Holm Winner Tells of Blizzards, Tornados, and a '49 Ford

Mike Overturf was presented the John Campanius Holm Award on September 1st for his extraordinary service in rural Clay Center, NE. Mike has been the observer at Clay Center dating back to July 13, 1978. Mike continues a tradition at Clay Center that dates back to January 1, 1894, when reports were first collected at the site. He provides critical precipitation information affecting Little Sandy Creek, which begins near the Overturf farm.

Mike is also a long time provider of accurate and timely information during severe convective weather and harsh winter conditions, such as last year's November 29 blizzard.

Mike has many a weather yarn to spin during long winter nights. In addition to blizzards, tornados have been unwelcome visitors more than once.

On March 13, 1990, a tornado hit Clay County, destroying one business and damaging 11 more as well as 49 homes. The tornados overturned a pickup truck and a police car, injuring four people. A reported 20 farms were damaged in the event.

During the traumatic event, one of Mike's closest neighbor's farmstead was completely destroyed. At the time of this tornado, Michael was finishing up a caesarian birth at the Meat Animal Research Center. This tornado turned out to be a multiple vortex storm, tearing a main damage path within 400 yards of Mike's home, whipping out a couple of large trees, and moving their garage. Luckily a neighbor called to report the tornado to Sandy and Anna Overturf, who immediately moved to the safety of their basement. This multi-vortex tornado event passed across the Overturf farm and twisted a tree in the yard, which has been known ever since as the “Tornado Tree.” Anna asked about trimming some of the dead branches within the tornado tree, but Mike has deftly maneuvered his way around this!

In September 2001, another tornado passed close to the Overturf farm, destroying two neighbors’ farmsteads.

May 2004 proved to be a rocky month, with tornado outbreaks on the 22nd and 24th. Mike's
Whites Recall Almost 100 Years of Blue Northers, Ice, Hail, Auroras, Dust Storms and More

Weather observations have been a family tradition for the White family of San Jon, NM, for nearly 100 years. February 1, 1909, Jesse and Arba White became cooperative observers for the U.S. Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau. After Jesse died in 1931, Arba continued the volunteer job until 1959. She was awarded the John Companius Holm Award for exceptional service in 1960.

In April 1905, the Whites left Iowa to settle near San Jon, in eastern New Mexico. The San Jon weather station was set up there in 1907. The Whites took over in 1909. In those early days, they recorded the temperatures, prevailing wind, precipitation, and ‘character of day’ on a wall calendar. They also used the calendar to record the number of eggs gathered and places visited that day. The weather data was later transferred to the official forms to be sent to the Bureau.

Arba graduated from Eastern New Mexico Junior College at age 57. Before retiring, she worked as a school teacher, newspaper editor, farmer and rancher. Her weather tales include the big snow of 1918; the big rain (6 inches in 24 hours) of 1930; and the dry dust bowl days that followed.

It became family tradition that it would always rain on Arba’s birthday, July 17. Sure enough, more often than not, some amount of precipitation was usually recorded on that day each year, and Arba had the records to prove it!

The weather reporting was turned over to Arba’s son, Clark, in 1959, who faithfully filed reports until 1969. During his tenure, the weather station was moved from two and a half miles southwest of the community, into San Jon. The thermometers were read and reset daily. The rain gauge was emptied and recorded as needed. When Clark became postmaster of San Jon, he passed the job on to his wife, Fern. At some point, the observing actually became a paying job. In the 1960’s Clark received $3.50 per month for his reporting.

Then the weather station was modernized and the old weather box became just a yard ornament. The thermometers are still intact inside. The temperature is now detected with an electronic device which delivers the data in a digital readout inside the house. Fern continued reporting during her years of employment as village clerk, then as mayor of San Jon. In 2000, she was awarded the John Companius Holm Award for exemplary service.

Jessie T. White founded the station and merited an article from an early newspaper story.

