Casper H. Hossfield, 1918–2002

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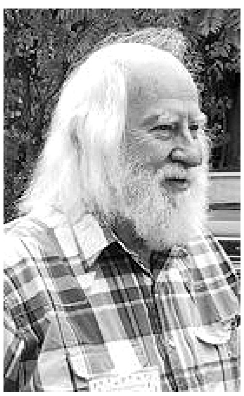
Abstract Casper H. Hossfield was a pioneering AAVSO Solar observer. He designed and improved upon much of the electronic equipment used in solar work today, was Chair of the Solar Committee, and dedicated himself to the service of the AAVSO in many innovative ways. An account of his accomplishments as an AAVSO member and observer is given.

Casper "Cap" Hossfield died at the age of 84 on November 26, 2002, as the result of a stroke sustained the day before. According to his sons Bruce and Bill, his passing was peaceful and dignified. Just a month before, Cap was at the AAVSO Annual Meeting in Somerville, Massachusetts, sharing his ideas about solar work and exhibiting his latest student-participation project, an easy-to-make Very Low Frequency receiver for detecting solar flares and gamma-ray bursts.



Cap Hossfield
1918–2002

Cap joined the AAVSO in 1958. He served as chair of the Solar Division from 1963 to 1979 and, for the last three years, had been the Editor of the *Sudden Ionospheric Disturbances Supplement* that is published along with the *AAVSO Solar Bulletin* each month. Also, he was elected President of the AAVSO for the 1969–1970 term. In 1999, he received a Solar Division Honor Award for outstanding contributions and dedication to the goals of the organization.

Along with Arthur Stokes, who passed away almost exactly a year before, Cap was responsible for creating the designs of most of the Sudden Ionospheric Disturbance (SID) receivers and antenna configurations used by solar observers today. Until the very end of his life, he continued to work at simplifying these designs and reducing component costs in order to attract the largest possible audience of builders. His latest revision appeared in the October 2002 issue of the *Solar Bulletin*.

Cap's interests were not limited to the design of SID equipment. He also devoted much time and energy to the design and construction of seismic sensors, gravity wave detectors, and magnetometers, and he contributed designs, authored papers, and presented talks on, and demonstrations of, many of these items. In recent years, he became convinced that SID receivers were capable of detecting strong gamma-ray bursts (GRBs) and, only a few months ago, had the satisfaction of reporting a candidate signal received by an observer to the High-Energy Group at NASA/

Marshall Space Flight Center with whom the AAVSO has a working relationship. At the time of his death, he was working on a paper relating to the history of sunspot observation in the Solar Division and was administering an experiment aimed at demonstrating the differences to be expected between the classic Wolf and more modern Zurich methods of counting. (I engaged in an animated email exchange regarding this experiment with Cap the day before his stroke and can attest to the excitement with which he looked forward to the outcome of the research.)

Cap served as a mechanic in the U. S. Army Air Force during World War II. He was a machinist by trade, and he was also an amateur radio operator. During the summer he lived on his son's farm in northern New Jersey; in the winter, he resided in Florida. His amateur radio interest in ionospheric disturbances, his knowledge of electronics, and his machinist's passion for precision and resourcefulness all combined to produce so many interesting, innovative, and helpful ideas and inventions during his time as an AAVSO member.

Whether they met Cap in person or via email, most observers will remember him as a patient, tenacious, helpful, inventive, cheerful, truly unique individual who was always ready to try something technically new and who encouraged all who wanted to share in that adventure to "Come along. You'll never know if it works if you don't try it!"

Thank you, Cap, for all you have done for us. We will miss you very much.