



RUTH JOSEPHINE NORTHCOTT

Members of the staff and students are saddened today to learn of the death last evening of Miss Northcott at Toronto Western Hospital after an illness of eight weeks.

Born in Solina, Ontario and educated in Toronto, Miss Northcott graduated in 1934 in the astronomy option of the Mathematics and Physics course at the University of Toronto and earned her master's degree in 1935 for her thesis on "The Calculation of the Heights of Meteors". She was appointed to the staff of the David Dunlap Observatory upon its opening in May of 1935, and at first served as computer. Her careful work, under Dr. Young's supervision, of setting up the observing programs and the plate files and of keeping records established a tradition for thoroughness and care which the Observatory has attempted to maintain under her continued guidance. In the early years she did a large share of the measuring for radial velocity determination, and it became a habit to refer "discordant" spectrograms to "RJN" as a sort of court of final appeal. During the war when the Observatory suffered the temporary loss of three observers she observed regularly and helped Dr. Young and Drs. Frank and Helen Hogg to keep the 74-inch telescope working full time.

In 1944 Miss Northcott was appointed Lecturer in the Department of Astronomy, was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1954 and to Associate Professor in 1962. Her teaching interest lay in the elementary courses, particularly in the extension course for teachers which she taught almost without interruption for twenty years. She had an especial interest in these mature students who often had difficulty in returning to formal study, and her patience and the extra time she devoted to them were matched only by her insistence on their competence. This same thoroughness characterized her supervision of undergraduate laboratory classes for which she took almost complete responsibility for many years. It is safe to say that she is remembered by more Toronto astronomy students than is any other member of the teaching staff.

Miss Northcott's research interest was in stellar radial velocities and in the solution of spectroscopic binary orbits. Her published work in these fields was recognized by the International Astronomical Union of which she has been a member since 1952, serving on the Commissions for Radial Velocities, Double Stars and The History of Astronomy. She attended general assemblies of the I.A.U. in Dublin, Moscow, Berkeley and Hamburg.

Another of Miss Northcott's great contributions to astronomy was her editorial role. Upon the death of Dr. Frank Hogg in 1951 she became Dr. Chant's Assistant editor of the Journal and the Handbook of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, and when Dr. Chant died in 1956 she succeeded him as editor. Since then she has striven to maintain the high standards set by Dr. Chant. In particular, her efforts to improve and enlarge the Observer's Handbook have brought it to a position of pre-eminence among amateur astronomers the world over. The press run for the 1970 edition which she had prepared just before entering hospital will be 12,000. The familiar "RJN" with which she signed over a hundred reviews and notes for the Journal will be missed by readers who have depended upon her to bring to their attention whatever was new in both professional and amateur astronomy. A member of the R.A.S.C. since 1935, Miss Northcott held many other offices, and was President from 1963 to 1965; as Editor she has been a member of Council for many years, and since 1965 she has been a member of the Executive Committee.

Although she devoted her greatest efforts to astronomy, Ruth Northcott had other interests. Possessing a natural talent for drawing, she took courses in oil and water-colour painting from the late J. W. Beatty at the Ontario College of Art. Beatty was a staunch proponent of the style of the Group of Seven, and Miss Northcott's paintings, mostly of Canadian landscapes, reflect the style of those great Canadian artists. Miss Northcott was also a naturalist and a skilful photographer; her colour photographs of wild flowers have been exhibited at the Toronto Camera Club of which she was a long-time member. She had also been a member of the Royal Canadian Institute and served on the Council and on the lecture committee of that Society. She was an enthusiastic traveller, and as recently as last summer she spent three weeks in England and Scotland. Through these varied interests Ruth made many friends who loved her for her modesty concerning her accomplishments and for her faculty of projecting herself into the interests of others. She was kind and gay, and it was always good to be with her.

Miss Northcott is survived by a brother, William of Willowdale and by cousins, principally in Oshawa and Windsor.

Friends may call at the Trull Funeral Chapel, 270⁴ Yonge Street after 2 p.m. Thursday. A service will be held there at 1.00 p.m. Friday, and interment will be in the family plot at Brookline, Ont.

OBSERVING

Dr. Blanco phoned from Chile recently to let us know that the two-color survey program of the southern Milky Way which Drs. van den Bergh and Racine had proposed has been approved. Also approved is a follow-up program of photometry and spectroscopy of the stars embedded in reflection nebulae which are hoped to turn up in this survey. The main purpose of this survey is to extend Dr. Racine's mapping of the nearby spiral structure by the use of reflection nebulae in the southern sky.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Dr. Kronberg is spending the summer at Jodrell Bank where he is observing with the 250-foot telescope. He is undertaking interferometric studies with the Mark I and Mark II and also polarization studies of radio galaxies.

Dr. Roberts has recently returned from Aracibo where he went primarily to look for housing in preparation for his temporary staff appointment there which is to be effective in September of this year.

