

The Department of Astronomy of the University of Chicago

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MY ASSOCIATION WITH ASTRONOMY is an association with Otto Struve. I have never studied the subject and never attempted to understand it. I believed in Mr. Struve. I believed in his judgment of men, in his standards of scholarship, and in his aims for his Department. I was sure that he knew the difference between a first-rate man and a second-rate man and that he would not tell me a man was first-rate if he were second-rate. I was sure that he knew the difference between a big department and a great department and that he wanted a great one. He did not want a great department so that he could brag about it; he wanted it so that the members of the Department and the University could make the greatest possible contribution to the advancement of knowledge. I knew that when Mr. Struve made a financial recommendation, he was being as economical with the University's funds as I would be, and often more so.

All I ever did for Mr. Struve was to encourage him. He had the ideas and the plans. He had the intelligence and character that commanded my respect, even when I didn't know what he was talking about. The difficulties he encountered were many. It was necessary for him not only to reconstruct a department in the midst of the Great Depression but also to operate it at a distance from the University. For long periods he had to give up his research to see to the most harassing kind of housekeeping problems in Wisconsin and Texas. All I did was to tell him the truth—that he was doing a great job.

Under Mr. Struve's leadership the Department of Astronomy set new standards of research as well as new standards for the quality of the staff in the Division of the Physical Sciences at the University of Chicago. The record of the Department has been an inspiration to the whole University.

When the Depression arrived, we could all see that research was going to be hard hit and that research in

fields not immediately practical was going to suffer more than any other kind. Research in fields which required vast expenditures for new capital equipment was going to be almost impossible unless universities could pool their resources. Mr. Struve was not alone in his interest in cooperation among universities. I was also interested in cooperation in astronomy because (1) I foresaw that we would lose him unless we could find him a place to look at the stars where he would have some chance of seeing them, and (2) I could not imagine where we would get the money to build an observatory under clearer skies.

By the time the McDonald bequest to the University of Texas was finally settled, Mr. Struve had built up a good Department of Astronomy. The University of Texas had none at all. At the suggestion of Mr. Struve and Dean Henry Gordon Gale I telephoned President Benedict at Austin and obtained his immediate consent to consider a proposal involving the combination of Texas' Observatory and Chicago's Department. Mr. Struve did the rest. The peaceful and prosperous relationship which Texas and Chicago have enjoyed for many years is a testimony to the possibilities of university cooperation—at least when Mr. Struve is the connecting link.

Mr. Struve has brought other universities into his orbit by making observing time available to them in Texas, and the end is not yet. The possibilities of cooperation with institutions which are without the funds required for a modern observatory are far from exhausted.

Under the leadership of Otto Struve the Department of Astronomy of the University of Chicago has made important contributions to the art and science of astronomy. It has given new impetus to research in its field; it has proposed standards for the emulation of scientific workers in every field; and it has demonstrated that universities can work together. This is indeed a great record.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Yerkes Observatory and the American Astronomical Society, a special session of the Society is being held at Williams Bay, Wisconsin, site of the Observatory, on September 6. On this occasion the editorial office of *Science* takes pleasure in presenting a series of articles by those who have been intimately associated with the achievements of this great Observatory.