variable Stars* (ISBN 1-878174-66-5) is a comprehensive guide to variable star observing. Included is information and tips on how to make variable star observations and report them to the AAVSO. The *Manual* is available online in .pdf format.

In an effort to make the *Manual* more useful to our members and observers world-wide, we have undertaken a project to translate it into different languages. Thanks to the assistance of

several ambitious and hard-working volunteers in various countries, coordinated by AAVSO staffer Sara Beck, we now offer translations of the *Manual* in the following languages: Chinese, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish. German and Persian translations are in progress, and a draft version in Russian is available.

For more information or to download the manual, go to:

<http://www.aavso.org/visual-observing-manual>



Dorrit and Wellington, Maria Mitchell Observatory, 1978 (photo by Sara Beck)

## THE AAVSO MENTOR PROGRAM

Since the earliest days of the AAVSO, experienced observers have helped new observers by corresponding, answering questions, and even providing personal guidance at the telescope.

If you would like to talk with an experienced variable star observer, contact the AAVSO and we will put you in contact with the mentor program coordinator, Mike Simonsen. Just send us an email ([mentor@aavso.org](mailto:mentor@aavso.org)), or call 617-354-0484 to let us know you are interested in this program.

Ideally, Mike will be able to provide you with names, addresses, and phone numbers of active AAVSO observers near you. If there are none located in your area, he can at least provide you with more distant contacts. A simple phone chat with an experienced observer may provide all the feedback you need to continue progressing as an AAVSO observer.

Visit the AAVSO mentor program webpage:

<http://www.aavso.org/mentor-program>

## THE AAVSO WALTER A. FEIBELMAN SUITE

The Feibelman Suite is available to guests who are in the Boston/Cambridge area to perform an AAVSO-related task, that is, the purpose of their visit is to do something for or related to the AAVSO. For details about the suite or making a reservation, please visit <http://www.aavso.org/walter-feibelman-guest-suite>.





Celebrating  
100 years  
1911–2011

## A LOOK BACK AT THE AAVSO'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING

ELIZABETH O. WAAGEN AND REBECCA TURNER, AAVSO HQ

The AAVSO Centennial meetings (spring and annual) are history, and did we ever celebrate, celebrate, celebrate! In the last issue of the *AAVSO Newsletter* we talked about the very successful Spring meeting that was held in May jointly with the American Astronomical Society in Boston. In this issue we focus on the Centennial Annual meeting held October 4–8, 2011, in Cambridge and Woburn, Massachusetts. We include the meeting schedule, the lists of papers given at the Historical and Scientific sessions, the group photo and key, and reflections from some of the meeting organizers.

The AAVSO staff and volunteers—Sara Beck, Arne and Linda Henden, Richard (Doc) Kinne, Will McMain, Aaron Price, Lauren Rosenbaum, Mike Saladyga, Mike Simonsen, Matthew Templeton, Rebecca Turner, and Elizabeth Waagen, and member volunteer John O'Neill—have always worked as a true team; it's one of the things that make the AAVSO so special, and the work done for this meeting was no exception—except that the amount of work was exceptional! Many, many hours went into the preparations, examples of which include: finishing interior and exterior HQ remodeling and construction (that may sound straightforward but it was very complex with thousands of details and stretched over years); research for and creation of all the historical posters and photographs; finding/assembling/filling the display case for the Hoffleit Conference Center; determining and making awards; figuring out the logistics of a land/water tour of Boston followed by a lobsterfest at a Boston restaurant when the meeting attendees were staying at a hotel in Woburn (thirteen miles from Boston and no way to get the two school buses of AAVSOers back and forth that didn't involve extremely heavy commuter traffic); working out who would be presenters in the historical sessions and which scientific papers would be given in which sessions and who would be the session chairs; how the dedication of the new HQ and Hoffleit Conference Center would happen (who would do what and say what when and where and how would everyone get there and would everyone fit into the space and what would everyone eat and drink and where would the photo be taken and would there be enough ice cream and birthday cake (hooray for Erma's fabulous cakes!) and what about the time capsule); deciding how to distribute copies of Dorrit Hoffleit's autobiography (*Misfortunes as Blessings in Disguise*) and Clint Ford's memoirs (*Some Stars, Some Music*) and sell Centennial fundraiser T-shirts; determining and providing all the audio/visual/internet/website needs and resources for such a complex meeting taking place in different venues as well as indoors, outdoors, and remotely; tracking down former officers/councilors/staff/volunteers and orchestrating the Leadership Banquet; orchestrating the Closing Banquet; lining up speakers; choreographing the group photo and the special photo sessions; planning the readings from and signings by Tom Williams and Mike Saladyga of their book *Advancing Variable Star Astronomy: The Centennial History of the American Association of Variable Star Observers*; deciding which caterer was going to service which event and what would the menus be; and, oh yes, there was the Council meeting to plan for, and at least a zillion other things. Whew!

We at Headquarters and everyone who helped make the meeting a real success—which, by all accounts, it was—are proud of our accomplishment, grateful to all our helpers and benefactors and sponsors, delighted for



Dessert at the Leadership Banquet

those of you who were able to celebrate with us in person or remotely, and satisfied in how we marked the AAVSO's first century and launched the Association on its second.

The AAVSO's Meeting Coordinator, Rebecca Turner, had a very unusual Centennial meeting experience. While putting in countless hours planning the myriad aspects of the meeting and looking forward enormously to the meeting itself, she realized that she herself might not be able to attend, as her sister, Sarah (who is a former AAVSO Headquarters Administrative Assistant), in Atlanta was due to have her first child at the same time of the meeting, and Rebecca was a key member of the "baby team"....

### Reflections from Rebecca

As the AAVSO meeting coordinator, I have been involved in the planning of dozens of AAVSO spring and annual (fall) meetings. Preparations for the 100th Annual Meeting stood out in many ways. Not only was this a big anniversary and a longer, more complex meeting than usual—just look at the schedule included in this newsletter—this year many more people were involved in putting this event together. Mike Simonsen planned the Leadership Banquet program and the AAVSO HQ building dedication. Tom Williams planned the history sessions. The AAVSO Staff stepped up the plate to help plan and execute this celebration, which had more sessions, more bus rides, more dinners, more caterers, more preparations at HQ, and many more details than a typical Annual Meeting.

I certainly experienced this year's annual meeting quite differently from other AAVSO meetings. For the first few days I participated remotely. (I left Boston for Atlanta the day before the meeting started in order to be a part of the birth of my first niece.) There were emails and numerous cell phone calls as the AAVSO Staff expertly carried out the meeting plans. [Ed note: Sara Beck took overall charge in Rebecca's stead, and Rebecca had left a wonderfully detailed set of instructions for each event and each staff person standing in for her or working it.] There were some remote troubleshooting sessions related to a Woburn-wide power outage, an AWOL field trip bus driver, and massive traffic jams in Boston as the ice hockey team Bruins brought the recently-won Stanley Cup to Boston Garden at the same time our duckboat tour of Boston and lobsterfest were scheduled to take place. I attended the sections of the meeting being broadcast on the web and wished that I were there in person.

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Celebrating  
100 years  
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# 100th Annual Meeting Highlights... **FEATURE**

## **A LOOK BACK CONTINUED...**

It was hard to be so far away from all of the action! I even started to wonder if I had made the right choice to leave when I did—babies arrive when they're good and ready and it was possible that this one was going to wait until the AAVSO Centennial Celebration was over. Should I have stayed in Boston? Then, about halfway through the Thursday night lobsterfest my little niece decided that she wanted to celebrate the AAVSO centennial, too. Lily was born Friday afternoon just a few minutes into Paula Szkody's talk on "28 Years of CV Results with the AAVSO." I guess Lily is a fan of CVs! I am so grateful that I was able to be present for my family at such a special time—especially since I knew that the AAVSO meeting was in very capable hands with the rest of the AAVSO Staff.

Such a special anniversary certainly made me stop and reflect on my own history with the AAVSO. My sixteen-and-a-half years with the organization are barely a blip in the hundred-year-long history of the AAVSO, but represent a very big part of my adult life. The AAVSO was my first job fresh out of college and Janet Mattei, the Director at the time, was not only my boss and my friend but also a kind of "work mother" up here in the Northeast where people "pahked their cahs," drove in rotaries (or "circles of death" as my Mom calls them), and shoveled snow. (I had lived my whole life in sunny, traffic-circle-free Atlanta, Georgia.) Both the organization and I have changed and grown quite a bit over the last sixteen years. Looking back can certainly be bittersweet—it is great to think about just how far we have come and sad to think of those we have moved on without. I know that many of the other staff and AAVSO members went through a similar reflection of their own histories with the AAVSO—many of those histories much, much longer than mine. In addition to looking back I was also inspired to look forward to the next 16 or 100 years, to think about that set of people who will look back on what we are accomplishing in the same way that we look back now. How exciting to think of what the years to come may hold. I'm honored to know that I will have at least a small part in making it all happen. Let's get started! ★



History Session 3

## **Meeting Schedule for the 100th Annual Meeting of the AAVSO, Cambridge and Woburn, Massachusetts, October 4–8, 2011**

### **Tuesday, October 4**

8:00 a.m. Council Meeting at Headquarters

### **Wednesday, October 5**

8:30 a.m. registration  
9:00 **History Papers Session 1: Women in AAVSO History**  
10:30 coffee break  
11:00 **History Papers Session 2: Women in AAVSO History**  
12:30 p.m. lunch break  
2:00 **History Papers Session 3: History of Variable Star Organizations**  
3:30 coffee break  
4:00 **History Papers Session 4: History of Variable Star Organizations**  
6:30 **AAVSO Leadership Banquet at Headquarters**

### **Thursday, October 6**

10:00 a.m. **HQ building dedication and time capsule ceremonies**  
12:00 p.m. lunch break  
5:00 **Duck boat tour and clambake**

