

LETTER TO THE EDITOR**"Memory and the Use of Charts"**

I was amused to read that recently several observers had misidentified SU Tau at maximum, when it had in fact faded. In 1979, I made exactly this error and on investigation was amazed at the extent of bias in "forcing" an estimate. Unfortunately, the field of SU Tau displays a similar appearance in both the presence and absence of SU Tau. However, although accepting Mark Heifner's general comment in JAAVSO 11, 87, about fallibility in memorizing charts, it is not strictly correct.

There are two types of memory, recognition and recall, which have been demonstrated to be separate in experiments on normal and brain-lesion subjects. In recognition memory, the object/pattern must be present to stimulate the memory, whereas in recall memory, the details of the object/pattern can be recalled in the absence of the stimulus. Thus, the variable star observer who wishes to rely on memory should not only learn the pattern around the variable but should also make a conscious check on the star's position and identity. This check is necessary when following faint cataclysmic variables which are visible in moderate-sized telescopes only during outburst. In addition, a good recall memory will allow the quick detection of any new object, this being the basic procedure of visual nova searching.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

We are pleased to announce that Elizabeth O. Waagen has been appointed Assistant Editor of the Journal of the AAVSO. This appointment recognizes one aspect of her many important contributions to the AAVSO.

C.A.W.