

DEDICATION
AND
75TH ANNUAL MEETING

August 6 - 9, 1986

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW AAVSO HEADQUARTERS
AND THE AAVSO 75TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING
AUGUST 6 - 10, 1986

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CLINTON B. FORD ASTRONOMICAL DATA AND RESEARCH CENTER DEDICATED

It was a sunny, August sixth afternoon in Cambridge, Massachusetts. On the front of a long, low, red brick building a bright blue drape hung conspicuously. A wide white ribbon bridged two posts in front of the doorway; a gaily colored tent consumed most of the adjacent parking lot. The efforts of many individuals, hours and hours of planning, and the generosity of some friends of astronomy was about to be formally recognized as a dream come true - a Headquarters building for the AAVSO!

At two o'clock, AAVSO President Thomas R. Williams stepped to the podium under the tent, and with news photographers' cameras flashing and videotape cameras rolling, addressed the audience of well over one hundred. In his remarks, President Williams recognized the attendance of AAVSO astronomers from all parts of the world including South Africa, Spain, Hungary, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Also recognized were Margaret Mayall, past Director of the AAVSO, and guests of Dr. Ford.

Mr. Keith Danskin, AAVSO First Vice-President, gave the audience a short history of how the new Headquarters building had been located. Dr. Janet Mattei, Director of the AAVSO, continued the chronology with the details behind the actual acquisition of the building, the preparations needed to put it to use, and the complex logistics of moving Headquarters operations from the old site at 187 Concord Avenue.

In her remarks, Dr. Mattei impressed the audience with the fact that acquisition of the building would have been entirely out of the question if it had not been for the magnanimous generosity of Dr. Clinton B. Ford.

Dr. Ford was then given the podium to respond. He recalled how the dream of a permanent home for the AAVSO had originated with Newton Mayall, and then described his own part in making the dream a reality. He concluded by saying how happy he was to be able to give the AAVSO the home that he had so long wished for them to have.

Two presentations were made to Dr. Ford. A citation from Governor Michael S. Dukakis lauding Dr. Ford's efforts was read and presented by President Williams, and an elegant letter of congratulations from President Ronald Reagan was similarly delivered by Mr. Danskin.

The Guest Speaker for the occasion followed Dr. Ford, after being introduced by Dr. Mattei. Dr. Riccardo Giacconi, Director of the Space Telescope Science Institute, graciously commended the members and staff of the AAVSO for their very fine work in support of all the orbiting observatory programs to date. As a result of the work of the AAVSO and other amateur astronomer organizations and their very real contribution to professional astronomical research, Dr. Giacconi stated that the next day, August 7, 1986, at a press conference at Astrocon 86 in Baltimore, he would formally announce that amateur observers would be permitted time on the Hubble Space Telescope facility. This announcement was enthusiastically received by all present. Dr. Giacconi continued his remarks with high praise for all the work the

AAVSO has done over the 75 years since its founding, and urged the organization to continue its fine work in its very special field. The text of his remarks appears in this issue of **JAAVSO**.

The Honorable Walter S. Sullivan, Mayor of the City of Cambridge, then briefly and humorously thanked the AAVSO for keeping its Headquarters within the bounds of the city whose name is synonymous with Harvard, MIT, and high-tech industry - not to mention the town of the AAVSO's birth and past 75 years.

So, on a very high note, the guests left the tent to gather in front of the Headquarters building, where to the flashing of many cameras, the Mayor pulled the royal blue drape, unveiling the AAVSO sign, featuring the Mayall projected star, on the front of Headquarters. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Ford cut the ribbon across the front door to officially open the building.

As a fitting finale to the ceremonies, everyone was invited inside Headquarters for a champagne toast by Dr. Dorrit Hoffleit and the unveiling of a plaque by Mr. Theodore Wales, AAVSO Treasurer, recognizing donors who gave \$1,000 or more to the Headquarters or to the AAVSO's two priority projects. A book containing a list of all donors to these programs was put on permanent display directly below the plaque.

During the reception, the attendees had the opportunity to explore the new AAVSO Headquarters, including its gracious library. Friends were able to see Headquarters at work, as several of the staff demonstrated the day-to-day operations in handling observations. Everyone enjoyed the fascinating display which was prepared by AAVSO staffer Michael Saladyga and showed the history of the AAVSO in photos and documents, and was presented in the large meeting room on the ground floor. A further item of interest was a paper "wall" erected in the parking lot. Constructed as a view-block, the wall became a giant greeting card which everyone was encouraged to sign. It is now part of the AAVSO archives.

The final event of the day was a genuine New England clambake under the tent. Everyone ate their fill of lobster, mussels, corn-on-the-cob, and a special 75th Anniversary cake baked by Mrs. Sylvia Danskin. An informal program followed, again recognizing some of the members from distant corners of the globe. One member, Attila Mizser from Hungary, was presented with a gift from Michael Mattei of two 10-inch pyrex mirror blanks, a rare commodity in Eastern Europe.

