

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE SOLAR PHYSICS DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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Abstract: The fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Solar Physics Division of the American Astronomical Society was held virtually in August 2020 with joint sponsorship from the Historical Astronomy Division, following the COVID-19-forced transformation of the original plan to hold the meeting in Spokane, Washington. The presenters had given papers at the first meeting in Huntsville, Alabama, in 1970, and addressed related fields from the vantage point of fifty years.

Keywords: American Astronomical Society, solar physics meetings, formation of the Solar Physics Division, Fiftieth Anniversary celebration

1 INTRODUCTION

Following several preliminary meetings on solar physics in the 1960s, within the structure of the American Astronomical Society (Dupree, 2021; Thomas, 1999), a meeting limited to solar physics was convened in Huntsville, Alabama at the 1970 Annual Meeting of the American Astronomical Society (see Figure 1). Some doubts had been raised about separating the solar physicists (perhaps as of 2019 to be known more generally as heliophysicists, especially by NASA) from the main body of astronomers, but the precedent of the formation of the Division of Planetary Sciences (DPS) within the AAS led to the formation of the Solar Physics Division (SPD). Dale Gary (New Jersey Institute of Technology) was SPD Chair at the date of the meeting and participated in the arrangements.

As part of the AAS Centennial celebration Thomas (1999) wrote about the Solar Physics

Division and its formation 30 years earlier. He discussed preliminary solar meetings in Boulder in 1966 and Tucson in 1968, with the Solar Physics Division established by vote on 22 August 1968. A third solar meeting was held in Pasadena, hosted by the Mt. Wilson and Palomar Observatories in 1969 before the first SPD meeting, in Huntsville in 1970 and the second in College Park, Maryland, in 1972. For a list of meetings see: <https://spd.aas.org/meetings>. Other SPD activities, such as the Hale Prize and *SolarNews*, followed.

2 CELEBRATING THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOLAR PHYSICS DIVISION

Five solar physicists who had participated in the first SPD meeting agreed to participate in the 50th anniversary (Figure 2), and are coauthors of this paper. They are listed below, along with the themes of their 50th Anniversary papers.

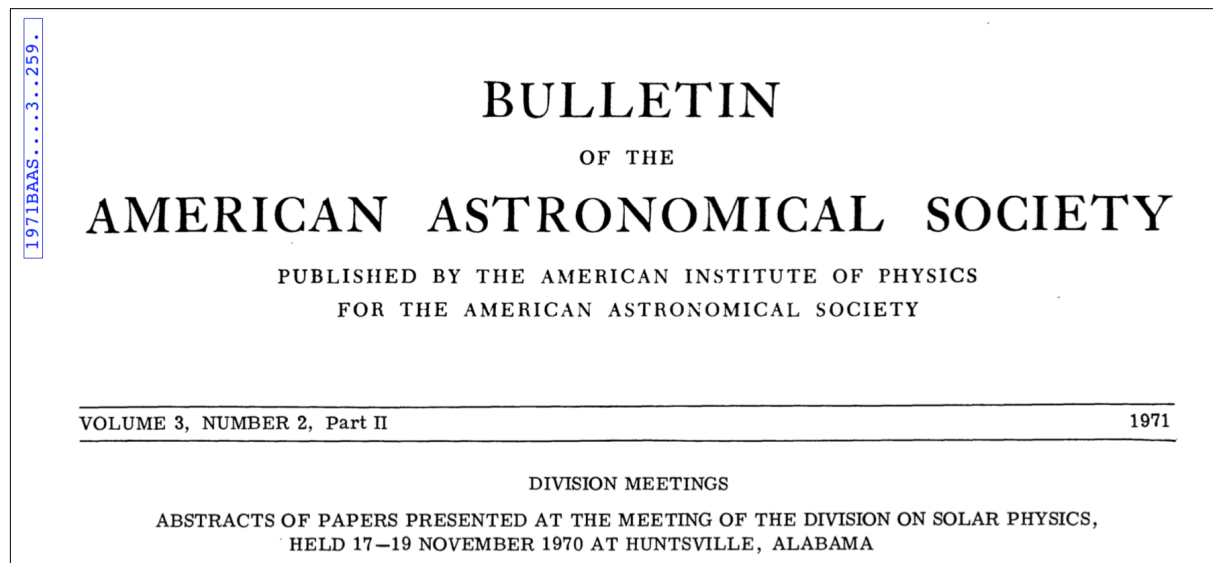


Figure 1 The heading of the abstract book for the first Solar Physics Division meeting.

- Jay Pasachoff, on total solar eclipse observations then and now
- Andrea Dupree, on the solar-stellar connection
- Peter Foukal, on solar physics then and now
- Spencer Weart, on possible contributions of the Sun to global warming
- Jack Zirker, on the state of solar physics

Zirker had been on the staff of the Sacramento Peak Observatory, where Pasachoff did his PhD observations in 1965 with Bob Noyes and Jacques Beckers. Dupree was at Harvard Graduate School of Astronomy a couple of

years ahead of Pasachoff, doing her degree with Leo Goldberg. Weart preceded Pasachoff, who preceded and then overlapped with Foukal, with Hal Zirin at Caltech with a joint appointment at what was then known as the Hale Observatories, a combination of the Palomar Observatory (owned by Caltech) and the Mt. Wilson Observatory (owned by the Carnegie Institution of Washington); Weart went on to study history of astronomy at Berkeley. Foukal spent some years at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics before going into industry and independent research.

3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this special section of the December 2021 issue of the *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, we publish individual papers by the authors of this Introductory paper based on their presentations at the 50th Anniversary Meeting, along with the 'Citizen Science' paper by Hudson et al., as one view of the way forward for solar research.

Figure 2: The SPD's 50th-anniversary logo.

4 REFERENCES

- Dupree, A.K., 2021. Sun and stars: mutual symbiosis. *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, 24, 1063–1068.
- Thomas, J.H., 1999. The Solar Physics Division. In DeVorkin, D.H. (ed.), *The American Astronomical Society's First Century*. Washington, American Astronomical Society. Pp. 238–251.

Editorial Comment: Note that biographical entries for all five authors appear later in this issue of *JAHH*, at the end of each of their individual papers.