Holm Award Winner
Continued from Page 1

reports to the NWS Hastings office included details of train derailments and significant damage to the USDA Animal Research Center, including the loss of a calving barn, pole barn and center pivots.

During the tornado outbreak of May 24, Mike sent the first report of a tornado during a multiple strike event. WCM Steven Kisner said, “Mike Overturf’s reports that day were invaluable, since the first tornadoes were weak landspout types, thus hard to detect on radar.”

Aside from weather, Mike loves to restore antique cars and trucks. He restored a 1930 Plymouth Business Coupe to full racing condition. This car performed as a stock car, and Mike’s father served as part of the pit crew. He also fully restored a 1949 Ford Pickup to mint condition.
That same year, Fern moved to Clovis, NM, and her son, Gerald, took over the San Jon site. Gerald White is a United Methodist Minister who retired in 2000 after serving as a pastor for 40 years in New Mexico and Texas.

The weather reporting has become even more modern in this computer age. Temperatures are now reported online. The weather station location is set by Global Position Satellite technology.

Amid all this upgrading, however, Gerald’s observant eyes are still constantly searching the skies for the next change in the weather or the atmospheric phenomena that require NWS reports. Through the years, these phenomena included tornadoes, Blue Northers, dust storms that blocked the sun and left sand piled on windowsills, flooding rains, thunderstorms which sometimes dropped hail on precious crops, damaging winds, smoke, haze, aurora, snow and ice storms, halo phenomena and rainbows.

The weather station in Melrose, NM, dates to July 1, 1908. Between June 1954 and October 1957, the station changed hands four times. On October 3, 1957, Grady Bright took over the weather station. Almost 50 years later, he is still taking observations.

Originally, the town was named Brownhorn. In the late 1800s, two ranch owners, “Wild Horse” Brown and Lonny Horn, set a mailbox at the crossroad. Cowboys going to Portales would deliver mail to this Brownhorn community mailbox.

In 1905 the Santa Fe Railroad asked the ranchers to change the town name to Melrose because it was going to build a roundhouse there. But in 1908 the railroad decided to move the roundhouse 27 miles east to Riley Switch, which later became Clovis. That same year, NWS started taking weather observations in Melrose.

Grady was manager of Melrose Grain for 38 years. “I was always interested in agriculture, and of course, the weather plays a very large part in the success or failure of agriculture,” he said. A native of West Camp, TX, Grady has spent his life in Roosevelt or Curry counties. He was the mayor of Melrose for 8 years, president of the Melrose Chamber of Commerce, and secretary of the Lions club. He has also been president and board member of the New Mexico Feed Dealers Association. He helped start Eastern New Mexico Natural Gas and is a past president and board member of the utility company.

Grady’s observation area includes the Ogallala Aquifer, which has a vital impact on agriculture. This area is particularly dependent on weather data since it has both dry land and irrigating farmers. His observations are also essential to the operation of the bombing range maintained by the Cannon Air Force Base near Melrose.

In the early days, the Whites recorded the weather on their calendar along with the daily egg count.

The White family is proud to continue the legacy of observing and recording weather conditions for NWS. In a way, the White family has brought this 360 year old tradition full circle back to the religious foundations of The Reverend John Campanius Holm who took observations in colonial America.
It looked like a family reunion at NWS Sioux Falls, SD, as the Judy family gathered to accept the Family Heritage Award. For 114 years, members of the Judy Family have monitored precipitation, temperature and even river levels at their farm near Forestburg, SD. Morris K. Judy began the tradition in 1890 and dutifully kept records until 1909 when he passed the responsibility on to his son, Sherman.

Sherman may have been an even bigger weather enthusiast than his father. His passion for watching atmospheric phenomena and a deep interest in history, especially the history of the area he knew as home, was exemplary. During his 62 year tenure as the official NWS Coop observer, Sherman gathered data not only for Forestburg, but also for Sanborn County and the surrounding central South Dakota area. Data and narratives were gathered from many sources at some personal expense to Sherman. He spent many hundreds of hours assembling his research. The result was a mimeographed publication entitled, “Central South Dakota Weather from 1873 to 1960.”

