

Herbert A. Luft Sunspot Observer



Leif Svalgaard
Stanford University
May 22, 2013

Digitizing Luft's Notebooks

Herb Luft's notebooks: new science from the AAVSO Archives

Posted by Matthew Templeton on May 10, 2013 - 12:25pm

The AAVSO Solar section and AAVSO headquarters are hosting a special guest this week and next, [Leif Svalgaard](#) (at center in this photo) of Stanford University/Solar Dynamics Observatory. Leif is here to digitize sunspot records from the original notebooks of AAVSO member Herbert A. Luft (1908-1988), housed in the [Thomas R. and Anna Fay Williams Archives](#).



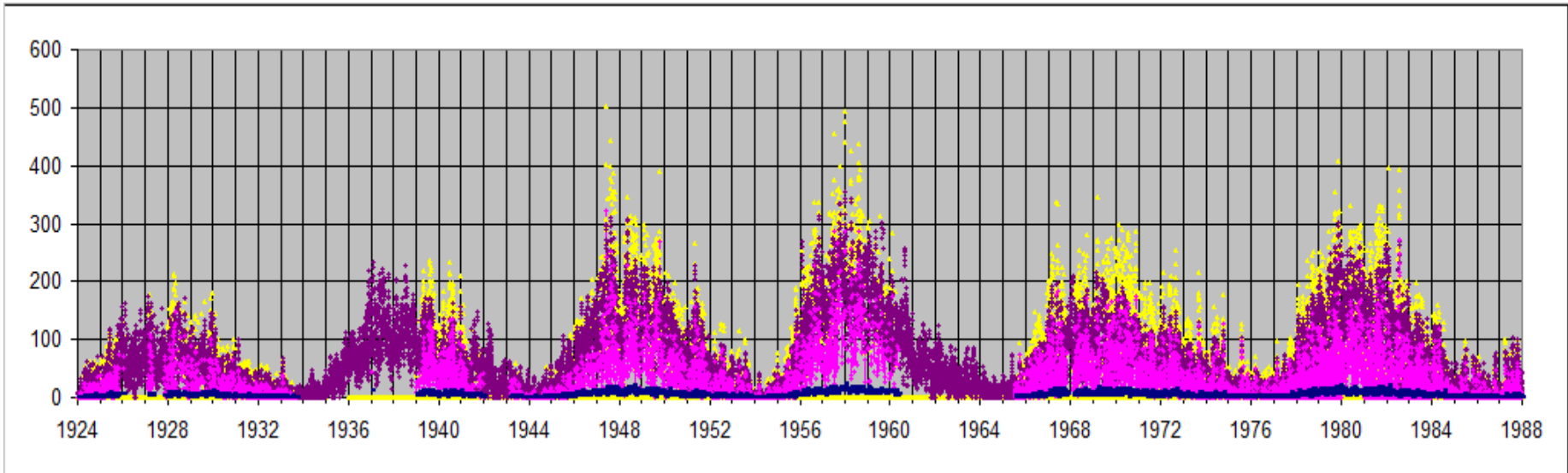
Michael Saladyga (L), Leif Svalgaard (C),
Matthew Templeton (R)

A year ago, our Solar section leader Rodney Howe started telling us about an international workshop series that both he and fellow solar observer Susan Oatney were attending. The [SSN \(sunspot number\) workshop](#), established by Ed Cliver (Air Force Research Laboratory), Frédéric Clette (Royal Obs. of Belgium), and Leif, was designed to reconcile the numerous historical records of sunspot counts. As it turns out, records exist for sunspot counts going back to the 17th century at least, and those records can in principle provide us with a record of solar activity for several centuries. However, some parts of that record were likely corrupted over time by changes in observing procedure and the use of different averaging and weighting factors. (You can read former Solar Division Chair Carl Feehrer's article "[Dances With Wolves: A Short History of Sunspot Indices](#)" on this same topic.) This is problematic, since it is difficult to understand long-term changes in the Sun without having a historical record that is self-consistent throughout. The scientific questions surrounding the sunspot record extend well beyond the Sun itself.

