

The American Association of Variable Star Observers

The tenth **AAVSO William Tyler Olcott Distinguished Service Award** is presented to

Brian A. Skiff

“for his unwavering support of variable star astronomy and observing, in both the professional and non-professional realms, through his ambassadorial online presence as friend and mentor to those yearning to learn more about variable stars and astronomy in general, as well as his tenacious dedication to the betterment of astronomical data worldwide.”

Brian is one of the true prolific observers. At Lowell Observatory, he has spent innumerable hours using the 21-inch telescope for solar constant monitoring and was the main observer for the LONEOS near-Earth asteroid program on Anderson Mesa. He inherited the Houk HD classification plates and has been continuing this essential spectral classification project. He has calibrated many variable star fields and created a merged catalog of field sequences from the literature. Brian has also contributed thousands of archival observations to the AAVSO. When he runs across an interesting paper, he digitizes the observations and emails them to Headquarters.

Brian has also mentored many budding amateur variable star observers. When photometric questions are raised on the AAVSO discussion group, he is often the first to respond and the most authoritative. His encyclopedic memory of variable stars and of observational history is truly amazing.

His mentoring activities do not stop with amateurs. The current AAVSO Director remembers one night when, on the 1.0-m telescope at the USNO-Flagstaff Station, he posted one of his first calibration sequences to the AAVSO discussion group. He received a phone call from Brian (at midnight!), suggesting how that calibration sequence could be improved to make it more useful to AAVSO observers. The mentoring activities also don't stop at variable stars – Brian's postings on the Minor Planet Mailing List are well respected and often the last word on any subject. At meetings, he is often surrounded by observers asking questions. When Jay McNeil discovered his nebula in Orion, he first called his friend Brian Skiff, who told him how to report his discovery.

A reporter contacted him for an interview a few years ago, and a half-hour program on BBC radio called *Lonely Nights* resulted, devoted to an observing night with Brian, giving a taste of professional astronomy to many amateurs and the general public. You can always have a long conversation with Brian if you mention the word “jazz”.

It gives us great pleasure to present the tenth AAVSO William Tyler Olcott Distinguished Service Award to Brian A. Skiff.

Jaime R. García
President

Arne A. Henden
Director

*Presented at the AAVSO100th Annual Meeting
Woburn, Massachusetts, October 8, 2011*