Sherman, in turn, passed on his desire to track weather to his son Raymond, who acted as assistant and backup Coop observer to his father. Raymond became the primary observer in August 1971 when Sherman passed away.

Raymond and wife Marion spent the next 26 years working as a team observing and recording the Forestburg weather data. The family continued an unbroken chain of information even after Raymond’s death in 1997. Marion continued to dutifully record temperatures and precipitation.

As of 2006, Marion has been a Coop observer for 35 years. She has readily adapted to the newer technologies for reporting weather data. She says the observational duties may someday be passed on to either her son, Mark, or perhaps a son-in-law when she leaves the farm. But for now, a nearly perfect data set continues to grow under her watchful eye.

The Judy family members have significantly contributed to our nation’s climate database and made themselves a part of the history of our country. From Morris, to Sherman, to Raymond, and finally to Marion, the Judy family members exemplify the meaning of American volunteerism.
Antoine, AR, resident **Owen B. Hendrix** was awarded the prestigious Thomas Jefferson and the 45 Year Length of Service Awards. The awards were presented by NWS Little Rock Meteorologist in Charge Renee Fair at the State Capitol. He has shown unusual effort to continuously provide accurate, timely observations to NWS Little Rock. On the rare occasions when Hendrix was unable to take an observation, he has always made arrangements for a back-up observer.

From left are Bill Porenza, Southern Region Director; Peggy Hendrix Stanley, Owen's daughter, and Benson Hendrix, Owen's son. Owen was ill and could not attend this ceremony.

**Clara Johnson**, center, of the Johnson Ranch, receives both the Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin Awards. Clara is also the aviation observer for Cuba, NM. Presenting the awards was NWS Albuquerque WCM Keith Hayes, right.

Photo by OPL Joseph A. Alfieri.
Edna Hale, Coop Observer at Flora, IL, was presented the prestigious John Campanius Holm Award at a special ceremony in Flora.

Making the presentation was Billy Ousley, DAPM at NWS Central Illinois. Photo by Dan Kelly.

A ceremony was held to present the Holm Award to Beth Jones (center) of Malta, ID. Beth also received a 40 Year Service Award. Pictured from left are NWS Pocatello MIC Jim Meyer, SOO Dean Hazen, WCM Vernon Preston, OPL Gary Wicklund, and ASA Donna Mills. In attendance from NWS Western Region Headquarters was Susan Nelson, Coop Program Manager. Many friends and neighbors came to help Beth celebrate this special day. The South Idaho Press sent a reporter to cover the event.
James B. Price of Pinson, AL, accepts his 55 Year Benjamin Franklin Award for more than 20,000 consecutive days of observations!

Pictured from left are NWS Birmingham, AL, DAPM David Wilfing; Kristin Scotten, Forecaster; James Price; MIC Jim Stefkovich, and Faith Borden, Lead Forecaster.

NWS Tucson, AZ, MIC Glen Sampson presented the Benjamin Franklin Award for 55 Years of Service to Pat King of Anvil Ranch, AZ, on behalf of the King Family. Anvil Ranch has been in the King family since 1895. Photo by OPL Angel Corona.
Nina Underwood of Goodrich, WI, was presented the Edward H. Stoll Award for her 50 years of service as a Coop Observer. The presentation was made by NWS La Crosse, WI, MIC Glenn Lussky, DAPM Randy Breeser and Coop Focal Point Tom Stangeland. Pictured behind Nina from left are Glenn and Tom.

Evelyn Quade of Wilmot, SD, was recently presented with the Stoll Award for completing 50 years of dedicated service. Evelyn and her husband Walter began taking observations from their farm near Wilmot in October 1955. Evelyn retired from the Coop observing program immediately following the award ceremony. She will be much missed.

