

A Reply from Dorrit

My lovely girls:

How you all did surprise me! I am deeply touched and so happy. The party was really a big surprise. I was eating a quick peanut butter sandwich for lunch when Dr. Hammer arrived, saying that he could not yet get into his hotel room. "No thanks," he said, seeing the peanut butter, "I don't eat lunch." We were just talking about what a wonderful person Janet Akyüz Mattei is [he had not yet met her] when she herself arrived - not a surprise as I was expecting her to show up sometime that day. We three were peacefully sipping coffee when there was a tap at the door and about a dozen girls and Mrs. Vincent came in. Ann Piening handed me a beautifully decorated cake she had just baked. It was in the shape of the observatory, complete with door, ivy, and the motto "ad astra per aspera" at the top. Then Barbara Capron, Kathy Wood Paranya and Pam Knight Wetherbee brought in platters of tea sandwiches, hors d'oeuvres and cookies which they had prepared. "For Sunday coffee?" I asked. No - right now! Soon after Barbie Welther started unpacking a huge suitcase full of presents - all for me. Best of all was the Memory Book with pictures, clippings and especially letters from over two-thirds of the girls who have spent a summer at the MMO! I will be re-reading it for the rest of my life - a priceless gift. Thank you all so much!

Then I was handed an envelope with an amusing card and a bank book. Next fall there will be an IAU Colloquium on Variable Stars in New Zealand. I had tentatively been thinking about going. Now, thanks to you, it is definite. Who else at the end of a paper can say in the acknowledgements that her former undergraduate research assistants sent her!

At the AAVSO banquet many of you participated in the celebrations. Speeches in reminiscence of previous meetings on Nantucket were given by Loretta Locicero, Kathy Paranya, Pam Wetherbee, and Ann Piening. Lucia Dexter recalled the history of the Loines Observatory and presented me with a beautiful picture of it painted by her father. It is now hanging in my Yale Office for everyone to admire. Barbara Welther played enchantingly on various recorders. Carolyn Hurless of the AAVSO had set to music a poem about the MMO written by Harriet Dinerstein. Carolyn recited it to her husband Don's exquisite piano accompaniment. And, of course, Janet Mattei, as Director of the AAVSO, had been in charge of everything. The master of ceremonies was Bill Liller, Chairman of the Maria Mitchell Association Astronomy Committee and also Lucia's "boss" at The Harvard - Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. I would like to go on and on; there was so amazingly much -- so much it tends to turn my head. But really it all makes me feel very humble. It was you who made my cherished dreams for the summer undergraduate research participation program bear fruit. From the early days of this program I envisioned that the AAVSO might serve as a proving ground for the presentation of papers by the students. This has become a gratifying conclusion to each summer's work. In commemoration of the fact that you and I have contributed over 90 papers at these meetings, the AAVSO presented me with a special certificate of appreciation. I hope the cordial and scientific relations between these two organizations may always continue.

Thanks again -- and especially to Janet Mattei and Barbara Welther, who with love, artistic taste and ability, jointly arranged this overwhelming tribute.

Affectionately,

Dorrit Hoffleit