

JACK EVANS 2010 HOLMS AWARD WINNER

Aula Evans DeWitt & Timothy E. Scrom

On Friday July 22, 2011, John "Jack" Evans, a long time Weather Observer and Bennington County resident, received the prestigious John Campanius Holm Award, at a gathering in Bailey Hall in East Arlington, VT.

This award recognizes outstanding accomplishments in the field of meteorological observations by Cooperative Weather Observers, volunteers all. It is named after a Lutheran minister, the first person known to have taken systematic weather observations in the American Colonies. Reverend Holm made weather observations, without the aid of instruments, in 1644 and 1645 near the present site of Wilmington, Delaware. His son later had these observations published. From hundreds of nominations each year, no more than twenty-five of these awards are presented annually to the volunteer observers.

Jack's interest in meteorology began in the 1940's while he tackled the Boy Scout requirements to earn a badge in weather. About forty years later this interest would become a defining passion when Jack became a member of the Capital District Weather Net, a volunteer group of Ham radio operators who meet at 6 every morning by radio to report local weather conditions.

These reports are submitted to the National Weather Service, helping catalogue temperature, visibility, precipitation amount and type, and other similar data at specific locations. The information is then used in developing weather predictions for those same areas. Jack's is the only Vermont station reporting into this particular net.

When the National Weather Service asked permission in the 1990's to place state of the art weather monitoring equipment on the Evans' property there was no hesitation in agreement and the installation was soon scheduled, with more equipment arriving as technology advanced. Between the verbal reports given every morning on the net, and the every six second data blast to the geo-synchronous satellite, information regarding the weather in Sunderland flows daily without fail.

Jack has spent untold hours meticulously recording observational data, driving daily to various rivers to obtain the current depth and flow information from those stations, teaching Boy Scouts, his own children and grandchildren, and participating in other events as requested. His ham radio station now also includes a computer and phone, installed to help him continue to meet reporting requirements as technology evolved.

So, on July 22, the National Weather Service honored Jack for both his 21 years of service and bestowed this signal recognition upon him. Six members of the Albany Weather Service Office trekked to East Arlington. Tim Scrom - Cooperative Program Manager, Ray Okeefe - Meteorologist in Charge, John Quinlian - Forecaster, and Tom Wasula - Journeyman Forecaster all spoke, while also presenting Jack with a large framed certificate, congratulatory letters from Representative Bernie Sanders and Senator Patrick Leahy, a certificate honoring his 21 years of volunteer service, a baseball cap, water bottle and two coffee mugs, also honoring Jack's wife, Aula Evans, for her quiet ongoing support behind the scenes. Also attending from the Albany Weather Service Office were Britt Westergard (Service Hydrologist) and Brian Frugis (Meteorological Intern).

During the speeches by the Weather Service personnel friends and family learned that Jack's reports on three tornado's that hit the Bennington area led to more accurate assessments of the tornados themselves and their effect on the area. The importance of long term observations from the same reporting station were outlined and personal memories of events related to Jack's work were shared before a buffet luncheon was served.

Tomorrow it may rain, or snow, or the temperatures will hold steady at 78 with low humidity. Whatever it does, one thing is pretty certain; Jack will be stationed at his ham radio at 6 am with his weather observations meticulously recorded in the appropriate log book and ready to be reported in as his turn comes on the Capital District Weather Net.