### **Friday, October 7**

8:00 a.m. breakfast provided  
8:30 registration  
9:00 **Membership meeting**  
11:00 coffee break  
11:30 **Book reading and signing; musical performance**  
12:00 p.m. lunch break  
1:30 **Paper Session 1**  
2:30 **Paper Session 2**  
7:00 **History Papers Session 5: Variable Star Observers**

### **Saturday, October 8**

8:00 a.m. breakfast provided  
8:30 registration  
9:00 **Paper Session 3**  
10:30 coffee break  
11:00 **Paper Session 4**  
12:30 p.m. lunch break  
2:00 **Paper Session 5**  
3:30 coffee break  
4:00 **Poster and picture session**  
6:30 cash bar  
7:00 **AAVSO Centennial Banquet**



Celebrating  
100 years  
1911–2011

## THE PAPER SESSIONS

### History Sessions



*Kristine Larsen*



*Michael Saladyga*



*Elizabeth Waagen*



*Tom Williams*



*John Toone*



*Josch Hamsch*



*Patrick Wils*



*Donn Starkey  
for Stan Walker*



*David Williams*



*Roger S. Kolman  
via cyberspace*



*Charles Scovil*

### Scientific and General Sessions



*Mario Motta*



*Seiichi Sakuma*



*Karen Meech*



*John Percy*



*Paula Szkody*



*Robert Hatch*



*Barry Beaman*



*Gerald Dyck*



*Jamie Riggs*



*Sebastian Otero*



*Chris Watson*



*Stephanie Slater*



*Jerry Horne*



*Horace Smith*



*Ed Guinan*



*Lee Anne Willson*



*Kevin Paxson*



*Ed Los*



*Arlo Landolt*

*See page 13 for listing of papers presented*

*Meeting photo not available:*

*Caroline Moore  
Rodney Howe*



## THE 2011 LEADERSHIP BANQUET

MIKE SIMONSEN (SXX)

The Leadership Banquet, held on Wednesday evening, October 5, 2011, was another once-in-a-lifetime event that took place during the fall centennial celebration. Invitations were sent out more than a year in advance to all the former and present councilors, officers, committee chairs, staff, and volunteers we could locate to attend a special banquet in their honor the first evening of the centennial celebration.

More than seventy-five people attended, making it a historical gathering unlike anything the AAVSO had done before. We had people who had served on the AAVSO council as far back as the 1950s in attendance. Some of these people hadn't seen each other in more than thirty-five years until this special night.

The evening started off with a brief introduction and then letters of regret from invitees who could not attend were read aloud. We heard words from Geoffrey Clayton, Msgr. Ron Royer, Roger Kolman, and Priscilla Benson.

Included with the invitations sent by mail was a return questionnaire to be filled out by the invitees asking them to recall any notable or humorous memories of their friends or associates and of their time in service to the AAVSO. There were a lot of good stories, but the thing that struck me most about them was the recurring theme. There was not one example of "My favorite memory was estimating R Leo for the very first time in 1956" or "The unexpected outburst of RS Ophiuchi" or "The outstanding paper on U Aquarii given at the 1999 meeting." Without exception, all of these fondest memories were about the people and the time they shared with each other as AAVSO members.

Here are some brief excerpts related specifically to the Directors these people served under:

*"I remember how Leon Campbell acted as the middle-man to bring me to Harvard College Observatory."* —Owen Gingerich

*"I can recall Sunday mornings at the Mayall home on Sparks Street."*  
—Arthur Pearlmutter

*"I remember the meeting in Nantucket when we had the end of a hurricane and Janet had to serve as Director before she actually became Director. I also remember the meeting at Woods Hole when Margaret Mayall encouraged me to play the guitar, and Charlie Federer had much to say about that!"* —Barbara Welther

*"Janet was fond of celebrations. I remember a staff Christmas party where, along with the obligatory egg nog, everyone was offered a generous splash of Bacardi!"*  
—Rich Strazdas

Ed. note: The holiday party was the only time of year alcohol was present at a function at Headquarters, the only exceptions to Janet's rule being very special occasions such as an engagement or new citizenship celebration.

*"Janet Mattei, as the then new Director, asserting her authority and imposing her will on some of the old heads who felt she could be reined in due to her inexperience. They didn't know Janet."* —Marv Baldwin

*"My favorite memory is of a dinner we shared with Janet at the Manchester IAU meeting, where Janet told us the story of her first massage at a spa. I won't go into the details, but it was VERY funny!"* —Paula Szkody

*"Watching Arne Henden give a photometry presentation at the 2009 Citizen Sky Meeting, and trying to explain to us why we should observe epsilon Aurigae and other bright variables on non-photometric nights with small, out of focus instruments!"*  
—Barry Beaman



Some of the AAVSO's top benefactors and past officers gathered for a photo at the leadership banquet. On the wall above them is part of the 100-year light curve of SS Cygni, and historical portraits of the AAVSO's observers and officers.

*"The Henden invited me to dinner one night in the Rosebrugh Residence. But Linda had to take one of the cats to the vet unexpectedly. Arne and I stayed behind, expecting Linda would be back sometime soon to make dinner. We started drinking, but Linda didn't come back...for a long time. We never ate dinner that night. We just got hammered! We came up with the solutions to all the world's problems and the mysteries of life that night, but neither of us can remember what they are."* —Mike Simonsen

*"I remember with great fondness the summer staff picnics at Mike and Janet Mattei's home, with Mike at the grill, Janet the happy and enthusiastically welcoming hostess, everyone helping to set up the sumptuous pot-luck feast, spouses and children and parents and the occasional dog all adding to the fun. After much relaxed conversation and lunch (and cleaning up the yard and kitchen), there was the tour of Mike's observatory to see the latest improvements (and maybe a visit to his amazing train room in the basement, too), enjoying Janet's gardens and the Matteis' beautiful home, watching the chipmunks scampering across the grass and diving into their holes, and finally reluctantly bidding farewell to head home. It was always a challenge to pick a date that fit everyone's schedules, and I recall one year we ended up having the 'summer' picnic in October, when it was extremely fall-like and just plain cold. Hot cider and warm sweaters and hats were the order of the day but we still had a great time!"* —Elizabeth Waagen

There were other stories of course, too many to recount here, but they were all enthusiastically received and in turn reminded people of more stories about people and events they hadn't thought about in a very long time.

After dinner we organized a picture-taking session, where we posed all the council members together by decades, and snapped once-in-a-lifetime shots of all the past presidents and officers as well as staff members and volunteers who had worked for the AAVSO since the Mattei era.

It was a fantastic evening, and a wonderful way for the AAVSO to give something back to the people who had served the AAVSO so well for so many years. All it cost the attendees was enduring a ten-minute fundraising speech by me at the end of the night, reminding them of how we got to where we are today, and how their contributions now and after they are gone will help to support the AAVSO for the next 100 years—a small price to pay for such a fine feast with friends. ★

Past council members Bob Wing, Paula Szkody, and Kristine Larsen were among the guests at the leadership banquet



## HEADQUARTERS RENOVATION AND DEDICATION CEREMONIES

MIKE SIMONSEN (SXX)

The weather couldn't have been any better for this historic day, October 6, 2011. By the time we got started with the first speeches and ribbon-cutting the Sun shone brightly in a nearly cloudless sky and it was warm enough for a light sweater or jacket. AAVSO Director Arne Henden began by welcoming the 100 or so attendees as he squinted into the bright sunlight, smiling from ear to ear. We'd been working on these plans for over two years now, and I think Arne felt the same way I did, greatly relieved that the day was finally here, we had a good crowd, and the weather was cooperating.

Former President David B. Williams had been invited to give a speech, since he was the acting president at the time we purchased 49 Bay State Road from Sky Publishing, so he and Arne were given the pleasure of unveiling the Clinton B. Ford Astronomical Research Center sign from the old headquarters in its new home on the wall near the front door.

Before they cut the ribbon draped across the entrance, each end supported by an AAVSO telescope on a German equatorial mount, Elizabeth Waagen explained to the crowd that the scissors we were about to use were also of some historical significance. They had been a fixture at headquarters for decades, and were in fact the same pair used to cut the old blueprint charts out of huge rolls from the printer, and had also been used to cut the ribbon in the ceremonial dedication of the Birch Street headquarters some twenty-five years ago.



*Ribbon-cutting with Arne Henden and David Williams*

We knew we couldn't squeeze everyone into the office and foyer for the next unveiling ceremonies, so we filed some of the crowd up the staircase, some of them were encouraged to go on through into the front inner office, anyone with a camera or video camera was encouraged to press into the foyer and stake out a spot to take pictures from, and the rest of the crowd remained just outside the front door, peering through the glass.

Arne, tucked into the alcove leading to the historical archives with Tom Williams, gave a brief speech remarking on the significant contributions from Tom and Anna Fay Williams in establishing a permanent home for the archival material owned by the AAVSO, and then unveiled the engraved brass plaque above the door officially naming the archives the Thomas R. and Anna Fay Williams Historical Archives.

I made my way to the closed double doors to the annex and gave a brief speech about the bequest Dorrit Hoffleit had made to the AAVSO



*HQ sign unveiled (above), and Tom and (left) Anna Fay Williams honored at the dedication of the AAVSO Archives in their name*



in her will and thanked her niece, Margaret Doleman, for assuring that her aunt's wishes were honored. With that, I unveiled the plaque recognizing the newly renovated E. Dorrit Hoffleit Conference Center. Everyone applauded, the doors were swung open, and we all filed into the well-decorated room for the next phase of our ceremonies.