Pictured from left are then NWS Aberdeen MIC William Tallman; Dan Chaloupka, Wilmot’s new observer; Evelyn Quade; and HMT Kenneth Gillespie. Dan has quite a tradition to live up to.
The staff of Llano, TX, City Government receives a 50 Year Honored Institution Award. Pictured from left are John Montgomery, City Manager; Gordon Hefner, Mayor Pro Tem; NWS San Antonio, TX, HMT Pat Mcdonald; and Josh Becker, Observer.

The Big Falls, MN, Hydro Plant staff accept a 50 Year Honored Institution Award. Pictured are John and John, the two chief observers. The award was presented by NWS Chanhassen, MN, OPL Michelle Margraf.
Essie Chavers of Wallace, AL, was presented with the NWS Dick Hagemeyer Award, honoring her nearly half century as a Cooperative Weather Observer.

The presentation was made by NWS Mobile, AL, MIC Randall McKee, as numerous friends and family members looked on. Photo by NWS OPL Eugene Jacobi.

The Dick Hagemeyer 45 Year Length of Service Award was presented to Jim Kaufman and sister Dorothea Kaufman of Blackrock, UT, by Elko, NV, MIC Kevin Baker (left) and HMT Greg Lonien (right). Jim’s wife Cynthia is also pictured. Dorothea was not present for the photo.
Bev Chaplin of Hubbard, IA, shows her 45 Year Length of Service Award. The award was presented by CPM Brad Fillbach, NWS Des Moines, IA, and MIC Brenda Brock.

The Schaeferkoeter Family of Canyon Dam, TX, received the Dick Hagemeyer Award for their 45 Years of Service. Pictured from left are Chad and Irene Schaeferkoeter; San Antonio, TX MIC Joe Arellano Jr., and HMT Pat Mcdonald.
Doris Taylor of Taylor Ranch, TX, shows her 40 Year Length of Service Award. Presenting the award is San Angelo, TX, MIC Buddy McIntyre.

Joe Chapa of San Manuel, TX, receives his 40 year Length of Service Award from NWS Brownsville, TX. Joe recently celebrated his 91st birthday.

Pictured from left are MIC Andy Patrick, Joe’s daughter Tina Villanueva, Joe Chapa, and HMT Tony Abbott. Photo by Jim Campbell, DAPM.
Lela and Bill Cooper (sitting) show their 30 Year Award presented by OPL Jimmy Russell, of the NWS Little Rock, AR, office. Photo by HMT Michael Reid.

Bill and Shirley Driscoll of Rossville, KS, were recipients of a 30 Year Award and pins. From left are NWS Topeka, KS. DAPM Bill Newman, with Shirley and Bill. While the Driscolls' reports are always of the highest quality, two major local flooding events showcased their dedication to reporting valuable river height data: the flooding of 1982 and the more recent flood of October 2005.

A 30 Year Length of Service Award was presented to David Caldwell of the Red River Research Station in Bossier City, LA. Photo not available.

Cooperative Observer Hazel Evans of Beulah, MI, is shown receiving her 30 Year Length of Service Award. Looks like she got a little precipitation! The presentation was made by NWS Gaylord, MI, OPL Eric Kersey.

John Barker, Coop Observer at Bridgewater, ME, was recently presented with a 25 Year Length of Service Award. Photo not available.

NWS Salt Lake City, UT, presented a 25 Year Honored Institution Award to the Santaquin City, UT, Government Staff. The award was presented by NWS OPL Steve Summy. Photo not available.
25 Years Length of Service Awards

Harvey Schmitz from Halliday, ND, received a 25 Year Length of Service award from Len Peterson, OPL, NWS Bismarck, ND. Also present at the presentation was Charlene Prindiville, Service Hydrologist.

Paul and Ann Nyren of Streeter, ND, were presented with their 25 Year Length of Service Award. This couple runs the Central Grasslands Research Station, which is an agricultural experiment center. They rarely miss a day reporting their weather observations. The presentation was made by CPM Sandra Wiche of NWS Bismarck, ND.

