

The American Association of Variable Star Observers

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

Virginia Trimble

“for her influential five-decade-long body of research in astronomy, including work on myriad types of variable stars; her outstanding service to the discipline through her annual reviews of advances in astrophysics as well as her work with professional organizations; her ability to bring to life the history of astronomy and communicate effectively with the public; and her invaluable service as a mentor and role model to multiple generations of astronomers.”

It is an honor and privilege to present the Olcott Award to Dr. Virginia Trimble, an exceptional colleague, friend, mentor, and role model. There is hardly a subdiscipline of astronomy that has not been touched by her keen intellect, curiosity, and creativity. From her Ph.D. thesis on the supernova remnant the Crab Nebula to her research on white dwarfs, dark matter, stellar evolution, star clusters, gravitational redshifts, galactic magnetism, and binary stars, Dr. Trimble has dared to ask probing and insightful questions about the universe around us. Her sixteen years of annual reviews of advances in Astrophysics in the *Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific* allowed members of the astronomical community not only to keep abreast of the larger developments in the field outside of their own narrow research programs, but thanks to her commentary to understand the connections between these seemingly disconnected studies. It could be rightfully said that for sixteen years Virginia Trimble knew more about modern astronomy than anyone else in the entire world.

Variable stars have repeatedly been the focus of Dr. Trimble’s sharp gaze. From R Coronae Borealis stars to eclipsing binaries, rotating FK Comae Berenices variables to pulsating helium stars, novae to their dwarf cousins, and T Tauri protostars at the start of their lives to supernovae at the end of theirs, all manner of animals from the variable zoo have made appearances in Dr. Trimble’s impressive collection of over 850 publications.

Much of Dr. Trimble’s research has not only centered on the history of stars in our universe, but the history of the people who study those very same stars. Her work on historical discoveries, debates, and debacles has corrected popular misconceptions, returned credit to its rightful place, and reminded current astronomers of the giants, subgiants, and everyday main sequence stars upon whose shoulders we now stand.

It is this human element in her work that makes Dr. Trimble so exceptional. A colleague to many, a close friend to the fortunate, and a mentor and role model to multiple generations, Dr. Trimble’s singular career has been filled with humor, creativity, tenacity, and generosity. From being only the second woman to be granted telescope time on the 200-inch telescope at Mount Palomar to becoming the First Lady of astronomy, Dr. Trimble has been a quintessential cheerleader and ambassador for our science. Dr. Trimble has repeatedly given of herself to the astronomical community, for example, serving as Vice-President of the AAS and Executive Committee of the IAU and endowing the AAS Weber Award for Astronomical Instrumentation, and it is fitting that she has been the recipient of numerous awards such as the AAS George Van Biesbroeck Prize, the Klopsteg Memorial Lecture Award of the American Association of Physics Teachers, and the National Academy of Sciences Award for Scientific Reviewing. She is also the namesake of asteroid 9271 Trimble.

Virginia Trimble has served the astronomical community with distinction over five decades, and made an indelible mark upon the lives and careers of more individuals than the human eye can see unaided in the sky. It is therefore fitting that the AAVSO number itself among the constellation of organizations that has officially honored Dr. Trimble, by presenting her with the AAVSO William Tyler Olcott Award.

Dr. Kristine M. Larsen
President

Dr. Stella Kafka
Director

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