*Guests in the newly dedicated Hoffleit Conference Center at AAVSO HQ. The portrait of Dorrit can be seen above right, just below part of the 100-year SS Cygni light curve.*

Immediately to the right as you enter is a new display case containing a collection of important artifacts and documents telling the history of the AAVSO (a photo of the display can be seen on page 13). This case was a labor of love by AAVSO archivist Mike Saladyga, who selected it, assembled and lit it (no small task), and selected and arranged the artifacts to be displayed. On the wall to the left is a stunning portrait of Dorrit Hoffleit in an impressive frame—the enlargement and framing work was donated by member Donn Starkey. This portrait was also unveiled after people had gained their seats and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Celebrating  
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# 100th Annual Meeting Highlights... FEATURE

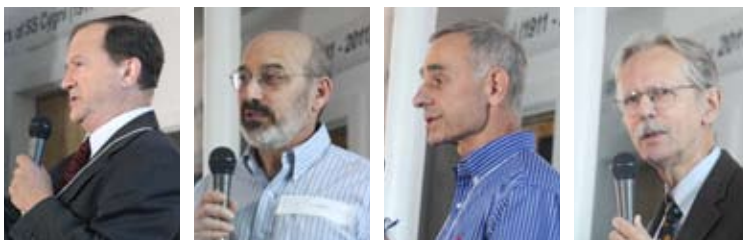
## HEADQUARTERS DEDICATION CONTINUED...



Part of the commemorative portraits of AAVSO observers, officers, volunteers, and staff can be seen here. The SS Cygni light curve continues around the room.

before the speakers were introduced. On the back wall of the conference center were posters depicting various historically important and interesting AAVSO men and women. These included past councilors and officers, staff and volunteers, leading observers, committee chairs and professional astronomers who had served the AAVSO over the first century. These posters were all designed and created by Mike Saladyga and printed gratis by Donn Starkey. On a table in the far corner sat two large birthday cakes (baked by Aaron Price's spouse, Erma, a professional pastry chef), which we would enjoy after our lunch later on that day. The thing that people remarked on the most was the 100-year light curve of SS Cygni that ran along the top of the walls all the way around the annex. It was created by Sara Beck as an homage to the long-term light curve of SS Cyg traditionally wrapped around the pier of the 15-inch telescope at Harvard College Observatory during AAVSO meetings. Ten inches high and over 120 feet long, it is an impressive demonstration of the history and dedication of AAVSO observers, and was a source of pride and amazement for everyone.

After everyone had a chance to look around the new conference center and find a seat at a table, our invited speakers made their remarks, beginning with David Williams, who told us of the history of the various headquarters we had occupied in the first 100 years. All were in Cambridge, Mass., and all were within walking distance of our current headquarters. AAS Press Officer (and former *Sky & Telescope* editor) Rick Fienberg talked about the connection through the decades between the AAS and the AAVSO as well as the growth of pro-am collaborations in astronomy that today is essentially commonplace in many fields. Vladimir Strel'nitski, Director and chief astronomer of the Maria Mitchell Observatory, talked about the conference center's namesake, Dorrit Hoffleit. The genuine respect and affection felt by everyone in the AAVSO was palpable in the room as Vladimir told stories of Dorrit's life.



HQ dedication speakers (from left) David Williams, Rick Fienberg, Vladimir Strel'nitski, and Charles Alcock



Piper and AAVSO member/observer Ron Zissell opens the AAVSO's 100th birthday celebration.

Longest-time members present were Owen Gingerich and Martha Stahr Carpenter, who were given the honor of cutting the birthday cake.

The final speaker of the day was Professor Charles Alcock, Director of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. He talked about the development of research in various related fields and the future of variable star research and the effect surveys like LSST would have on the observers of the coming decades. It was clear from his comments that we will be busier than ever following up on transient discoveries made every night in the not so distant future.

Taking advantage of the splendid, sunny fall day, lunch was served outdoors in the parking area adjacent to headquarters. Attendees enjoyed their sandwiches, chips, and soft drinks while soaking in the fine weather, or at a picnic table under the locust tree on the lawn, or while strolling around the conference center chatting with their friends and associates. Throughout the day, including during lunch, staff members and volunteers snapped away, taking hundreds of pictures for posterity.

As people regained their seats after lunch I announced that we had copies of the Centennial history book, *Advancing Variable Star Astronomy*, for sale throughout the meeting, but that we had one special copy we wanted everyone in attendance to sign, as we would be placing it inside the 2061 time capsule for the AAVSO meeting attendees to enjoy at the fall meeting fifty years from now. People were encouraged to sign the book anywhere they wanted, in particular on pages where they might be mentioned in the book or there was a picture of them.

The birthday party portion of the day got started with a bang as Ron Zissell marched in the front door, through the foyer, and into the conference center with bagpipes blaring Happy Birthday in finest Scottish tradition, followed by Gerry Dyck leading the crowd in a chorus of Happy Birthday from the piano at the back of the conference center.

The time capsule copy of the Centennial history was passed around the conference center as I introduced the next special guests, Owen Gingerich and Martha ("Patty") Stahr Carpenter, two lifetime members who had been with the AAVSO since the 1940s. Patty and Owen were invited to cut the ceremonial birthday cakes, and we enjoyed a festive cake and ice cream birthday party to top off the most fun ever had at 49 Bay State Road.

Before calling an end to the proceedings of the day, I explained our plans for the 2061 Time Capsule and read some excerpts from various articles and letters that had been commissioned specifically for this project.

The party broke up around 2 p.m. and a boisterous, smiling, laughing contingent loaded onto buses headed back to the Woburn Hilton, having shared one of the great days in the first 100 years of the AAVSO together under a clear, bright Cambridge sky. ★

## THE AAVSO TIME CAPSULE FOR 2061

MIKE SIMONSEN (SXN)

One of the 2011 Centennial Celebration projects was to create a time capsule containing items such as the centennial history book, newspapers, charts, and other artifacts from today that might prove to be interesting historically in fifty years' time, as well as letters and articles from AAVSO members written for the people who will be opening up the time capsule in 2061.

We asked several astronomers with expertise in specific fields of variable star research to summarize where they thought we were in our pursuit of the truth today, as well as try to imagine or make a wish for where we would stand fifty years from now. We also asked members and observers of today to tell their future counterparts what the AAVSO means to them and what they hope for the future as well. The following are some excerpts from these varied and interesting letters to the future.

**From Boris Gaensicke**—Dear Reader, When Mike Simonsen asked me whether I wanted to contribute a document for this time capsule, my initial reaction was “yes, sure,” because I always try to do what Mike asks from me (if you have met him, you will know why). But once getting started on this, I started to feel dizzy: throughout the last twenty years so many things have changed in astronomy, both in the way we do the research (with whole fleets of space-based observatories, giant-sized mirrors on the ground, and lightning-fast computers), as well as in the way that the focus of the research triggered by the discovery of extra-solar planets and dark energy has shifted. Do I really have any hope to set out questions that will be relevant throughout the next fifty years?

**From Alan Plummer**—To someone like me, the AAVSO is a gift. Being Australian, my natural introduction to variable star astronomy was through the Variable Star Section of the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand, now simply Variable Stars South (still the VSS). This local community of observers is important, and it is where my mentor, Peter Williams, came from. However, the AAVSO does so much more, providing, among other things, substantial computer resources, and just as important, human resources. VSOers tend to be geographically isolated, yet we work best in teams. A sense of community, of working together, arises naturally from the mission statement of the AAVSO; we become a part of the world wide astronomical community.

I have very little doubt that the AAVSO is a functioning, successful organization as you read this. I'm certain that electronic observations and robot surveys will continue to play a bigger and better role in variable star work, and that is good. The data will be better if it's done properly. But I hope people still stand at an eyepiece looking at variables, and I ask you not to forget the characters behind the light curves. Of course, if I'm still around, I'll probably be a brain in a jar hooked up to CCD gear, at last!

**From AAVSO Director Arne Henden**—Where will the AAVSO head by 2061? We'll still be helping the professional astronomer in follow-up activity. Just as our claim-to-fame is the 100 years of visual observations of long-period variables, by 2061 we will have 70 years of digital monitoring of variables. The first extra-galactic civilizations will be discovered, and we'll find that the expensive techniques first used to make the detection can be replaced by simpler concepts that are attainable by amateurs, and they will be the main sources of observations of these civilizations. Our roles will continue to broaden, and our value to the community will increase. However, most everything will be automated, which will give us time to go back to visually observing the sky and enjoying its beauty!

**From Bob Stine**—So, if this little note of mine is being read in 2061, I ask you, the reader, “Are we still having fun?”

If you are an AAVSO observer, then most likely your answer will be a resounding “Yes!” This is my hope, because it means the AAVSO continues to survive, not just for survival's sake alone, but also for its relevance to the human experience as a crucible for blending passion and science. Our observations of the first 100 years have their genesis in our distinctly human traits of curiosity and awe. I cannot see those traits disappearing any time soon.



AAVSOers at the Headquarters rededication ceremonies

**From Erwin van Ballegoij**—How will variable star observing develop in the next 50 years? To tell you the truth, I haven't got a clue. I couldn't have imagined where we stand today back in 1984, and I am convinced that the developments in variable star observing will have surpassed my wildest dreams in 2061. Let us see what happens, and let's talk it over in October 2061 when I attend the 150th Annual Meeting of the AAVSO as a vital 96-year old man.

**From Horace A Smith**—By 2061, certain RR Lyrae stars will have been observed for more than 150 years, a short interval for a star but a very long interval for any individual astronomer. The AAVSO has already lasted a century and it seems quite likely that it will still be going strong after another 50 years have passed. AAVSO observations have the potential to address questions requiring observations lasting beyond the lifetime of any individual observer. I suspect, however, that there will be no lack of new puzzles as the problems noted in this letter are resolved.

**From AAVSO Science Director Matthew Templeton**—The AID contains 20,737,374 observations of variable stars. Each one is a number, a piece of data, and information recorded by an observer whom you may never have known. Even if you don't know us as people, we hope that you will still know us by the dedication and care that we took in making these observations, in analyzing and preserving the data, and in making them available to you and to everyone else who wanted them. And we hope that you continued to expand and improve upon these data, and made your own contributions to the science of variable star astronomy, and to the culture and fellowship of the AAVSO that makes it possible.