Eugene Pilarczyk, McCook, TX receives his 25 year Length of Service Award from NWS Brownsville, TX, MIC Andy Patrick. Photo by Jim Campbell, DAPM.

Joe Douberly of the Plum Creek Timber Company in Jesup, GA, received a 25 Year Length of Service Award from Mike McAllister, OPL, NWS Jacksonville, FL.
Jerry Oster (left) accepted the 25 Year Honored Institution Award for Radio Station WNAX in Yankton, SD. Jerry has been the primary weather observer at WNAX for the last 25 years. The presentation was made by NWS Sioux Falls, SD, DAPM Donald Morin at the WNAX studios in Yankton.

Utah Power and Light Carbon Plant was presented a 25 Year Institutional Award by Steve Summy, OPL, NWS Salt Lake City, UT. Accepting the award are Mike Pozini and Mary Sejkord, Observers.

Carol Adams, observer in Easton, KS, received a 20 Year Length of Service Award from HMT Harry Morgan, NWS Pleasant Hill, MO.

Observer Jerry Henderson from Littleton, ME, shows his 20 Year Award. Photo by Mark Turner, Service Hydrologist, NWS Caribou, ME.

Dale Henderson, Observer in Holyoke, CO, was presented a 20 Year Award by HMT Carl Burroughs, NWS Boulder, CO.
15 Year Length of Service Awards

Ernest Kuhl, Coop Observer for Orleans, NE, accepted a 15 Year Length of Service Award from NWS Hastings, NE, DAPM Marla K. Doxey. Photo by HMT Steve Carmel. Ernest also monitors a river rain gage.

Thomas Horobik, Observer in Benkelman, NE, received his 15 Year Award from Larry Boyd, OPL Goodland, KS. Thomas also reports river readings.

Ellis L. Pannell, left, accepts an award recognizing his service as Coop Observer for the last 15 years from HMT Doug Vogelsang, NWS Memphis.

Frank and Dawna Perkins, Coop Observers at Milo, ME, were recently presented with a 15 Year Service Award.

A 15 Year Length of Service Award was presented by Electronics Technician Randy Henley, left, NWS Shreveport, LA, to Travis and Deborah Riogrande of Lufkin, TX.
15 Year Length of Service Awards

A 15 Year Length of Service Award was presented to Danny Wilcox of Lewisville, AR, by DAPM Marion Kuykendall, NWS Shreveport, LA.

Wallace Roeske, left, observer at Rogers City, MI, was presented with a 15 Year Award by HMT Keith Berger, NWS Gaylord, MI. Photo by R. Eric Kersey, OPL.

David Sylvester, Coop Observer at Barnard Plantation, ME, shows his 15 Year Award.

10 Year Length of Service Awards

A 10 Year Service Award was presented to Beth Anderson of Callao, UT, by MIC Kevin Baker, NWS Elko, NV. Beth’s husband Don, not pictured, also received a 10 Year Award.

Jim Allen, right, Observer at Julesburg, CO, holds up his 10 Year Award with help from HMT Carl Burroughs, NWS Boulder, CO. Photo by Vickie Sandlin, reporter, Julesburg Advocate.

Marion Bates, Observer at Topsfield, ME, was recently presented with a 10 Year Length of Service Award.

A 10 Year Length of Service Award was presented by NWS Shreveport, LA, Meteorologist Patrick Omundson to M. L. Broussard of Hemphill, TX. Photo not available.
Roger Bygrave of Rudyard, MI, receives his 10 Year Award. Roger’s home, barn, outbuildings and Coop site were completely destroyed by fire in 2005, but Roger didn’t give up observations. Reconstruction is almost complete. The award was presented by R. Eric Kersey, OPL, NWS Gaylord, MI.

Peggy Engroff, Coop Observer at Patten, ME, was presented with a 10 Year Award for her continued dedication to the NWS Cooperative Observer program.

