

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

FLORENCE CAMPBELL BIBBER
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Dr. Donald Menzel and Dr. Willem Luyten were two star boarders at our home for a while. Dr. Luyten is with us this week and we welcome our friend to our 75th!

The AAVSO has been part of our lives since 1915 when we returned from Peru, where my father was the head of the Harvard Station in Arequipa. He became the first Director (or Recorder, as the title was then) of the AAVSO soon after our return. During those years of his Directorship between 1915 and 1949, we made many wonderful AAVSO friends.

One dear friend was Charlie Elmer - or Uncle Charlie as we called him. He was always inviting "Leon" as he called my father to come to his home on Long Island and adjust his telescope for the one observation he made each year (if that). We spent many enjoyable summer vacations at his summer home on beautiful Long Island Sound and he was a very generous host. He was very fond of my mother's cooking and always gave her a dollar for a piece of her fabulous apple pie.

Dr. Charles Godfrey was another amateur who became a family friend and often had dinner with us. He was a minister and was asked as a courtesy by my father to say grace. As this was not the usual practice at our rowdy table we Campbell Kids would look at each other out of the corners of our eyes and stifle our giggles.

Mr. Charles McAteer was a dear man - a locomotive engineer by profession (AAVSO'ers have always been a diverse bunch). He, too, always came to dinner when he was in town, and one night my mother made cream puffs for dessert and put them on the center of the table to follow the main course. Mr. McAteer took one, put it on his plate, covered it with gravy, and ate it. Dad gave us all the sternest of looks and we knew life would be considerably shorter if we dared laugh. Over the years we did have many laughs about this and often wondered how gravy and whipped cream tasted when mixed together.

David Pickering - or "Uncle Dave" - was a member we loved to have visit. He would sit and tell us children stories by the hour. He sang to us too. We had sing-alongs long before Mitch Miller did. He was wonderful with children and a great favorite of ours.

My father retired and, a good friend, Margaret Mayall, took over as Director. The AAVSO left Harvard and Headquarters moved to 4 Brattle Street. I went back to work part-time in 1957 and full-time around 1960. At 4 Brattle Street we had one small room which we quickly outgrew. As time passed the office seemed to grow smaller and smaller as more records and more books were added to our library. We knew it was time to move when one day our landlord came to Margaret and told her to please keep the door of the office shut - those books were making the place an awful eyesore. When people walked by they noticed the awful mess. Imagine! Of All Things! Margaret's precious books an eyesore! We laughed many times over that, and off we went to 187 Concord Avenue. Margaret and I enjoyed many AAVSO meetings together. She ran the meeting and I did the registration. Of course she was always so gracious to all the members and they appreciated her kindness.

Margaret retired as Director and Janet Akyüz (now Mattei) became our third Director. She was fortunate to have been one of "Dorrit's

Girls" at Maria Mitchell Observatory on Nantucket. At the 1969 meeting Dorrit couldn't get over from the mainland because of dreadful weather conditions. The girls ran the meeting and did a wonderful job. Janet gave the talk after the banquet. It was about astronomy in Turkey with slides to show the observatory there. Her English was still slightly idiomatic and as she was identifying the different astronomers who were on the slides, she remarked "As you can see most of our astronomers are gentlemen." This brought down the house! We all laughed, which confused her to no end; and Eddie Oravec leaned over and said to my daughter, "Well I would certainly hope so, Priscilla." It was quite sometime before she knew what we were laughing about. Janet became our third Director at the Blantire Castle, Lenox, Massachusetts, meeting in 1973. I worked for her until I retired in 1976.

There must be something about the month of January that makes the AAVSO Directors so capable. Leon Campbell, Margaret Mayall, and Janet Akyüz Mattei were all born in January and see how fantastic the last 75 years have been!

VARIABLE STAR OBSERVING
AROUND THE WORLD

Thursday
August 7, 1986