

*The 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the AAVSO  
Cambridge & Woburn, MA  
October 4 - 8, 2011*

**History Session Schedule & Abstracts**

**Wednesday, October 5, 2011**

9:00am – 10:30am **History Session 1: Women in AAVSO History**

“The Career and Contributions of Martha Stahr Carpenter: Between a Rock and (Several) Hard Places”

**Kristine Larsen**

Martha Stahr Carpenter served an unprecedented three years as AAVSO president during the Association's difficult years in the 1950s. Despite the pivotal role this Cornell University radio astronomer played in the history of the AAVSO, little has been collected and published about her life, career, and service to the AAVSO. Carpenter was no stranger to battles and difficulties throughout her own career. For example, as a freshly minted Ph.D. she served as main advisor to Vera Rubin's controversial masters thesis, and after marrying Cornell Industrial and Labor Relations professor Jesse Carpenter found herself the victim of anti-nepotism rules. In addition, her work at Cornell cataloguing extraterrestrial radio sources was classified by the government until recently. Carpenter completed her career at the University of Virginia in the 1970s, and was involved in a number of astronomical organizations besides the AAVSO (of which she is a life member). This talk will provide an overview of Carpenter's life and career, filling in a gap in the history of the AAVSO's council members.

“Margaret W. Mayall in the AAVSO Archives”

**Michael Saladyga**

AAVSO Director Margaret W. Mayall's presence in the AAVSO Archives is unique in that it was only by her effort that the AAVSO's institutional memory survived the organization's years of struggle. The history of the AAVSO could not have been written thoroughly and accurately without its archival collections. Similarly, the story of Mayall and the AAVSO within that history is not only informed, but is also formed by, the materials that she chose to collect and preserve over the years.

***COFFEE BREAK***

11:00am – 12:30pm **History Session 2: Women in AAVSO History**

“Guiding Forces and Janet A. Mattei”

**Elizabeth O. Waagen**

We are all shaped by the guiding forces in our lives - some we seek out, some seek us out, many are beyond our control. These forces may be human or not, personal or cultural, social, political, historical, or environmental, constructive or destructive. If we are fortunate we have had at least one human mentor who has nurtured us and helped us to grow towards our potential. Throughout her life, Janet Akyüz Mattei was the recipient of the effects of guiding forces - good and bad - and was herself a guiding force. From childhood on, she was blessed by having mentors and she responded constructively to them. This presentation discusses Janet Mattei both as she was shaped by guiding forces and mentors and how, as a mentor and guiding force herself, she shaped others.

“The AAVSO Widow--or should we say Spouse?”

**Thomas R. Williams**

Little attention has been paid in discussions of AAVSO observers over this past century of progress to the familial consequences of membership. But at one time or another, or frequently, we have all experienced, in conversations with non-astronomer friends, the casual question, “But how does your wife feel about your spending so much time at the telescope and not in bed with her?” And while our Directors have not all been ‘observers’, they too are forced to keep unusual office hours, answer telephones in the middle of the night, etc. So this paper will attempt to deal with the issues involved, or more appropriately, to portray the many surprising ways in which the AAVSO spouse (not all observers are male nor directors female!) responds to a spousal pre-occupation with variable stars.

## ***LUNCH BREAK***

### **2:00pm – 3:30pm History Session 3: The History of Variable Star Organizations**

“BAA VSS 1890-2011”

**John Toone**

A summary history of the longest established organized group of variable star observers whose work extends from the latter stage of the 19th Century until today.

“Introduction to BAV”

**Josch Hambsch, Joachim Hübscher**

The “Bundesdeutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Veränderliche Sterne” was founded 1950 in Berlin. The intention was - and still is - to support amateurs in the systematic observation of variable stars. The History of the German workgroup, the classical working focus (maxima and minima and single estimates) and the main publications (BAV Mitteilungen and Lichtenknecker-Database of the BAV) will be described.

“The "Werkgroep Veranderlijke Sterren" of Belgium”

**Patrick Wils, Eric Broens, Hubert Hautecler, Frans Van Loo**

The "Werkgroep Veranderlijke Sterren" (Working Group Variable Stars) of the Belgian "Vereniging Voor Sterrenkunde" (Society for Astronomy) was founded in 1969. The group and its individual members have been among the pioneers in several areas of amateur variable star astronomy: CV alert bulletin boards and telegrams, CCD observing, automatic handling of observations and online availability of the data, collaboration with professional astronomers, telescope automation, remote observing and data-mining. Realizing the importance of international collaboration for a small group, there has always been a close contact with other variable star organizations. As a result also the first European meeting of the AAVSO was hosted in Brussels in 1990.

## ***COFFEE BREAK***

### **4:00pm – 5:30pm History Session 4: The History of Variable Star Organizations**

“The RASNZ Variable Stars Section & Variable Stars South”

**Stan Walker, Albert Jones (read by Don Starkey)**

The Variable Star Section of the RASNZ began in 1927 and has now been revived in the shape of Variable Stars South. This review introduces Variable Stars South, then continues by outlining some of the history of the RASNZ VSS, discusses the more worthwhile achievements of the old RASNZ VSS and mentions some of the observers and others who contributed to those successes.

