

Simon Newcomb Award Nomination – Alan Whitman, Okanagan Centre

Few members of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada have contributed so much to international and national astronomical journalism as has Alan Whitman. As a recognized author of books and published articles, his work has ranged from historical material to instructive treatises, and particularly to authoritative, in-depth observational guides drawing on his lifetime of astronomical experiences which have been observed with his naked eye as well as through the eyepieces of all sizes and types of telescopes.

Alan's ongoing journalistic activity includes regularly featured 'Going Deep' articles in Sky & Telescope magazine, which, after his second published article in 2012, now recognizes him as a 'Contributing Editor'. In fact, Alan's association with Sky & Telescope goes back many years and includes featured articles ranging from an early definitive treatise on the use of eyepiece filters to a book review of 'Star Clusters' (2003) by Brent A. Archinal and Steven J. Hynes. Alan's article "Digging Deep in M33" was chosen by Sky & Telescope as one of seventy representative articles in celebration of seventy years of publication for the magazine.

From 1998 forward, Sky & Telescope published articles by Alan exploring some of the many fields of his expertise, which include dark nebulae, globular clusters, the southern sky, planetary observing, and in-depth exploration of extended objects such as M33 and the Lagoon Nebula. His work included no fewer than ten featured articles in Sky & Telescope's 'Deep Sky Notebook' department from 1999 to 2004. Alan Whitman's journalism has not been confined to Sky & Telescope magazine. His work has also appeared in Astronomy magazine as well as Astronomie Heute, a short-lived German version of Sky & Telescope. One of Alan's most noteworthy accomplishments was made as a contributing author for about one-fifth of the 576 page book 'Astronomica' for Australian publisher Millennium House in 2007, which met with reviews such as 'amazing' and 'comprehensive and superb', words which equally apply to Alan's many other literary accomplishments.

As well as in his educational role, Alan has contributed work for scientific papers, most notably the paper he co-authored with Tony George titled 'A new double star from an asteroid occultation: TYC 4677-00696-1' for the International Occultation Timing Association (IOTA) in 2009. The paper reported on Alan's personal discovery of a previously unidentified double star arising from his astute observation of a stepped dimming of the star by asteroid 1048, Feodosia.

On the national front, Alan authored a regular RASC Journal column titled 'At The Eyepiece' for two years, in which he discussed a wide range of topics from observing challenges to eclipse chasing. In addition, Alan has played a role in expanding the horizons of the RASC Observer's Handbook with the 'Southern Hemisphere Splendours' observing list. For a time he also contributed to the Observer's Handbook through 'The Sky Month by Month' section.

As the founding President of Okanagan Centre RASC, Alan has continued to be very active in the Centre, reprising his presidential role in 2010. In the Centre he has contributed ongoing literary work through our 'Focus' newsletter and email communications loop, providing members with in-depth updates and explanations of astronomical events, as well as providing seasoned observational advice drawing on his long experience.

All of Alan's work displays a comprehensive and detailed writing style, which allows the reader to feel his presence at their shoulder while following the path of his observational conquests. Alan has played an important part of astronomical journalism for many years, extending from his local Centre to the national stage, and significantly in the international astronomical community. It is with great pleasure that we nominate Alan Whitman for the Simon Newcomb Award, which would help recognize the exemplary literary role he has played, and continues to play.

Guy Mackie and Dave Gamble, on behalf of the Okanagan Centre