**From Tom Bretl**—I don't know what the AAVSO will be like 50 years from now. Will visual observations no longer be of much value? Will CCD observations be done mostly by robotic telescopes? Who knows? In any case, I hope the AAVSO lives on as a team of dedicated observers who work together to support the scientific community, and who make new members feel welcomed and valued, just as I was made to feel 36 years ago. The AAVSO has meant a great deal to me. It has challenged me, supported me, rewarded me, and taken me to places like Tucson, Calgary, and the Big Island of Hawaii. Thank you AAVSO!

**And finally...** Dear Robotic Overlords, I, for one, welcome our robotic overlords who have surely taken over the world by the time this time capsule will be opened. If I am still alive, please take this letter as proof that I was a loyal follower from day one and reward me accordingly. Beachfront property in Bermuda would suffice.

Your obedient servant, Aaron Price, Assistant Director

AAVSOers at the Headquarters rededication ceremonies: (from left) John Toone, Kristine Larsen (partly hidden), Gil Lubcke, Martha Stahr Carpenter, Seiichi Sakuma, Seiichiro Kiyota, Tom Williams, Eric Broens, Will McMMain, Rick Fienberg



## PAPERS AND POSTERS PRESENTED AT THE 100TH ANNUAL AAVSO MEETING

Listed here are the papers and posters presented at the 100th Annual Meeting of the AAVSO, held in Cambridge and Woburn, Massachusetts, October 4–8, 2011 (the list of papers and posters presented at the Spring 2011 meeting can be found in the July 2011 *Newsletter*). Papers and abstracts from both the spring and annual meetings will be published in the June issue of *The Journal of the AAVSO*.

### History Session 1, Wednesday, October 5, 2011: Women in AAVSO History

“The Career and Contributions of Martha Stahr Carpenter: Between a Rock and (Several) Hard Places” by Kristine Larsen, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut

“Margaret W. Mayall in the AAVSO Archives” by Michael Saladyga, AAVSO Headquarters

### History Session 2, Wednesday, October 5, 2011: Women in AAVSO History

“Guiding Forces and Janet A. Mattei” by Elizabeth O. Waagen, AAVSO Headquarters

“The AAVSO Widow—Or Should We Say Spouse?” by Thomas R. Williams, Houston, Texas

### History Session 3, Wednesday, October 5, 2011: The History of Variable Star Organizations

“BAA VSS 1890–2011” by John Toone, British Astronomical Association, London, England

“Introduction to BAV” by Franz-Josef Hamsch, Joachim Hübscher, Mol, Belgium

“The ‘Werkgroep Veranderlijke Sterren’ of Belgium” by Patrick Wils, Eric Broens, Hubert Hautecler, Frans Van Loo, WVS, Belgium

### History Session 4, Wednesday, October 5, 2011: The History of Variable Star Organizations

“The RASNZ Variable Stars Section and Variable Stars South” by Albert Jones, Stan Walker, Waiharara, New Zealand

“The GEOS Association of Variable Star Observers” by Franz-Josef Hamsch, J.-F. LeBorgne, E. Poretti, the GEOS association, Belgium

“The Visual Era of the AAVSO’s Eclipsing Binary Program” by David B. Williams, Whitestown, Indiana; Marvin E. Baldwin, Butlerville, Indiana

### History Session 5, Friday, October 7, 2011: Variable Star Observers

“Walking With AAVSO Giants—A Personal Journey” by Roger S. Kolman, Glen Ellyn, Illinois; Mike Simonsen, AAVSO Headquarters

“Variable Star Observers I Have Known” by Charles Scovil, Stamford, Connecticut

“Appreciation for Clinton B. Ford and the AAVSO of Fifty Years Ago” by Tony Hull

### Paper Session 1, Friday, October 7, 2011

“Medical Effects of Poor Lighting” by Mario Motta, M.D., Gloucester, Massachusetts

“Star Watching Promoted by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan” by Seichi Sakuma, Kawasaki, Japan

“An Amateur-Professional International Observing Campaign for the EPOXI Mission: New Insights Into Comets” by Karen J. Meech, Institute for Astronomy, Honolulu, Hawaii

“High School Students Watching Stars Evolve” by John Percy, Drew MacNeil, Leila Meema-Coleman, Karen Morenz, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

“The World’s Strangest Supernova May Not Be A Supernova At All” by Caroline Moore, Warwick, New York

### Paper Session 2, Friday, October 7, 2011

“Twenty-Eight Years of CV Results With the AAVSO” by Paula Szkody, Anjum S. Mukadam, University of Seattle, Washington; Boris Gänsicke, University of Warwick, Coventry, England; Janet A. Mattei, Arne A. Henden, Mike Simonsen, Matthew Templeton, Elizabeth O. Waagen, AAVSO Headquarters; Gary Walker, Maria Mitchell Observatory, Nantucket, Massachusetts; Edward M. Sion, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania; Steve B. Howell, National Optical Astronomy Observatory, Tucson, Arizona; Dean Townsley, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

“Inventing Mira Ceti: First Inklings, Second Guesses, Second Thoughts” by Robert Alan Hatch, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

“Illinois—Where Astronomical Photoelectric Photometry Grew Up” by Barry B. Beaman, Rockford, Illinois

“The Variable Star Observations of Frank E. Seagrave” by Gerald P. Dyck, Assonet, Massachusetts

### Paper Session 3, Saturday, October 8, 2011

“Solar Cycle 24—Will It Be Unusually Quiet?” by Rodney Howe, Fort Collins, Colorado

“A Generalized Linear Mixed Model for Enumerated Sunspots” by Jamie Riggs, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado

“Data Evolution in VSX: Making a Good Thing Better” by Sebastian Otero, Buenos Aires, Argentina

“VSX: the Next Generation” by Christopher L. Watson, San Diego, California

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## PAPERS AND POSTERS CONTINUED...

“Exploring the Breadth and Sources of Variable Star Astronomers’ Astronomy Knowledge: First Steps” by Stephanie J. Slater, Castle Rock, Colorado

### Paper Session 4, Saturday, October 8, 2011

“Intense Observations of Cataclysmic Variables, RR Lyr Stars, and High Amplitude  $\delta$  Scuti (HADS) Stars” by Franz-Josef Hamsch, Mol, Belgium

“RS Sge—Looking for Eclipses” by Jerry Horne, San Jose, California

“Things We Don’t Understand About RR Lyrae Stars” by Horace A. Smith, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

“Eclipsing Binaries That Don’t Eclipse Anymore: the Strange Case of the Once (and Future?) Eclipsing Binary QX Cas” by Edward Guinan, Michael Bonaro, Scott Engle, Andrej Prsa, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania

### Paper Session 5, Saturday, October 8, 2011

“What Mass Loss Modeling Tells Us About Planetary Nebulae” by Lee Anne Willson, Qian Wang, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

“Introduction to Digital Archiving: Where the Past Lives Again” by Kevin B. Paxson, Spring, Texas

“Use of APASS to Calibrate Harvard Plates” by Edward J. Los, Nashua, New Hampshire

“The Acquisition of Photometric Data” by Arlo U. Landolt, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### Poster Session, Saturday, October 8, 2011

“Automation of Eastern Kentucky University Observatory and Preliminary Data” by Marco Ciocca, Ethan E. Kilgore, Westley W. Williams, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky

“Flares, Fears, and Forecasts: Public Misconceptions About the Sunspot Cycle” by Kristine Larsen, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut

“History of Amateur Variable Star Observations in Japan” by Seiichiro Kiyota, Tsukuba, Japan

“Light Curve of Minor Planet 1026 Ingrid” by Shelby Delos, Gary Ahrendts, Timothy Barker, Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts

“ $\delta$  Scorpii 2011 Periastron: Visual and Digital Photometric Campaign” by Costantino Sigismondi Sapienza, University of Rome, Rome, Italy

“Bright New Type Ia Supernova in the Pinwheel Galaxy (M101): Physical Properties of SN 2011fe From Photometry and Spectroscopy” by Sai Gouravajhala, Edward F. Guinan, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania; Louis Strolger, Andrew Gott, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky

“RASNZ Photometry Section, Incorporating the Auckland Photoelectric Observers’ Group” by Stan Walker, Waiharara, New Zealand

“Apollo 14 Road Trip” by Paul Valleli, Burlington, Massachusetts

### After-Banquet Remarks

“Centennial Highlights in Astronomy” by Owen Gingerich

## A TROUBADOR SINGS THE TALE OF OLCOTT AT THE 100TH ANNUAL MEETING

The 100th Annual Meeting attendees were treated to a delightful hour of music by the first Official State Troubador of Connecticut, Tom Callinan. He wrote and sang what might be called “The Ballad of William Tyler Olcott” but is actually titled “Heavenly Gazetteers” which celebrates the founding of the AAVSO and the work of its observers.

Previously unaware of the AAVSO-Olcott-Connecticut connections, he found out almost by accident one day. Callinan sent a note to AAVSO Headquarters to see if the AAVSO did indeed exist, and to let us know that he was working on a song for us:

*Over the weekend I received some information about William Tyler Olcott from the Leffingwell Museum here in Norwich, Ct., which I found fascinating. From a couple of links to related websites, I cobbled together the lyrics of an as-of-yet unfinished composition.*

*In light of this being AAVSO’s Centennial Year, I thought you might be interested in knowing about it. Please keep in mind that it’s often difficult to match meter and rhyme when dealing with technical terms, so I incorporated some poetic license in writing it. As of yet there’s no melody, but if the general premises meet with your approval, I’ll see if “The Muse” can help me create something suitable.*

Official Connecticut  
Troubador Tom Callinan  
at the AAVSO’s 100th  
Annual Meeting



A copy of the CD, called *Commemorations*, containing “Heavenly Gazetteers” and other songs about Connecticut history can be purchased from Tom Callinan at Crackerbarrel Entertainments, 55 East Town Street, Norwich, CT 06360.

