

About This 100th Anniversary Issue

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Welcome to the Centennial Issue of *The Journal of the American Association of Variable Star Observers*! The AAVSO was founded in 1911 by a small group of amateur astronomers, led by William Tyler Olcott, and encouraged by Edward Pickering, Director of the Harvard College Observatory. By 2011, it had become the most important organization through which amateurs can contribute significantly to astronomical research. In media articles about “citizen science,” the AAVSO is almost always mentioned.

Initially, the work of AAVSO observers was collected by the Recorder, and made available to researchers as needed, usually in the form of light curves. By the time I became aware of the AAVSO, half a century ago, its work was being reported by Director Margaret Mayall in “Variable Star Notes,” in the *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* (I joined the RASC in 1961). Her output was remarkable: she published dozens and dozens of these notes, highlighting both specific and general results of AAVSO observations. Some research, based on AAVSO data, was (and still is) published in other astronomical research journals.

In 1972, *JAASO* was launched. On its first page, Director Mayall writes “sixty-one years after the founding of the Association, we now launch an important new project—one we have hoped for and needed for many years—our own *Journal of the AAVSO*. It will be a place where professional and non-professional astronomers can publish papers of interest to the observer....” Our audience continues to be all those who are interested in variable stars, including AAVSO members and other observers, and professional astronomers and students engaged in variable star research. Together, they constitute a special “family” within the astronomical community, making the AAVSO one of my favorite organizations.

Over the years, *JAASO* has grown and changed, as the AAVSO has. Most obviously, it is now primarily an electronic journal, though hard copies can be ordered. Happily, therefore, *JAASO* is freely available, all over the world. It no longer contains the administrative reports of the Association; these (such as the Director’s Report) are found in the *AAVSO Annual Report* and elsewhere on the AAVSO website. The AAVSO’s 75th anniversary was marked by a special issue (volume 15, number 2, 1986). Volume 25, number 2 contained the proceedings of an AAVSO session on Mira variables, marking the 400th anniversary of the discovery of Mira’s variability. Papers from our 1997 meeting in Sion, Switzerland, were (belatedly) published in volume 35, number 1, 2006. The proceedings of our first truly international meeting were published as a separate book (Percy, Mattei, and Sterken 1992).

In 2011, the AAVSO Centennial was celebrated in several ways, including by the publication of an official history of the AAVSO (Williams and Saladyga 2011), and two meetings—a joint meeting with the American Astronomical Society in the spring (May), and a Centennial meeting in October (the Annual meeting). The Spring meeting included several invited papers related to the history of the AAVSO, presented jointly with the Historical Astronomy Division of the AAS. These, and most of the invited history papers from the Annual meeting, are contained in one section of this Centennial Issue. The history sessions were organized by Dr. Thomas R. Williams, who has provided a short introduction to those papers.

The spring AAVSO-AAS meeting also included two sessions of invited papers on scientific themes relevant to the work of the AAVSO. These sessions were organized by Dr. Matthew R. Templeton, who has provided an introduction to that section.

We also commissioned a set of short science reviews of variable star types, to give a flavor of variable star astronomy at the start of the 21st century. The authors are professional astronomers with special ties to the AAVSO. We thank them for their reviews, and also for their ongoing interest in the Association. I have provided a separate introduction to those review papers.

Finally, there were a large number of papers which were contributed to the two meetings, by members, observers, and other friends of the Association. These reflect the remarkable diversity of the interests and activities of the AAVSO—observation, analysis, instrumentation, education, history, biography, and so on. Most of these papers are contributed by amateur astronomers, who carry out their work voluntarily, as a labor of love.

I close by thanking all the authors of the papers in this issue, Drs. Tom Williams and Matt Templeton for organizing the sessions on AAVSO history and science, Rebecca Turner and the rest of the AAVSO staff for their work in organizing the meetings and other Centennial events. I extend special thanks to the astronomers who review these and all other papers contributed to this *Journal*. These reviewers are normally anonymous, and therefore go unthanked in public. They play an important role in maintaining the standards of *JAAVSO*, and in improving virtually every submitted paper. Last and not least, I thank the production editor of the *JAAVSO*, Dr. Michael Saladyga, Associate Editor Elizabeth O. Waagen, and Assistant Editor Dr. Matt Templeton, for the quality and vast quantity of their editorial work, and their patience in dealing with many challenges in producing a volume like this one, not the least of which is the diversity of content and format of the “raw material.” Thanks, Mike, Elizabeth, and Matt!

We hope that all readers will enjoy this collection of papers, and that many of you will order a printed version of the issue. It, along with the official history (Williams and Saladyga 2011), provides an outstanding and lasting picture of an organization that we know and love.

References

- Percy, J. R., Mattei, J. A., and Sterken, C. 1992, *Variable Star Research: An International Perspective*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.
- Williams, T. R., and Saladyga, M. 2011, *Advancing Variable Star Astronomy: The Centennial History of the American Association of Variable Star Astronomers*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge.

Key to the cover photographs (from upper left): *7th Annual Meeting of the AAVSO, November 10, 1917; 100th Annual Meeting of the AAVSO, October 4–8, 2011; M. Alberta Hawes, AAVSO Charter Member; AAVSO member/observers Barbara Harris, Mary Glennon, Michael Linnolt; William Tyler Olcott, William Henry, and Leon Campbell at the AAVSO Spring Meeting, 1923; at Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass., for the AAVSO's 1924 Spring Meeting; AAVSO member observer Shawn Dvorak; AAVSO members and observers at the 100th Annual Meeting—Martha Stahr Carpenter, Seiichi Sakuma, Seiichiro Kiyota, Thomas R. Williams, and Eric Broens. The background image is a portion of the historical light curve of the variable star SS Cygni.*