Luft observed from 1923 to 1987

Herbert Luft was born in 1908 in Breslau, Germany and died 1988 in New York, USA

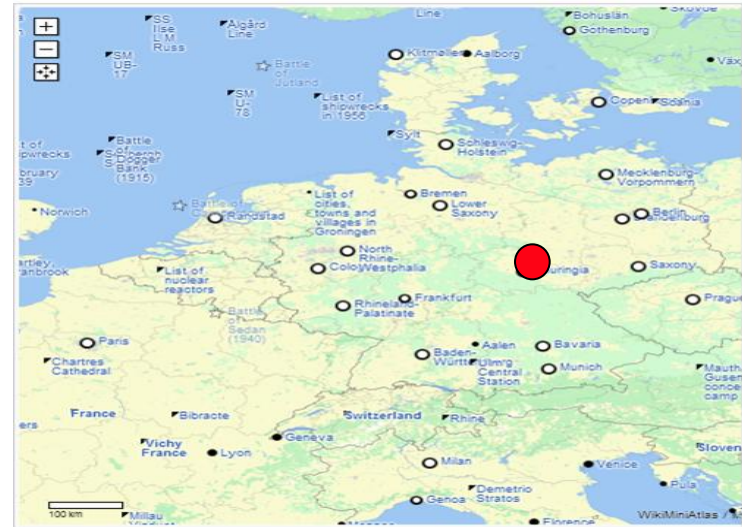
As a teenager he joined various Amateur Associations and was mentored by the slightly older Wolfgang Gleissberg who suggested Luft concentrate on Sunspots.



The nearly 12,000 pages yielded 10,434 usable observations [when image quality was good enough].

Blue = groups, Pinks = spots, Yellow = SSN, Purple = SIDC Official SSN.

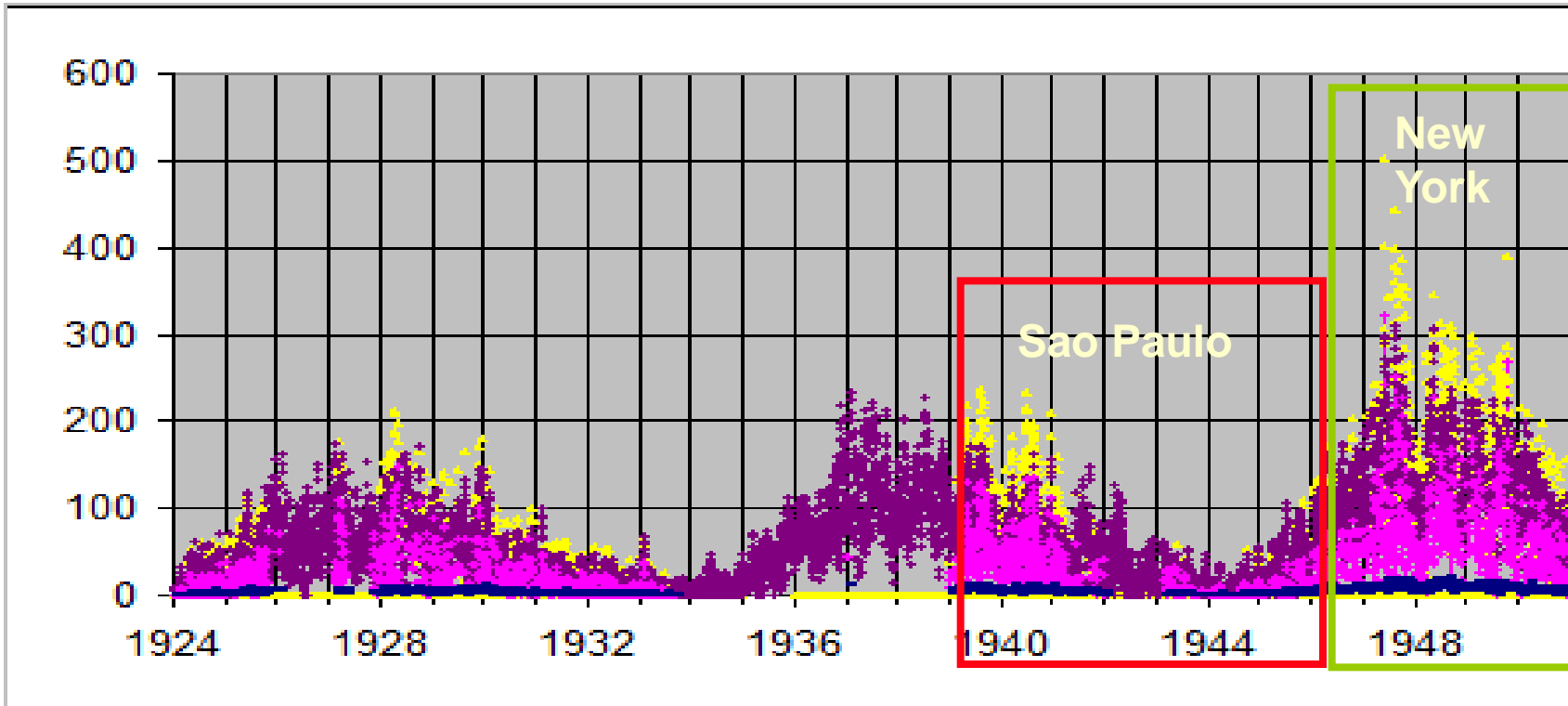
In 1938 Luft was in Buchenwald



Managed to get out in 1939 and flee to Brazil [where he had family]

