

As a record of memories of the October, 1977, meeting of the A.A.V.S.O. on Nantucket Island, Barbara L. Welther has produced a charming little pamphlet. We thought the readers of this Journal would enjoy sharing these excerpts. Ed. Note.

The seed of the idea for this festive occasion was actually sown a couple of years ago when Janet Akyüz Mattei (MMO '69), Director of the AAVSO tentatively scheduled the fall 1977 meeting of the variable star observers on "Our Island." Last spring, in her first year as a member of the Astronomical Committee of the Maria Mitchell Association, Janet firmed the plans for this fall and began to organize both the Annual Meeting for the AAVSO and the special events to honor Dr. Dorrit Hoffleit, Director of the Maria Mitchell Observatory since 1957. Because the essence of Dorrit's directorship has been the nurturing of her special Summer Student Research Assistant program for undergraduates, Janet reasoned that as many as possible of those assistants should be invited to return to Nantucket at this time to participate in the festivities. Together we worked on securing correct addresses and married names for all the former assistants. By July we were ready to send out our announcement of the October weekend.

In August we began receiving favorable responses to our proposal. There would be a surprise tea on Thursday afternoon, October 13, at which a book of letters and pictures from her assistants would be presented to Dorrit. By October we had received memorabilia from over half of the former MMO participants and affirmative replies to return to Nantucket for the weekend from over a dozen of them. It is truly remarkable that there is a letter from at least one assistant for every year from 1957 to 1977, and that there are letters from all five assistants who were at MMO in 1965! So far they hold the record.

To make the Memory Book very special for Dorrit, Janet decorated the inside of the covers by pressing Nantucket wildflowers onto a beautiful shade of blue textured paper. For each year she made a special elliptical label out of the same paper and decorated each one with a unique design of Queen Anne's Lace and silver numerals. The effect is very handsome, indeed, and lends continuity to the whole.

On Wednesday evening, October 12, seven of us ventured forth and met on the dock in Hyannis to embark the 8:15 ferry to Nantucket: Kathy Wood Paranya '66, Loretta Locicero '70, Barbara Capron '73, Lucia Dexter '74, Ann Piening '77, Janet Mattei and I. Aboard, we all enjoyed chatting and catching up on the news of one another and slowly easing back into days of yore. At one point someone mentioned "the chairs and the stairs" [how could anyone ever forget setting up the Library for the Monday evening lectures!] and we all burst into gales of laughter. It was definitely an in-group joke and one that united us all regardless of when we participated in the summer program. After what had seemed like a few minutes but actually was a fun-filled hour-and-a half, Loretta was the first to spot the lights of Nantucket. We all pressed forward to join her in viewing them emerge from the fog. As the outlines of church steeples and buildings became distinct, so did our memories of this wonderland where once we shared a short but significant season with our peers and our peerless mentor....

On her calendar for 1978 Miss Hoffleit has some special dates already circled. In June she will celebrate her 50th reunion at Radcliffe; in August she will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the dedication of the Loines Observatory; and in October, after she hands the keys of the Maria Mitchell Observatory to Dr. Emilia P. Belserene, who has been chosen to be its Third Director, Dorrit will prepare to attend a special colloquium on variable stars in New Zealand. It is the generosity of all of you that has made her participation in this colloquium possible. She is just ecstatic about now being able to attend it and will include us in the acknowledgments at the end of her paper. Such will be the year for our very active and much beloved variable star observer.

Barbara L. Welther '57