Dr. Hogg spent the first two weeks in July at her Dunstable, Mass. home, accompanied by her six year old grandson, Edward Sawyer MacDonald. On July 16 she and Edward flew to Washington where they had lunch with Dr. David Hogg and family who then took Edward for a further holiday with them. Dr. Hogg returned to Richmond Hill on July 18.

Dr. MacRae was in Washington again on July 17-18 in connection with the Universities Space Research Association. When he returned he found that the announcement had been made of his election as Chairman of the Council of Institutions. Coming at the time of the excitement over the moon landing, this provided the Toronto reporters with the needed local focus, with the result that Dr. MacRae and the U. of T. received almost as much coverage as the astronauts and Eagle.

Dr. Garrison is leaving on August 1 for the Yerkes Observatory for an observing session, returning briefly on August 10, then embarking on a New England motor trip with his family until August 16 and then off again to Pasadena for an observing session on Mount Wilson until mid-September.

Fred Hickok left on July 18, first to go to Pensacola College to arrange for housing in preparation for his appointment there, then to go to Colorado for a two-week course in the use of the planetarium as a teaching aid. Chalmers Hardenbergh, having completed his masters thesis, returned to the U.S. at about the same time. During the previous week the two were hosts at a "Yankee Go Home Party" at Fred's apartment.

Dr. Rene Racine, appointed Assistant Professor here, arrived yesterday. His family, Claudine and Bertrand, are now in Quebec; after a short vacation with them he will bring them to Toronto. During July he observed on 21 nights at Mount Wilson and Palomar on just about every telescope except the 200-inch .

SEMINARS

July countdowns were as scheduled last month except that on July 23 Dr. Percy spoke on "Beta Cephei Stars in and around η and Chi Persei", and Dr. van den Bergh on "M 82"; and on July 30 Jim Clarke speaks on "Synchrotron Radiation from Jupiter" and Chris Coutts on "Period Changes of RR Lyrae Variables in the Globular Cluster, M5". *

AUGUST

6th D.D.O.
Countdown

Peter Martin, "Structure of Rapidly Rotating
Close Binary Stars".
Bob Hawkins "Infrared Astronomy".

15th and 16th,
McLennan,
"URSI MINOR"
CONFERENCE.

Prof. J.R. Shakeshaft, "Magnetic Fields in the Galaxy",
University of Cambridge. "The Structure of Radio
Sources".

Dr. Dennis Walsh, "Radio Astronomy from Space
University of Cambridge Vehicles".
"Recent Research at Jodrell
Bank"

Dr. Donald McLean, "Recent Observations of the
C.S.I.R.O., Australia Sun at 80 MHz with the Culgoora
Radioheliograph".
"Principles of Operation of the
Culgoora Radioheliograph".

20th D.D.O.
Countdown.

Greg Fahlman, "Redshifts of Quasi Stellar
Objects"
Walter Gorza "Detection of Planets Outside
the Solar System" (tentative)

27th McLennan
Countdown

Dave Lindop "Polarization of Moonlight".
Carl Bignell "Polarization of Radio Sources".

Papers Submitted in July

S. van den Bergh "Photography on the Faint Outer Regions of the
Galaxies". (accepted by Astrophysics Letters).

S. van den Bergh "A Search for an Optical Remnant of the Cassiopeia
and W.W. Dodd Radio Sources". (accepted by Nature).

* The July 30 Countdown was cancelled because of the death of Miss Northcott.

- J. D. Fernie "The Period-Luminosity Relation: A Historical Review"
- J. Percy "Comments on the Identification of β Cephei Stars".

ALUMNI

Born

On July 17, to Dr. and Mrs. Serge (Ph.D. 1967) Demers in La Serena, Chile, a son, André. The Demers have been awaiting this event before moving to Serge's new appointment at Laurentian University, Sudbury.

Appointed

It is understood that Dr. George Mitchell (Ph.D. 1967) has accepted an appointment as Assistant Professor at St. Mary's University, Halifax.

Hubes

Dr. Doug Hube (Ph.D. 1968) and Joan and Sharon visited the Observatory on July 7 en route to Doug's job at the University of Alberta.

Space Visitor

Colin Kaye a graduate student of 1964, now Professor and Sub-dean at the University of Newcastle, Australia, visited the Observatory briefly on July 23 enroute to an assignment at the Houston Manned Space Flight Centre for a Newcastle newspaper.

MISCELLANEOUS

Injured

Tom Clarke suffered a painful accident on June 23 on a canoing trip north of Sturgeon Falls. The canoe was swept into the rapids and Tom was thrown out and his leg badly fractured. His companions improvised a splint and went for help, and eventually he was taken to hospital where the fracture was pinned. After four weeks there he was discharged for further convalescence at home (489-0194). On August 5 he will be examined again to determine when he can return to work at the Planetarium.

Picnic

On July 24, 20 students, staff and families enjoyed a hastily arranged picnic at Bass Lake, Orillia, sponsored by GASA. It has been denied that the swimming session was referred to as the GASA strip.