

BOOK REVIEW

Received: January 27, 1992

Observing Variable Stars: A Guide for the Beginner

David H. Levy, 1989, 198 pages, ISBN 0-521-32113-1, hard cover \$21.95, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England.

Until a few years ago, there were no guides to learning how to observe variable stars except the one by former AAVSO Director Margaret Mayall. David Levy's book is one of several guides currently available. Although the book is a guide for observing variables, it would be useful for any beginner amateur astronomer. For those who are already familiar with observing, Levy's book is a tale of the romance of astronomy and observing. Particularly touching are the sections near the end of the book on John Goodricke, the AAVSO, and Leslie C. Peltier.

The book is divided into four parts. The first covers learning the sky, constellations, and observing equipment. The star charts include the southern sky. Levy suggests making up your own constellations as a way to learn the sky. He also discusses training the eye and shares personal experiences on the tricks the eye can play.

The second part, which is the bulk of the book, covers an introduction to the different kinds of variable stars and different techniques for making visual estimates of the stars. Following this are complete instructions on reporting the observations to AAVSO Headquarters.

The third part covers a list of variables to observe for each season. A section of southern sky stars is included. There is a grading system used by the author to determine the ease or difficulty of observing each star.

Part four contains the information on John Goodricke and Leslie Peltier.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to beginners. The information you need to know about observing variables is contained in this book. If you are a seasoned observer, purchase the book anyway, for it contains tidbits of history, personal anecdotes, and variable star trivia. Be sure to look up the Betelgeuse song on pages 62-63 and the Supernova song on page 79. Experienced observers may use this book as a handy reference guide as well as enjoyable reading to pass the time on cloudy nights.

John W. Griese, III
965 Elms Common Drive, Apt. 100
Rocky Hill, CT 06067