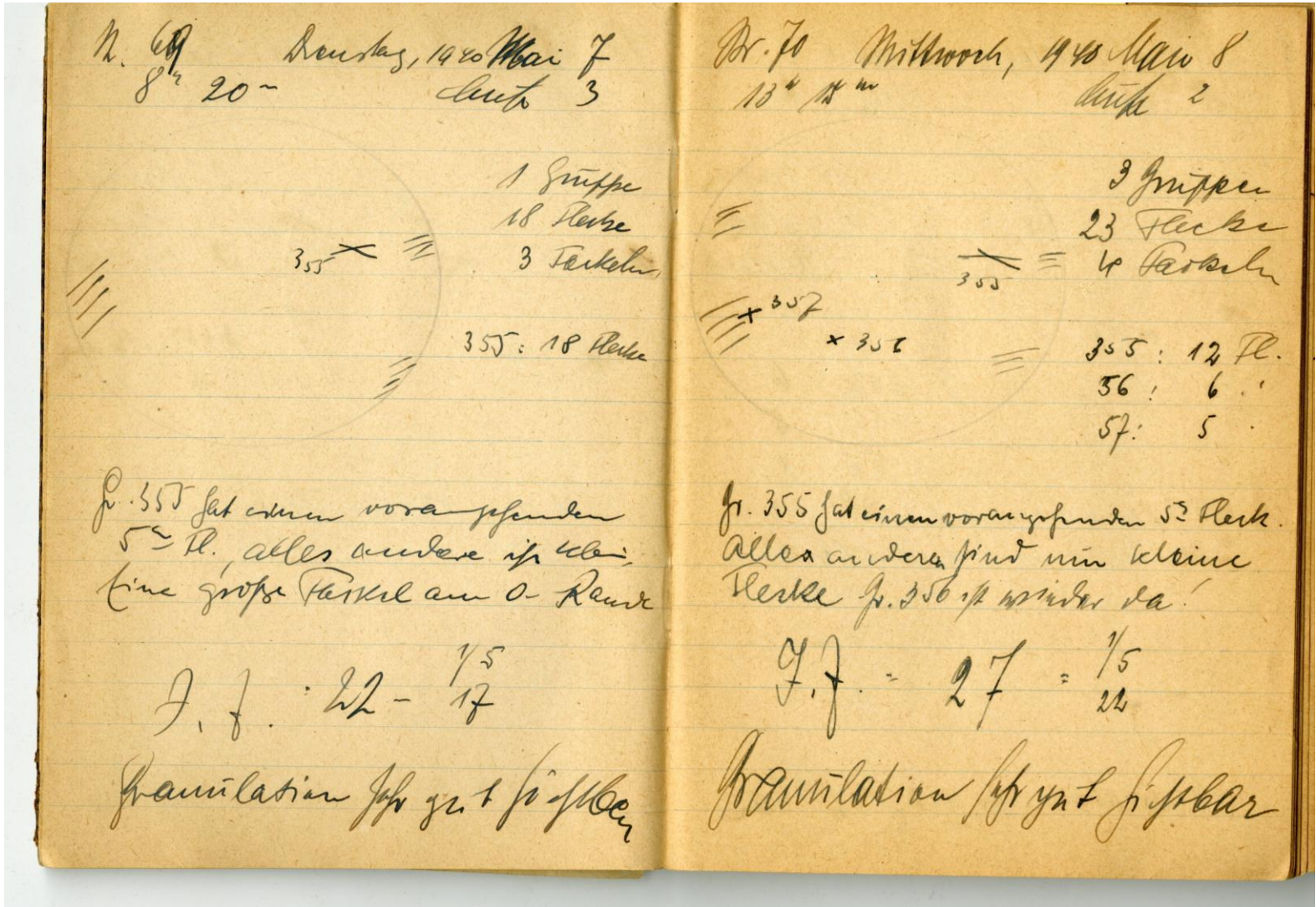


Monte Pascoal 2400-passenger steamer

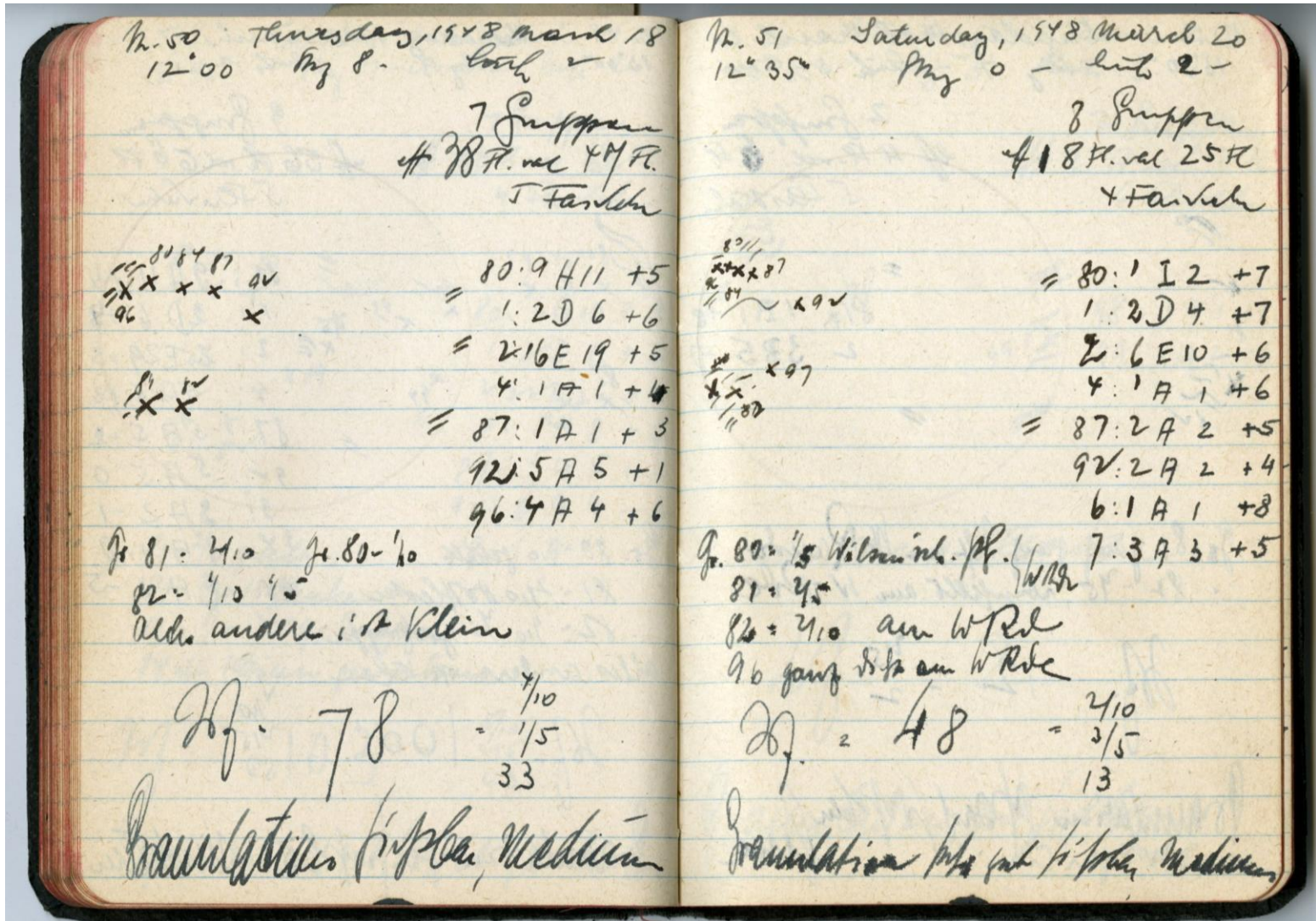


And in 1946 he married [Hilde] and settled in New York, NY

Pages from May 1940 [São Paulo]



Pages from March 1948 [New York]



The Data File

1948	3	7	1948.183			
1948	3	8	1948.186	7	23	93
1948	3	9	1948.189	7	30	100
1948	3	10	1948.191	9	58	148
1948	3	11	1948.194			
1948	3	12	1948.197	9	52	142
1948	3	13	1948.2	7	62	132
1948	3	14	1948.202	10	66	166
1948	3	15	1948.205			
1948	3	16	1948.208	7	50	120
1948	3	17	1948.21	9	56	146
1948	3	18	1948.213	7	38	108
1948	3	19	1948.216			
1948	3	20	1948.219	8	18	98
1948	3	21	1948.221	2	4	24
1948	3	22	1948.224	2	2	22
1948	3	23	1948.227			
1948	3	24	1948.23			
1948	3	25	1948.232	6	19	79
1948	3	26	1948.235	7	35	105
1948	3	27	1948.238			
1948	3	28	1948.241			
1948	3	29	1948.243	9	64	154

Groups Spots SSN

Now we can begin to do Science with Luft's data [so more to come]

