

IN REMEMBRANCE OF BRIAN MARSDEN

by Albert Jones (Nelson, New Zealand)

I first had the pleasure of meeting Brian Marsden (and Elizabeth Roemer) when they visited Wellington on their way to a meeting of the International Astronomical Union in Australia. They brought with them a Comet Medal from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, to be presented to me.

In the years that followed, I valued occasional correspondence with Brian by airmail and later by email.

When I learned in 2000 that he was handing over as head of the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams (CBAT) to Dan Green, I thought he was retiring and wished him well in retirement. He emailed back that he was not retiring but was staying on at CBAT in support of Dan Green. He also mentioned that as it was 54 years since I had found a comet, it was time that I found another one. That was easier said than done — although in the mid-1940s I had spent some time searching for new comets, but I was unsuccessful. The only comet I found then was when I was star-hopping to a variable star and a comet got in the way! Following that I spent telescope time on known comets and variable-star observing.

Therefore, in 2000, I carried on with my favourite variable stars and a few months later, while star-hopping to variable star T Apodis, I happened to notice a nice comet, which I thought must be already named. I phoned Alan Gilmore at Mount John Observatory and told him that I had come across a nice comet and asked him for its name. Alan replied that he had not heard of a comet in that region and decided to inform the CBAT. Next, I heard from Brian that it might be the comet reported by Syogo Utsunomiya a week earlier but had become lost, and if it was the same comet, he suggested where to look for it. That prediction was correct and the comet received the designation and name C/2000 W1 (Utsunomiya-Jones).

Subsequently, Brian wrote “I told you what to do”!!!

A few years later, when Brian came to New Zealand, he visited Nelson. My wife Carolyn and I had the pleasure of meeting him and entertaining him in our home.

The next time he came to Nelson, he was accompanied by (his wife) Nancy, and so we had the pleasure of knowing her as well. They planned to return to New Zealand at a later date, but sadly that was not to be. We felt privileged to know Brian and Nancy. Now we are left with lovely memories of a true gentleman and his wife that will be with us forever.

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