Tom’s website is: [www.crackerbarrel-ents.com/Callinan/bio.htm](http://www.crackerbarrel-ents.com/Callinan/bio.htm)  
His email is: TomC@Crackerbarrel-Ents.com



Celebrating  
100 years  
1911–2011

# 100th Annual Meeting Highlights... FEATURE



The 100th Annual Meeting of the AAVSO, Cambridge and Woburn, Massachusetts, October 4–8, 2011

### KEY TO THE PHOTOGRAPH



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| 4 Yvonne Roe                 | 38 Jeremy Shears     | 72 Henri M. van Bommel |
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| 6 Bill Dillon                | 40 Barbara L. Wether | 74 Chris Stephan       |
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## THE NEXT ONE HUNDRED YEARS

**MIKE SIMONSEN (SXN), AAVSO DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

As we begin our second one hundred years I want to say thank you, AAVSO members, observers, supporters, and donors for all you've done for the AAVSO through its first 100 years.

Although we have been celebrating the first 100 years, looking back, remembering the people, and examining the history and the circumstances that have brought us to this day, this is also the time to think about the next 100 years.

In many ways the success of the next 100 years depends a lot on what we do today and in the coming decade.

Its unlikely that any of us will be here 100 years from now, but your support and devotion to the AAVSO can live on long past your days on Earth, through a bequest in your will or estate plan. We literally would not be here today celebrating 100 years of achievements without the generosity and good will of the AAVSO membership and leadership.

The AAVSO Endowment, from which the organization draws the majority of its operating funds each year, and was primary source for funding our new headquarters, is mainly the result of Clint Ford naming the AAVSO as beneficiary in his will.

Our new conference center is the result of Dorrit Hoffleit leaving a bequest to the AAVSO in her will. The Rosebrugh Residence and the Feibelman Guest Suite refurbishments were also financed in large part from the estates of those two long-time supporters.

Who knows, your name could be immortalized on the first AAVSO satellite in space, or an AAVSONet telescope on the Moon!

But don't worry. You do not need to die to make a financial contribution!

Tom and Anna Fay Williams have made sizeable contributions, resulting in the funding of the AAVSO Historical Archives. Tom has been giving regularly to the AAVSO for thirty years. Arne and Linda Henden have contributed tens of thousands of dollars to assure completion of the renovation of the interior and exterior of 49 Bay State Rd.

Gary Walker, through contributions to AAVSONet and the refurbishment of the New Mexico State University 24-inch telescope and other donations, is on the verge of becoming our next Argelander Society member. This honor is one you achieve by donating a lifetime total in excess of \$35,000. There are many others who have made important contributions totaling in the thousands of dollars.



*The display of AAVSO archival material included the 1917 Olcott cup, seen here on the second level, towards the right*

This past summer we purchased the sterling silver Olcott Cup for \$3,700.00. We were all very excited to acquire this historic piece for the archive, but Arne was not excited to see the money coming out of the endowment. Tom Williams and Mike Saladyga offered to put up half the money to pay for it, if I could find donors to match their contribution. I started with emails to the current council members on a Tuesday. By Friday I had enough pledges to cover half the cost of the cup AND the display case we wanted to buy for it.

As past, present, and potential leaders of the AAVSO, you don't need to be told how important your financial contributions to the organization are. Take time this week to think about where we have been, where we are going, and try to imagine the possibilities of where the AAVSO will be in 2111. Consider what *you* can do to assure the future of our great organization. ★



*AAVSO members and friends gathered for the HQ rededication ceremonies*



*Ed. note: following is the Spanish language text of Arne's Director's message.*

## MENSAJE DEL DIRECTOR

**ARNE A. HENDEN (HQA)**

2011 ya es historia ¡Qué año excitante! La Celebración del Centenario fue, por supuesto, el “acto” estelar, y creo que todos la pasaron bien en el encuentro de octubre. Va a haber un artículo resumiendo el Centenario en la web, en el Reporte Anual y quizás incluso en este newsletter, así que no voy a adelantarles mucho más, salvo decirles que septiembre y octubre fueron meses muy muy ocupados por aquí.

Podría parecer que fin de año es una época tranquila aquí en HQ pero ese nunca es el caso. Es el momento en que suele comenzar la auditoría de nuestro año fiscal, lo cual implica que una empresa de contabilidad externa venga y revise todos nuestros registros financieros. Piden un montón de información, desde recibos, copias de solicitudes de fondos, hasta contratos de seguros de salud. Esto genera un triple esfuerzo por parte de quienes trabajamos en HQ, ya que tenemos que encontrar los registros para el auditor, hacer copias y correcciones según lo que nos piden y luego entregar los papeles una vez que están listos. Linda, Lauren, y yo pasamos ese tiempo muy ocupados y Jane Caton (nuestra contadora) también tiene trabajo extra.

Además de la auditoría, tenemos otro tipo de trabajo administrativo. El contrato del seguro de salud se renueva el 1 de diciembre y tenemos que revisar las opciones. Las cuentas de la FSA de los empleados deben completarse de nuevo para el 31 de diciembre. El período de renovación de nuestra membresía ahora se movió para coincidir con el año calendario así que tenemos que molestarlos a todos ustedes para que nos envíen sus pagos.

Noviembre también es un mes complicado para Aaron, Matt, y para mí. La NSF pone como fecha tope el 15 de noviembre para la mayoría de sus propuestas científicas, lo cual significa que estamos ocupados escribiendo solicitudes para obtener fondos y trabajando con nuestros co-investigadores para producir las mejores propuestas posibles. Hay otras fechas límite para pedidos de subsidios destinados, por ejemplo, a la educación científica informal que vencen en diciembre y enero, por lo cual continuamos redactando durante todo ese período. Aaron, Matt, Mike Simonsen y yo también asistimos al encuentro de la AAS en Austin en enero, así

que tuvimos que preparar posters y exposiciones orales para ese evento.

El resto del staff está igual de ocupado. Rebecca no pudo estar en el Centenario por motivos familiares, pero debió preparar instrucciones detalladas referentes a la logística del encuentro. Ella también tiene tareas relacionadas a donaciones, entregando reportes financieros y científicos trimestrales para Citizen Sky, y los subsidios de la NASA y de la NSF de Matt y ahora también del subsidio 3D “Two Eyes” de Aaron. Elizabeth y Sara estuvieron trabajando en la mayoría de los premios que se entregaron (y que luego debieron ser enviados a la gente que no asistió el encuentro). Elizabeth y Mike Saladyga tienen que trabajar en el próximo número del Journal, preparar este newsletter, y elaborar el Reporte Anual. Lauren creó una nueva tienda online con productos de vestimenta, y ha estado manejando todo el correo (como por ejemplo las miles de cartas por las fiestas). Sara también me ayudó a preparar el siguiente lanzamiento de datos de APASS. Will ha estado realmente ocupado agregándole funciones a la página web. Y, por supuesto, Mike Simonsen tiene que encargarse de todas las tareas relacionadas a donaciones de fin de año y reportes.

Que estemos ocupados no significa que no podamos disfrutar de las fiestas. En mi caso particular, me encantó seguir al cometa Lovejoy en todo su esplendor antes que bajara de brillo a través de las imágenes de la cámara de todo el cielo de CTIO en diciembre. Varias personas nos enviaron lindas notas en respuesta a la tarjeta de fin de año y las estuvimos compartiendo entre todos para así estar al tanto de lo que sucede en la vida de nuestros observadores. La Fiesta de Navidad fue divertida y el clima estuvo genial – aunque este año no fue una Navidad blanca, en su lugar tuvimos días templados y soleados – ¡buen negocio si me preguntan!

A 2012 lo veo tan excitante como a 2011. Tenemos un encuentro conjunto con la Society for Astronomical Sciences (SAS) en Mayo, sólo un par de días después del eclipse anular de sol que pasa por el sudoeste norteamericano. Luego, la AAS realiza su encuentro de verano en Anchorage, unos pocos días después del tránsito de Venus (que será visible en su totalidad en Alaska). Hemos propuesto un tercer taller de Citizen Sky que esperamos sea aceptado y estamos planeando una Escuela de CCD para julio. Nuevas campañas de observación visual serán anunciadas a la brevedad y nuevos telescopios de AAVSONet serán puestos

en línea. Esperamos conseguir varios estudiantes aquí en el verano para que ayuden con proyectos del staff. Mike Simonsen está a cargo del primer evento Star Party de AAVSO a llevarse a cabo en el marco de la Winter Star Party de Florida. Cada día que pasa el Sol tiene más manchas. Vivimos en una era dorada, y espero que continúe así ¡por un largo tiempo! ★

*Ed. note: following is the Spanish language text of Mario's President's message.*

## MENSAJE DEL PRESIDENTE

**MARIO MOTTA, M.D. (MMX)**

En este mi primer boletín como presidente, quiero agradecer al Consejo y a los miembros de la AAVSO por confiar en mí y convertirme en el presidente número 49 de AAVSO. Me siento verdaderamente honrado de estar en una posición de liderazgo en una organización que he admirado toda mi vida. Me comprometo a hacer todo lo que esté a mi alcance para mejorar y apoyar la AAVSO en mis 2 años en el cargo y espero, con mucho interés, trabajar con los asociados. Para aquellos que asistieron a nuestra fabulosa reunión aniversario de 100 años, en octubre pasado, fuimos gratamente sorprendidos por los numerosos recuerdos de la muestra de fe y dedicación de nuestros muchos miembros en los últimos 100 años que atravesaron diversos momentos difíciles de nuestra historia y trajeron a la AAVSO al nivel de éxito que ahora disfrutamos. Me siento honrado de ser el primer presidente de la segunda centuria y espero que el éxito de AAVSO sea aún mayor en el futuro.