As members reluctantly headed to the dormitory, everyone agreed it had been a very exciting day, Wednesday, the first of four to celebrate the AAVSO's 75th.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AAVSO 75TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Thursday - Variable Star Astronomy, Past and Present: Dr. Martha Hazen chaired the Thursday morning paper session which covered many interesting, and not too well known, facets of the history of variable star observing. As this session opened the meeting at Harvard's facilities, welcoming remarks were made by Dr. David W. Latham, Associate Director, Optical and Infrared Astronomy Division, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

Thursday - Variable Star Observing Around the World: The Thursday afternoon session was chaired by Elizabeth O. Waagen. The session was devoted to learning about variable star observing history and practices in different associations around the world. Dr. Frank M. Bateson of New Zealand, Mr. Sei-ichi Sakuma of Japan, Mr. Jan Hers of South Africa, and Mr. Attila Mizser of Hungary all spoke on variable star observing activities in their respective countries. Reports from

representatives of several other variable star observing organizations were also read by AAVSO Council members. Texts of these talks and reports appear in this issue of **JAAVSO**.

Thursday's evening activity featured a Headquarters Open House for members to renew old acquaintances and view the historical display.

Friday - Variable Star Symposium: Friday's day-long session chaired by Dr. John Percy covered the latest findings in almost every major field of variable star astronomy. With a nine o'clock start, the session went well past six PM. However, the papers presented were informative and well received, as evidenced by the enthusiastic question and answer periods. A listing of these papers and texts of most of them appear elsewhere in this issue of **JAAVSO**. An Open House graciously arranged by Sky Publishing Corporation was enjoyed by many during the lunch break.

Friday - Pizza, Poems, and Songs: Following this session, the meeting adjourned to the Harvard College Observatory for an informal Pizza Supper. After an indoor-outdoor dinner of pizza and everyone's favorite beverages, the group moved to Phillips Auditorium for a Poem/Song Festival. The evening moved into high gear as AAVSOers entertained each other in a manner reminiscent of the old Gilbert and Sullivan spoofs of years past. Texts of original works performed appear elsewhere in this issue of **JAAVSO**.

Unfortunately, cloudy skies prevented the use of Harvard's telescopes after the festival.

Saturday - AAVSO Annual Meeting and Scientific Paper Session: The Minutes of the 75th Annual Meeting, which appear elsewhere in this issue of **JAAVSO**, describe the morning Annual Meeting of the Association and the afternoon Scientific Paper Session.

Saturday - Annual Banquet: The AAVSO 75th Annual Banquet was held in the spacious banquet room at the Harvard Law School. Members and friends met and discussed the past days' events during the well-catered social hour preceding the banquet.

The banquet itself was carried off in first-class style, from the food to the brightly colored blue and gold AAVSO decorations. Over one hundred forty were served.

Following dessert, Dr. Willem J. Luyten, a long-time friend and the only living charter member of the AAVSO, reminisced about his outstanding career and his variable star observing experiences. The text of his remarks appears elsewhere in this issue of **JAAVSO**.

Then a program of the presentation of awards began. All presentations were enthusiastically endorsed by the members and friends present. President Williams thanked the AAVSO staff for their tremendous efforts in re-locating the AAVSO Headquarters and preparing such an outstanding and unforgettable meeting.

Two poems of appreciation, composed by AAVSO staff member Michael Saladyga, were then read and presented to Keith Danskin and Ted Wales, for their many contributions to the Association, especially in this year of excitement and upheaval. These poems appear elsewhere in this issue of **JAAVSO**.

The 75th anniversary is an auspicious time for recognition of member contribution and achievement. In this spirit, the AAVSO council took the opportunity to make a number of awards.

The AAVSO Nova Award was presented to Rev. Robert O. Evans of

Australia for his visual discoveries of extra-galactic supernovae. This is the second time the award was presented to him, for a total of 12 discoveries. The award was accepted for Rev. Evans by Tom Cragg.

The AAVSO Merit Award was presented to three members, Thomas A. Cragg, M. Daniel Overbeek, and F. Lancaster Hiett. The texts of the citations of their awards appear in this issue of **JAAVSO**.

Finally, Honorary Membership was bestowed on Dorrit Hoffleit and Frank Bateson for their long-standing active roles in supporting the AAVSO. This membership is extremely special, and is rarely awarded.

How could anyone suitably climax such an exciting evening? Gerald Dyck did. A team-effort, multi-media performance composed and conducted by Gerry called "Images and Variations of AAVSO" featured the combined talents of Glenn Chaple, Douglas Danskin, Keith Danskin, Sylvia Danskin, Gerry Dyck, Richard Lynch, Helga Magrath, Elizabeth Waagen, and Theodore Wales. Everyone was given a cardboard window-wheel program which explained what was being shown as slides, what voices and instruments were being employed, and the composition's title.

As the audience watched in awe, slide photographs dissolved into one another and Gerry's vocal and instrumental chorus accompanied each of nine segments as the images moved from sunset, to starry sky, to AAVSO observers, to old and new, to gathering data, to data processing, to anniversary tributes, to starry sky again, and sunrise.

As the sun rose and the last notes faded from the singers and Gerry's recorder, the audience rose in a very moving and expressive response to what they had just experienced. It was truly a fitting climax to the end of a very exciting and memorable week.

Sunday - Open House - AAVSO Headquarters: Sunday morning found people making their way back home after an enjoyable stay in Cambridge. Before leaving, however, many took the time to visit Headquarters once more and admire what 75 years has brought to pass.

Editor's Note: An expanded version of this article appeared in **AAVSO Newsletter**, Number 1, 1986.