“The GEOS Association of Variable Star Observers”

**Josch Hamsch, J.-F. LeBorgne, E. Poretti and the GEOS association**

GEOS is an astronomical association created in the 1970ties with the aim in mind to promote research among amateurs in Europe. We started with people from Belgium, France, and Italy, and later extended to Spain, Switzerland and Germany. More recently, people from USA joined the group. The basic idea was that amateurs should extract by themselves scientific information from their observations (visual observation at the beginning and then by electronic means) and publish their results. It is not surprising that some GEOS members became professional astronomers and that the amateur-professional collaboration strengthened in the years. From the beginning, it has been clear that the study of variable stars was a privileged topic where such projects can develop. Since the 1980ties GEOS members have published a number of scientific papers, even in refereed professional journals. Presently, the observations are mainly done using CCD cameras though still visual measurements exist. During the past decade the main development has been the creation of a public database concerning RR Lyr star maxima. This is a unique tool for those that want to study RR Lyr stars in particular it allows to follow period variations of the stars since their discovery, for some of them since more than 100 years. In parallel to the database, a project called "GEOS RR Lyr survey" was designed. It has several aims. First, add significantly more maxima timings of the brightest RR Lyr stars: this is done essentially with robotic telescopes. Secondly, study fainter understudied stars in order to tune their period and find new stars which exhibit the so-called Blazhko effect. And third, the characterization of this Blazhko effect is one of our main research topic. Other variable stars are also studied, eclipsing binaries, Delta Scuti stars, etc. GEOS has a good cooperation with other variable star associations, mainly BAV and AAVSO.

“The Visual Era of the AAVSO's Eclipsing Binary Program”

**David B. Williams, Marvin E. Baldwin**

We survey the beginnings, development, and end of the visual era of the AAVSO's eclipsing binary program. Beginning in 1960 when an article in *Sky & Telescope* introduced the timing of eclipsing binary minima to amateur observers, the program expanded and flourished for 45 years, eventually enlisting dozens of observers contributing hundreds of minima timings each year. We review the development of observing techniques, charts, predictions, the reduction and publication of results, and how the higher precision of CCD photometry finally ended the era of visual observation.

## **Friday, October 7, 2011**

7:00pm – 9:00pm **History Session 5: Variable Star Observers**

“Walking With AAVSO Giants- A Personal Journey”

**Roger S. Kolman, Mike Simonsen**

Through pictures, anecdotes and remembrances, the author recounts the inspiration, friendship and camaraderie shared with legendary AAVSO figures such as Leslie Peltier, Clint Ford, Carolyn Hurlless, Tom Cragg, Margaret Mayall and others that has led to 50 years as an AAVSO member and observer, and a career as a professional astronomer and educator.

“Variable Star Observers I Have Known”

**John E. Bortle, Charles Scovil**

By virtue of my 50 years as an active visual observer with AAVSO and enhanced through my three decades as editor of the AAVSO Circular, I have enjoyed the opportunity to come into contact with the great majority of the association's true luminaries active during AAVSO's second half century. As a small part of our celebration of 100 years of amateur scientists contributing to the field of variable star monitoring and solar observation through the auspices of the AAVSO, I would like to share with you some personal recollections of a few of

these individuals. Some of you who have devoted decades to the association, as I have, will undoubtedly recognize these names immediately. For others of you who have joined the organization more recently, but perhaps have perused the volume *Advancing Variable Star Astronomy*, it may add a degree of more personal familiarity to those individuals otherwise known to you only as written names on a page. In one manner, or another, all have played an important role in AAVSO's 100 years of service to the astronomical community.

“Appreciation for Clint Ford and the AAVSO of 50 Years Ago”

**Tony Hull**

Of the ways a career in astronomy can start, being mentored from a young age is one of the best. I had the great fortune of living about a half mile up the country road from family friends and extraordinary AAVSOers Clint and Alice Ford. It was a Sunday afternoon ritual for my family and the Fords to visit, and I began to become hooked on astronomy at age 8 when Clint showed me around his roll-off roof observatory, then showed me the eyepiece projection of the sun through his well-used 10-inch Newtonian. While adults conversed, I would go page-by-page through Clint's *Sky and Telescopes*, frequently asking questions. Clint's love of astronomy was apparent, as was his proficiency. As I got a little older, Clint helped me design my telescope, introduced me to the world of ATM, and taught me much, including the use of AAVSO charts, about the variety of variable stars and the visual estimation of magnitude. Newton and Margaret Mayall and other AAVSOers would come visit in Suffield frequently, and I had the privilege of meeting them. With Clint as a sponsor, and I recall Margaret Mayall as well, I became a member of the AAVSO at age 15, and later attended the 50th meeting of the AAVSO at the Library of HCO.

Personal memories of the Clint Ford, and of the AAVSO 50th Anniversary Meeting, will be presented, and appreciations given for how these jumpstarted my career in astronomy. I now hold an Adjunct Professorship of Physics and Astronomy at the University of New Mexico, and in my career have had diverse responsibilities in NASA and industry, including earth orbiting and planetary probes, service as NASA Technologist for Terrestrial Planet Finder Coronagraph, and recently as Program Manager for the Optical Finishing James Webb Space Telescope, NASA's next flagship mission. My association with Clint and the AAVSO are fond memories.