En especial, quiero agradecer a todos los observadores miembros que contribuyen con su tiempo y energía para hacer que AAVSO tenga el éxito que tiene. Empezamos nuestro segundo siglo con 21 millones de observaciones en nuestra base de datos. Como muchos de los que siguen la tasa de aumento en el número de observaciones por año pueden dar fe, nuestra tasa de crecimiento es fenomenal. Esto es atribuible, en parte, a la gran dedicación de nuestros observadores, pero también a la capacidad continua de AAVSO de crecer y evolucionar para satisfacer los nuevos retos y oportunidades que se presentan a través de los años. En 1911, las observaciones eran puestas en piezas de papel y entraban en libros de registro. Ciertamente, muchos cambios se produjeron a lo largo de los años que nos permitieron registrar y almacenar 21 millones de observaciones. Si no

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## MENSAJE DEL PRESIDENTE CONTINUED...

hubiésemos evolucionado, nuestra organización habría quedado obsoleta hace muchos años. En lugar de eso, hemos crecido, adaptándonos a los tiempos, y en ese proceso desarrollamos un depósito de datos valiosos, apreciado por los investigadores de todo el mundo.

De cara al futuro, tenemos que tener en cuenta la historia previa de cómo nos convertimos en quienes somos, una organización dinámica en evolución que sigue el ritmo de las necesidades de la comunidad astronómica. Es sólo continuando esta orgullosa tradición de crecimiento y evolución que podemos asegurar que la organización de AAVSO de nuestros descendientes en nuestro 200 aniversario todavía disfrute del mismo respeto y cooperación colegiada con los hermanos de la investigación profesional que ahora tenemos.

Parece que cada año, desde que el chip CCD estuviese por primera vez a disposición de los miembros de AAVSO, en la década de 1990, tenemos una discusión recurrente acerca de si las observaciones visuales seguirán teniendo valor, y que se reprodujo el año pasado en varios formatos de debate. Les digo a todos los miembros lo más fuerte y claro posible, que tenemos necesidad de todas las observaciones, de todo tipo y en todo momento. Todas las observaciones son valiosas. Todos los observadores y miembros son valiosos.

Cultivar observadores y recolectar observaciones es la esencia de lo que hacemos. Insto a todos a no temer al cambio o la evolución de AAVSO, sino a abrazar el cambio que inevitablemente vendrá. Como debe estar claro para todos, en este día y en esta época, simplemente no podemos hacer las cosas como se hacían en 1911. Las necesidades de la observación astronómica cambiarán lentamente. Hay grandes estudios detallados que se llevarán a cabo que van a realizar gran parte de la recolección rutinaria a largo plazo de datos de estrellas variable de evolución lenta y de largo plazo. Si usted es un observador a largo plazo de gigantes rojas no debe temer a esto. Citando al afamado astrónomo Carl Sagan, “hay miles y miles de millones ahí fuera”. La investigación astronómica moderna necesitará grandes muestras estadísticas para un mayor crecimiento en la investigación y la comprensión del Universo. En lugar del retiro de los observadores visuales, puedo predecir que la necesidad de observadores dedicados aumentará significativamente. Los grandes estudios detallados encontrarán muchas nuevas variables y descubrirán nuevas estrellas que necesitarán más observaciones intensivas. Los estudios detallados notarán cuando algo inusual esté ocurriendo y esto requerirá una respuesta urgente e intensiva por parte de los observadores, tanto visuales como con CCDs.

Las necesidades de los futuros investigadores requerirán grandes estudios detallados para

descubrir más sobre la naturaleza de nuestro Universo. Nuestra misión principal ha sido siempre la de recolectar, catalogar y distribuir datos útiles a los observadores e investigadores de todo el mundo. Eso no va a cambiar, aunque los métodos cambien. Imagino un futuro donde los grandes estudios detallados hacen gran parte del trabajo pesado de controlar miles de estrellas en forma periódica. Cuando una anomalía se presente durante este control, el personal o los miembros de AAVSO percibirán esa anomalía y enviarán alertas a los miembros para que vigilen, por cualquier medio, algún cambio o evento particulares. Así, puedo predecir que poco a poco - poco a poco, no rápidamente - evolucionarán de monitores de largo plazo a equipos de repuesta rápida a corto plazo y observadores de eventos especiales. El número de eventos que puede necesitar una respuesta rápida, de hecho, puede llegar a ser abrumador. Muy probablemente vamos a necesitar más observadores de los que ahora tenemos para manipular el volumen de observaciones especiales. Este es un Universo muy grande y somos pocos los que tenemos el interés, el equipo y la habilidad para su seguimiento. La AAVSO seguirá siendo una organización vibrante y mantendrá un papel vital en la comunidad de la investigación astronómica, y lo hará sólo por el continuo, intenso y constante esfuerzo de sus dedicados miembros. ★

### A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATIONS

We are grateful to Sebastian Otero and Jaime García for providing, respectively, the Spanish language versions of the Director's and President's messages, We hope that readers of the *Newsletter* will enjoy this feature.

### AAVSO CENTENNIAL HISTORY !

*Advancing Variable Star Astronomy: The Centennial History of The American Association of Variable Star Observers* by Thomas R. Williams and Michael Saladyga, published by Cambridge University Press, is available through the AAVSO at a special reduced price.

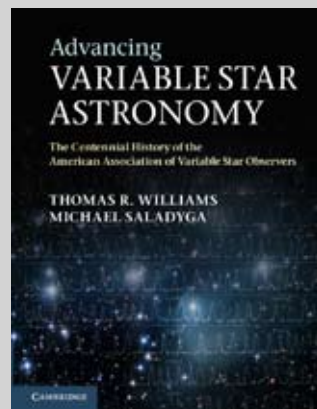
**Thanks to the generosity of a donor, the purchase price of each book sold through the AAVSO online store will go to benefit the AAVSO!**

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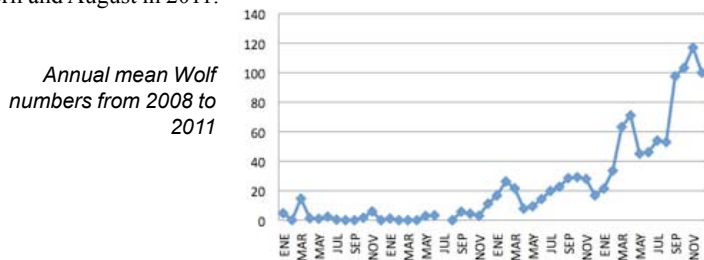


## ONE SOLAR OBSERVER'S YEAR

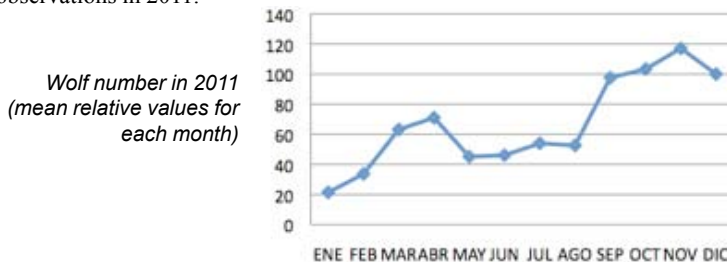
A. GONZALO VARGAS B. (VARG), COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA

Greetings from the amateur Southern Cross Observatory! Here is a short review of my personal solar observations in 2011.

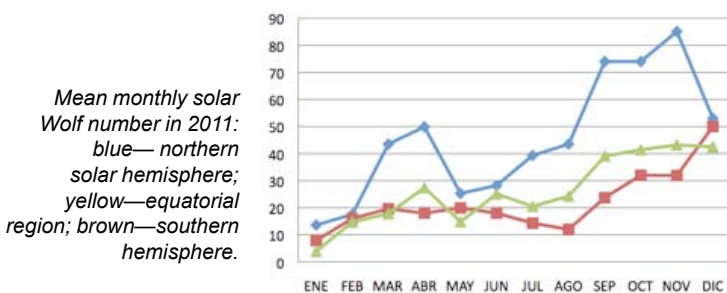
There was a long minimum solar activity at the end of the twenty-third solar cycle, (period 2008–2009). Solar activity began to rise around December 2009. According to my records there was a low Wolf number time between April and August in 2011.



Between February and May, 2011 there was a maximum relative mean Wolf number of 67.9. Between May and August, 2011 solar activity was almost regular with a mean Wolf number around 49.5, and after that the Wolf number rose to a relative peak of 117 in November. There were a total of 249 solar observations in 2011.



In 2011, 48.1% of sunspot observations were made in the northern hemisphere, while 23.2% were made in the southern hemisphere, and 23.2% for the equatorial area. The mean annual values are: Northern hemisphere 35.2; Southern hemisphere 17.0; and Equatorial region 20.9.

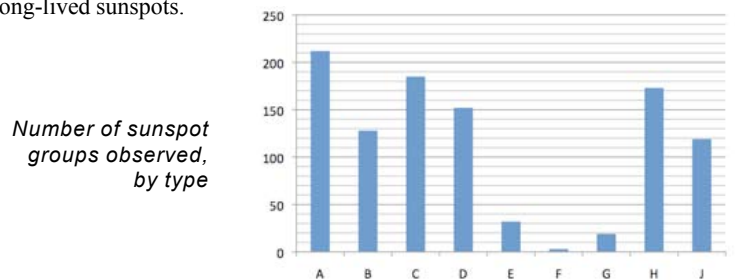


Below is a diagram of sunspot group types. How many of these sunspot groups (Zurich classification) were observed in 2011?

*Sunspot groups according to Zurich classification*



According to my observations and inaccurate determinations (sometimes it is very difficult to make sunspots identifications!), we can see in the graph below that type A identifications (unipolar sunspots) are very common because many times all sunspots are born as this type, and many times, too, sunspots vanish like an A type. H and J types are common too because I observed that they are long-lived sunspots.



