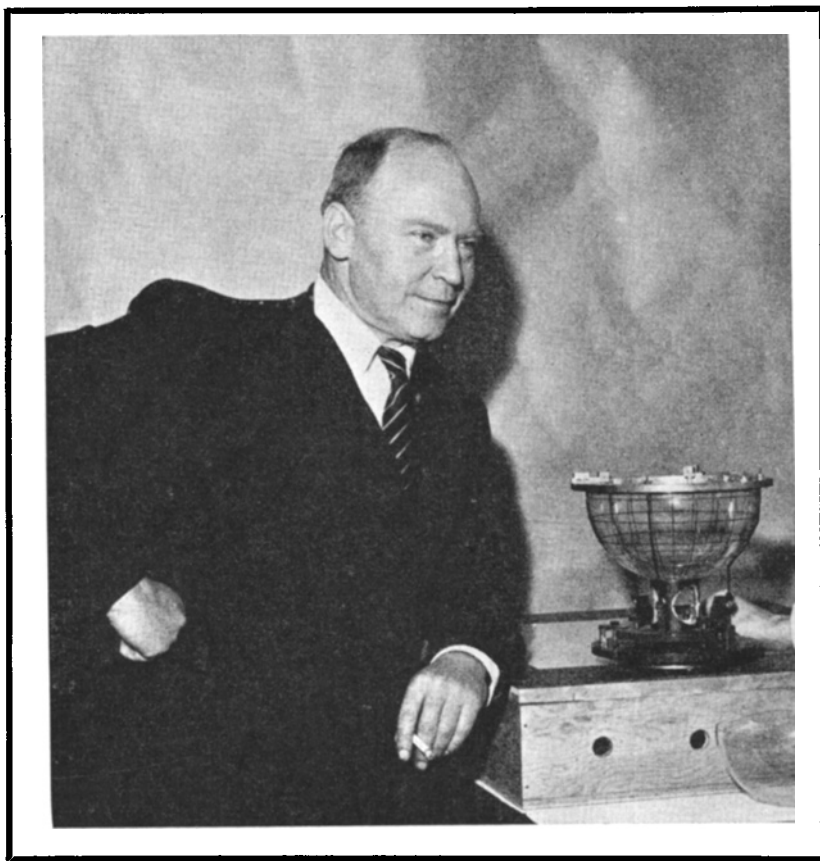


Carl-Gustaf Rossby in memoriam



28 December 1898—19 August 1957

The death of Carl-Gustaf Rossby is a great loss for meteorology, oceanography and geophysics in general. One of the great pioneers and leaders in our science has left us. Carl-Gustaf Rossby was an unusual man. His exceedingly clear intellect was combined with a deep desire to serve science and mankind, a unique capability to stimulate his associates

and a friendly and personal way of initiating and maintaining contact with them.

Rossby's contributions to science are mainly in the fields of dynamic meteorology and oceanography. Well-known concepts such as Rossby-waves, the Rossby-diagram, the Rossby-parameter and the Rossby-number will remain in the meteorological vocabulary for

years to come. His theoretical discussions were founded on a deep insight into the physics of the problems based upon a detailed knowledge of and feeling for the "real" atmosphere and ocean. He had unusual insight into the fundamental processes in nature even when obscured by unimportant details. His approach was basically heuristic. Brutal simplifications, to be justified afterwards, paved the way to the centre of the problems. A characteristic saying often used by him was: "The proof of the pudding lies in the eating." His imagination was constantly developing ideas which were submitted on trial to the group working around him, discussed, improved or rejected, but always stimulating the activity in the group, resulting in a strong feeling of the teamwork with the master. Such working sessions are unforgettable memories to all who worked in close association with him.

But Rossby's interest in a problem never stopped with having solved certain theoretical aspects of it. A strong feeling of responsibility to society urged him to carry it into operation. And much of his work also originates from his attempts to see the place of meteorology in society. Typical examples are his basic interest in weather forecasting, his attempts to couple meteorology and agriculture, in bringing forward the problems of atmospheric chemistry, his great interest in the deep sea circulation of the oceans both from the point of view of climatic changes and the discussion of radioactive waste and finally his concern about the hydrologic cycle in nature. Once a sound idea was born it was pursued with great consistency, first by himself, then gradually by letting more and more of it be taken over by his students.

Students were always attracted to Rossby

resulting in an institute wherever he stayed for some time. The meteorology departments at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of Chicago as well as the International Meteorological Institute in Stockholm are his creations. His brave initiative also contributed greatly to the start of well-known scientific publications such as the *Journal of Marine Research*, the *Journal of Meteorology* and *Tellus*.

Rossby's interest in the planetary problems of meteorology made him very active in international collaboration. In particular after the last war and on moving to Sweden this internationalism absorbed his interest more and more. Many are the discussion groups he has brought together from countries all over the world and it is characteristic that he sought the contacts with individuals wherever he went rather than institutes and organizations they represented. In this way the meetings were informal and fruitful both scientifically and personally.

Professor Rossby will be especially remembered for his generosity, friendliness and sparkling humor. He took great interest in his students and often expressed the idea that you have to consider everyone of them as a special project to be developed according to the personality involved. His enthusiasm and optimism kept him spiritually young and it is characteristic that until the end it was a group of young people he gathered around him.

Rossby had the simplicity of the great. His life was his work. He died during a conference making great plans for the future. Carl-Gustaf Rossby is dead but his name and his spirit will be carried on by friends, students and colleagues all over the world.

B. Bolin.