

Obituary - prof. Loránt Dezső



Loránt Dezső, founder and former director of the Heliophysical Observatory, Debrecen, died on 16. December 2003 in his ninetieth year.

Loránt Dezső was born on 7. May 1914. He learned mathematics, astronomy and theoretical physics at the Budapest University and he became a research assistant in 1937 at the Budapest Astronomical Observatory founded by the late Konkoly. Meanwhile he got a one-year scholarship as a research assistant at the Zurich Observatory in 1939-40, where he got familiar with the practice of sunspot and flare observations by using a photoheliograph and a spectroheliograph. Being deeply inspired by these experiences he devoted his entire lifetime to the study of solar phenomena.

He established the solar department in the Budapest Observatory in 1948 and started a photoheliograph program. The department moved to Debrecen in 1957 where they established the Heliophysical Observatory. This institute has been substantially enlarged in the early seventies with a coronagraph, Lyot-filter and measuring instruments. Nevertheless, prof Dezső was an enthusiast of the photoheliograph program which remained the basic task of the observatory. He also established an observational station at Gyula (southern Hungary), its telescope is erected at a height of 43 meters above the ground level which is very important for the image quality. He also gathered all Hungarian historical photospheric observations taken by Fenyi and Konkoly which, along with the recent photographic material, cover the longest, though intermittent, observed interval. This huge reservoir of photospheric information is being intensively evaluated to produce the most detailed photospheric database, the Debrecen sunspot catalogue. The scientific activity of prof Dezső basically concerned the sunspot phenomenon (their proper motions, distribution, morphology, temporal variations) and the flares (H-alpha and white light flares) as well as their interconnections. He also taught astronomy at the Debrecen University.

Prof Dezső was an excellent organizer. He had extraordinary communication abilities and unexhaustible energies, he was able to turn attention to all details of a project, construction or scientific event. He organized five international and two national meetings in Hungary and the participants remember with pleasure even after many years on how they enjoyed his hospitality.

The scientific heritage of prof Dezső will inspire our photospheric research work for a long time.

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