Many bipolar groups such as D, E, F, and G decline after some days to unipolar groups, the leader sunspot remains like type H; this sunspot type has a long life.

### A tour of my visual observing equipment

*My solar telescope (right) is an 8-inch Newtonian, f/8. I use a 25-mm eyepiece for solar image projection.*



*A projection box (below left) helps make a darker place for observations. The projected solar image (below right) is 200mm in diameter.*



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## SOLAR OBSERVER'S YEAR CONTINUED...

My solar telescope dome



### H-alpha solar observations

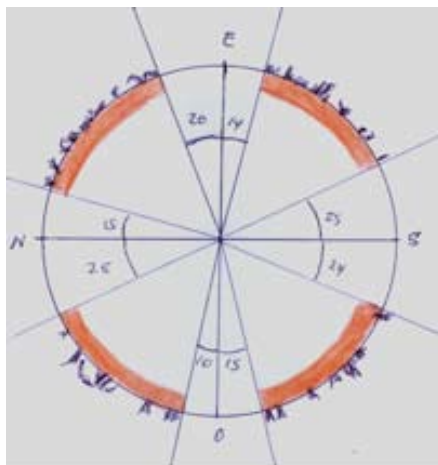
I have a Daystar T Scanner for 6562.8 Angstroms; it was a gift from Vic and Jennifer Winter. They help me often in my solar and educational astronomical programs. For my H-alpha solar observations I use an 80-mm f/5 refractor.

80-mm f/5 refractor for H-alpha solar observations



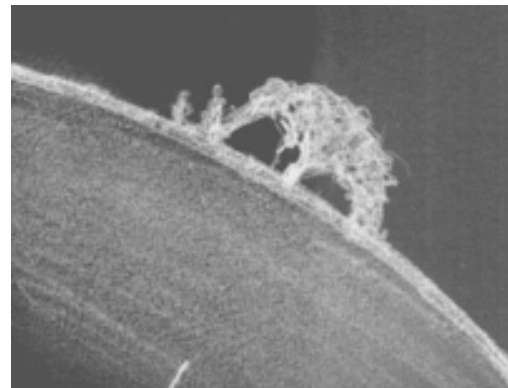
During almost two years of making solar H-alpha solar observations I have found the most common solar disk regions for solar prominences. Almost all solar prominences are located between 20 and 65 degrees in both north and south latitudes (see figure below).

Most common solar disk regions for solar prominences

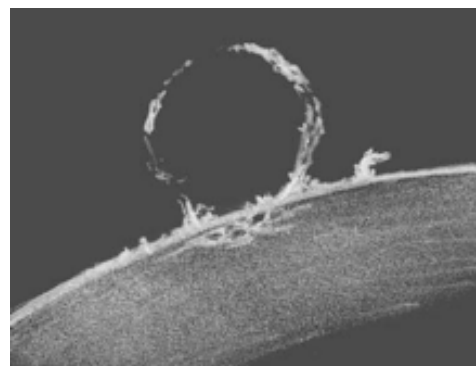


During 2011 I made drawings of 43 remarkable solar prominences. Here are the most impressive:

January 26, 2011 at 2044 U.T.

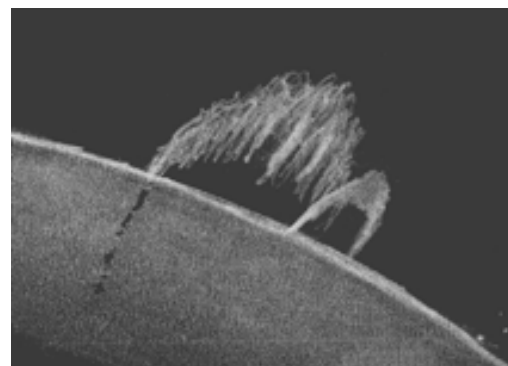


March 2, 2011 at 1920 U.T. At left, a white light bipolar sunspot observation. At right, the same sunspot but in the H-alpha line, F represents solar filaments.



The most wonderful solar prominence that I observed in 2011: March 21, at 2200 U.T.

January 27, at 1920 U.T. Part of the solar prominence was observed to be like a dark solar filament.



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## SOLAR OBSERVER'S YEAR CONTINUED...

### 2011 Cochabamba, Bolivia, geomagnetic events

In 2011 I recorded twenty-four low level geomagnetic perturbations and ten moderate perturbations, as shown in the bar graph below.

Geomagnetic events recorded  
at the Southern Cross  
Observatory, Cochabamba,  
Bolivia, in 2011

Blue—low level perturbations  
Red—moderate activity

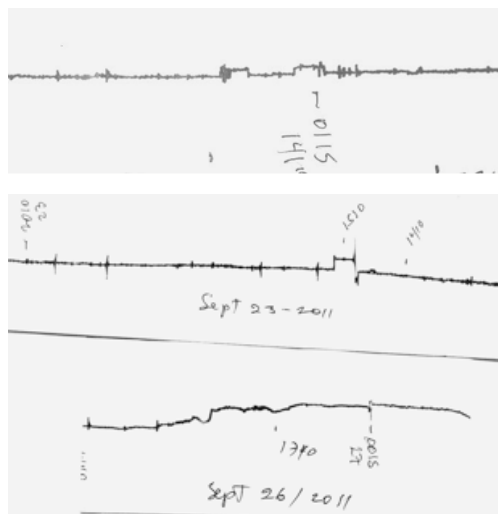
(No observations made Nov.  
and Dec.)



I built a thermal recording device using an old analog ink recorder; the magnetometer itself is a magnetometer by Jim Mandeville.



Thermal recording system using fax paper



Geomagnetic traces  
for October 14 (above)  
and September 23  
(left)

### Next project

In 2012 I hope to mount my SID monitoring system. 2011 was a special year for me and my dear solar telescope! I am very happy to have earned my AAVSO Solar Award. May we observe the sun together for many years! My thanks to all AAVSO members and observers. Sunny days to you all! ★

Gonzalo Vargas (VARG)



## PHOTOELECTRIC PHOTOMETRY PROGRAM UPDATE

MATTHEW TEMPLETON (TMT), AAVSO SCIENCE DIRECTOR

It's been an eventful few months for the AAVSO and the PEP program. I'm happy to note that the AAVSO celebrated its centennial in October 2011. It was a pleasure to meet some of our PEP observers at the Centennial, and I hope you found the meeting as enjoyable as I did!

I'm also happy to note that PEPObs is now available on the AAVSO website again. Observers making V-band observations using the AAVSO's standard procedure can use PEPObs to enter their raw data and have it reduced by the webserver using our most recent calibration data. Please make use of this tool if you're doing only V-band observations; those of you making observations in other bands besides V, or who do their own V reductions may submit reduced magnitudes as always. Please note that if you do your own reductions, you should use the comparison star data found on our website:

<http://www.aavso.org/pep-starparm>

During the past quarter, PEP observers continued making regular observations of several stars. Since 2011 October 1, eight observers made a total of 257 PEP observations of 33 different stars, a significant increase over the prior quarter!

P Cygni (59 observations) and epsilon Aurigae (49 observations) were the most popular targets of the quarter, with zeta Aurigae (28 observations) being third. All three stars were targets of campaigns during 2011, but all are good targets regardless of whether there's a campaign running or not. Although the eps Aur eclipse has ended it remains a good long-term project because of its pulsations. P Cyg is an interesting pulsating Luminous Blue Variable certain to become a supernova but very uncertain as to when!

Other stars with more than one observation include: EU Del (14), EG And (12), U Del (12), V395 Vul (8), V832 Cyg (7), VX And (6), IM Peg (6), AB Cyg (4), V1339 Cyg (4), R Lyr (4), omicron And (3), W Cyg (3), V973 Cyg (3), V1070 Cyg (3), AC Her (3), HK Lac (3), alpha Ori (3), KX And (2), V442 And (2), RZ Ari (2), CH Cyg (2), CX Dra (2), eta Gem (2), EW Lac (2), II Peg (2), X Per (2), and rho Per (2). Gamma Cas, CE Tau, and NSV 11271 each had one observation. The tally of PEP observations since October 1 is: FXJ (81), CBB (67), OAD (44), RTH (36), WI (18), UIS01 (9), HEK (1), and GGL (1). Observers UIS01 (J. Martin) and OAD (Adrian Ormsby) made a number of B,V observations of several stars, FXJ (Jim Fox) made B,V observations of zeta Aur, and CCB (Charles Calia) made B, V observations of P Cyg. RTH (Tom Rutherford) continues to take infrared J, H data on eps Aur.

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## PEP PROGRAM UPDATE CONTINUED...

In addition to the three campaign stars noted above, Thom Gandet also alerted the AAVSO of an outburst in the Be-star V442 And that was being followed by European spectroscopists. Our PEP Chairman Jim Fox made two observations of this star during the quarter, and more PEP observations are encouraged this season while the star is still high in the sky. Further observations will be useful in seeing whether the star has returned to quiescence.

In addition to new observations made during the quarter, the AAVSO also received a holiday gift from Doug Welch, who provided a large number of digitized historical PEP observations of Cepheids. Over 24,000 archival PEP observations from published literature were added to the

AAVSO International Database during this time for the use of the research community. For details, please feel free to contact me.

Finally, I note that the AAVSO has one SSP-3 photometer available for loan. Any AAVSO member in good standing who promises to make use of the instrument during the year is welcome to borrow it until s/he no longer has need of it. Please contact me privately if you are interested.

I encourage PEP observers who've been inactive this past year to begin observing again. PEP observing remains one of the most accurate ways to observe bright stars (especially Betelgeuse, which I request every issue!) and some of our PEP light curves have no equal among professional or amateur databases anywhere. If you're interested in trying it out, please take us up on our offer of an SSP-3 and give it a chance! Clear skies! ★

## AAVSO OBSERVING CAMPAIGNS UPDATE

**ELIZABETH O. WAAGEN (WEO),  
AAVSO SENIOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANT**

2011 was a very busy year for observing campaigns at the AAVSO, with a lot of activity and numerous opportunities for participation in professional variable star research. With the close of 2011, some observing campaigns are concluded, some are ongoing, and some new ones are getting underway.

### *Concluded campaigns*

Although the formal campaigns on  $\epsilon$  Aur and T Pyx are over, your observations are still very much needed.

*T Pyx*: Dr. Brad Schaefer writes in part, "The AAVSO has an awesome light curve (getting near 100,000 magnitudes) for the current eruption of of T Pyx. Some results have appeared in Schaefer et al. 2011, arXiv:1109.0065; Oksanen & Schaefer, 2011, ATel #3782; Schaefer & Oksanen, 2011, ATel #3707. [Other publications are pending.]... The immediate need for catching the rise and the rapid fluctuations around peak has now passed. The light curve is now not changing fast, so we do not need high time resolution. Rather, we are needing good high-accuracy time series (to keep track of the periodic oscillations O-C curve) and ~daily monitoring (to see what the light curve does as it goes to quiescence)...."

*epsilon Aur*: The epsilon Aurigae campaign has officially concluded, and was spectacularly successful. You, the AAVSO observers, contributed over 22,000 multicolor observations of this no-longer-so-enigmatic system—thank you! Observers are encouraged to continue to observe  $\epsilon$  Aur as study of the system will continue, but intense, concentrated coverage is no longer needed.

### *Campaigns being continued into or through 2012*

To date we have confirmation of the following:

*P Cyg*: Dr. Ernst Pollmann writes, "The P Cyg campaign will be continued for several years. All the observers, photometrical and spectroscopic, did contribute very worthwhile measurements for extension of our monitoring of the intrinsic Halpha Flux."

*SS Cyg*: Dr. James Miller-Jones writes, "Many thanks again for your help last year; your contribution was invaluable, and we're very grateful. We still have

one trigger left on the EVN project, which is valid for another 18 months (or until triggered). So yes, we are planning to continue our work this year, and very much hope that you would still be willing to provide us with triggers."

*HBC 722 and VSX J205126.1+440523*: Dr. Colin Aspin writes, "I'd like to continue with the [Young Stellar Object] monitoring program for 2012. It is really valuable to see how the outbursts in these two similar but different objects progress over a long time period. The parameters can remain the same, the observers are doing a great job!"

*HMXBs and SFXTs [High-Mass X-ray Binaries and Super Fast X-ray Transients]*: Dr. Gordon Sarty writes, "Definitely the HMXB/SFXT campaign is ongoing. Tim Crawford (SFXTs) and Keith Graham (HMXBs) have been putting in a lot of work this past year to define sequences in the fields. The HMXB fields are pretty much done and Tim is only now getting APASS data for four of the SFXT fields. I have also just applied for SOFIA time to observe a couple of SFXTs. So keep plugging along!"

*QX Pup*: Dr. Arne Henden writes, "I would like the observers to continue monitoring QX Pup. It has a 650d period and so we've only covered about 2 cycles. More would be nice."

### *New campaigns*

Campaigns just getting underway in 2012 include:

*RT Cru*: Dr. Jenő Sokolowski, Columbia University, monitoring the symbiotic variable RT Cru both now and in the future to see if it is doing anything unusual in the optical, in order to interpret the interesting hard x-ray behavior. Announced in *AAVSO Alert Notice 451*.

*SU Aur and AB Aur*: Dr. Hans Moritz Guenther, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, intense observations of the classical T Tauri star SU Aur and the close-by Herbig Ae star AB Aur. Details coming in early February.

Grateful thanks from the astronomers and us at AAVSO Headquarters go to all of you who are participating in AAVSO Observing Campaigns. You have been and continue to be a vital part of variable star research, so stay tuned, get plenty of rest, and keep your lenses polished and equipment temperature-acclimated! ★

## JULIAN DATE / MOON PHASE CALENDARS

2,450,000 plus the value given for each date

### DECEMBER 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 5897	2 5898	3 5899
4 5900	5 5901	6 5902	7 5903	8 5904	9 5905	10 5906
11 5907	12 5908	13 5909	14 5910	15 5911	16 5912	17 5913
18 5914	19 5915	20 5916	21 5917	22 5918	23 5919	24 5920
25 5921	26 5922	27 5923	28 5924	29 5925	30 5926	31 5927

### JANUARY 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 5928	2 5929	3 5930	4 5931	5 5932	6 5933	7 5934
8 5935	9 5936	10 5937	11 5938	12 5939	13 5940	14 5941
15 5942	16 5943	17 5944	18 5945	19 5946	20 5947	21 5948
22 5949	23 5950	24 5951	25 5952	26 5953	27 5954	28 5955
29 5956	30 5957	31 5958				

### FEBRUARY 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 5959	2 5960	3 5961	4 5962
5 5963	6 5964	7 5965	8 5966	9 5967	10 5968	11 5969
12 5970	13 5971	14 5972	15 5973	16 5974	17 5975	18 5976
19 5977	20 5978	21 5979	22 5980	23 5981	24 5982	25 5983
26 5984	27 5985	28 5986	29 5987			

Moon calendars courtesy StarDate online

<http://stardate.org/nightsky/moon/>

## JOIN THE AAVSO!

Help support the mission of the AAVSO and enjoy exclusive access to publications, access to robotic telescopes, and more!

### Types of Memberships Offered and Dues

Annual:	Adult	US \$75.00
	Associate (Under 21)/Pension-Income Limited	US \$37.50
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All applicants please add a one-time application processing fee of US \$10.00.



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Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

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Age \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Vocation \_\_\_\_\_

Telescopic Equipment \_\_\_\_\_

Astronomical Experience (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about the AAVSO? \_\_\_\_\_

To apply online, please [click here](#). We accept checks (drawn on a US bank), money orders, and Visa/Mastercard credit cards. Please send your application, first year's dues, and application fee to: AAVSO, 49 Bay State Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA. If using a credit card, please fill out the following information:

Card#: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 3-Digit Security Code (on back of card) : \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

See the following pages for important information about membership renewals and contributions.

## GET THE LATEST CAMPAIGN NEWS...

Subscribe online to receive AAVSO *Alert Notices* and *Special Notices* directly to your email's inbox. Stay on top of stellar activity and get detailed information on current and upcoming observing campaigns by visiting <http://www.aavso.org/observation-notification> to subscribe today!

# MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

On this page is a copy of the AAVSO membership renewal form for 2012. You may also renew your membership online. Safe and secure online payments are possible by visiting <http://www.aavso.org/membership-renew>. If your postal or email address has changed, please also take a minute to update your personal profile online. Simply click "User login" at the upper right of the home page, then go to "My account." Please note: We are transitioning from charging membership dues from the fiscal year (October 2010–September 2011) to the calendar year (January 2012–December 2012). If you paid dues for 2010–2011, you will be charged for the rest of 2011 (October–December) plus all of 2012. The prices listed for 2012 have been updated to reflect this. This is a one-time update and does not reflect a change in the price of our membership dues. In addition to your dues, your contributions to the AAVSO further support the organization's activities and are very much appreciated. Also, on the next page you will find descriptions of the various funds to which you may contribute.



**AAVSO**  
**Membership and Subscriptions**  
49 Bay State Rd  
Cambridge, MA 02138-1203

*Address Service Requested*

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## Payment and Contact Information

My **check** for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. *Checks must be in US funds and made payable to AAVSO.*

For payment by **credit card** please complete the section below. *All fields are required.*

\_\_ Visa \_\_ Mastercard Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

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Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2012 Membership Dues Renewal Form

**Membership Type** (please check one):

- Annual \$75       Sustaining \$150  
 Associate (under 21) \$37.50  
 Pension/Limited Income \$37.50

**Contributions** (see other side for descriptions):

AAVSO Building Fund	\$ _____
Janet A. Mattei Research Fellowship	\$ _____
Margaret Mayall Assistantship	\$ _____
Member Sponsorship Fund	\$ _____
AAVSO General Fund	\$ _____

**TOTAL ENCLOSED:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_



## SUPPORT THE AAVSO

In order to sustain the AAVSO and its operations, we rely on the generous support provided by members, sponsors, donors, and staff. Together we are the AAVSO. Your gift is a way for you to say that you believe in what we are doing and that you want it to continue moving forward. Every dollar given and membership purchased benefits the AAVSO in a necessary and unique way.

**AAVSO Building Fund:** Contributions to this fund will be used to replenish the Endowment, to refurbish the building, and to cover other costs associated with the purchase of 49 Bay State Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts. We expect the new Headquarters to meet the needs of the AAVSO for decades to come, with sufficient space for growth, for safeguarding our century-long archives, and for giving us the opportunity to hold meetings and workshops at Headquarters.

**Janet A. Mattei Research Fellowship Fund:** Contributions to this fund help to bring a visiting scientist, postdoctoral researcher, or student to AAVSO Headquarters to perform research using the AAVSO International Database with the goal of disseminating the results throughout the astronomical community.

**Margaret W. Mayall Assistantship Fund:** Established in honor of the former Director of the AAVSO on the occasion of her retirement in 1974, this fund is used to hire summer research assistants to carry out various important technical projects of the organization.

**Member Sponsorship Program:** Contributions to this fund go toward paying for the membership dues of an active observer who otherwise would not be able to become a member of the AAVSO. The recipients are chosen by the Director based on the quality and number of observations submitted to Headquarters and the perceived benefit of membership to the observer.

**AAVSO General Fund:** Contributions to this fund help in the operation of the AAVSO, enabling us better to serve the needs of our members and the astronomical community.

If you wish to contribute to one or more of these funds please fill in the amount on the appropriate line on your renewal form and include it in the total. *All contributions are tax-deductible in the USA.*

You may also donate online at: <http://www.aavso.org/support-aavso>

**Thank you for your support of the AAVSO!**