Clayton Carr of Washburn, ND, shows his 10 Year Award given by CPM Sandra Wiche, NWS Bismarck, ND. He and his wife own a beautiful home overlooking the mighty Missouri River.

Coop Observer Bill Carson, of Boyne Falls, MI, is shown receiving his 10 Year Award. The certificate was presented by Denny Fruehauf, NWS Gaylord, MI.
10 Year Length of Service Awards

**Bob and Vera Cole**, Observers at Beaver Dam, AZ, received their 10 Year Length of Service Award from Don Maker, OPL, NWS Las Vegas, NV.

**Observers Richard and Karen Fulk** brave the cold to show their 10 Year Service Awards for the Hesston, KS, area. Presenting the award was DAPM Joe Rosner, NWS Wichita, KS.

**Bill Fyre** of Edinburg, VA, shows his 10 Year Award. Photo by OPL John Darnley, NWS Sterling, VA.

**Reinhard and Beverly Grenz**, A-Paid and Coop Observers at Chulitna River, AK, receive their 10 Year Award from Alaska Regional Cooperative Program Specialist Peter Rahe, right.

**Observer Scott Gutsch** was presented a 10 Year Award for the Lincolnvile, KS, area by DAPM Joe Rosner, NWS Wichita, KS. Photo not available.

**Adrian Fredriksson**, Observer at Hondo, TX, received a 10 Year Award from Dennis Cook, HMT, NWS San Antonio, TX. Photo not available.

**Joe Hays** receives his 10 Year Award for taking care of the Fischer and Porter recording rain gage at Edison, NE. Joe also keeps grain dust off the solar panel. DAPM Marla K. Doxey, NWS Hastings, NE, presented Joe with his award.
10 Year Length of Service Awards

From left, NWS HMT Steve Teachout, Des Moines, IA, and 10 Year Coop Observer Monte Hollingsworth stand next to the gage at the Chariton Waste Water Treatment Plant. Photo by George Brown.

Calvin Hutzler, Observer at Riomedina, TX, received a 10 Year Length of Service Award. Photo by Dennis Cook, HMT, San Antonio, TX.

Larry Hassell of Hawkins, TX, received a 10 Year Award from Nicholas Fillo, Meteorologist Intern, NWS Shreveport, LA. Photo not available.

Willie Mai of Brewington, TN, shows her 10 Year Award presented by NWS Nashville OPL Ralph Troutman.

Observer Fred Kaufman of Andice, TX, and wife, Alice, show his 10 Year Award. Photo by Pat Mcdonald, HMT, San Antonio, TX.
Al Kinsall, Observer at Eagle Pass, TX, received a 10 Year Award from Dennis Cook, HMT, San Antonio, TX.

Betty Klepper, observer at Pandale, TX, received a 10 Year Length of Service Award. Photo by Dennis Cook, HMT, San Antonio, TX.

Mike Kirkham (right), of Jamestown, LA, shows his 10 Year Length of Service Award presented by NWS Shreveport, LA, DAPM Marion Kuykendall.

Lloyd Kraft of Wessington Springs, SD, (left) accepted his 10 Year Award from DAPM Don Morin, NWS Sioux Falls, SD. Lloyd also accepted a 20 Year Award on behalf of his back-up Observer Duke Wenzel, who was not available for a photo. Photo by Meteorological Intern Tim Masters, NWS Sioux Falls, SD.

From left, William E. and Mary Jo King (not pictured) get their 10 Year Award for service at Smyrna, TN, from NWS WCM Jerry Orchanian, Nashville, TN.
A 10 Year Length of Service Award was presented to **Laura Mccoin** of Clarksville, TX, by DAPM Marion Kuykendall, NWS Shreveport, LA.

Observer **Leonard Moore** of Mulvane, KS, was presented a 10 Year Award by Leon Wasinger, CPL, NWS Wichita, KS. Leonard provides river readings for the Arkansas River.

**Keith Phillips**, Monterey, TN, shows his 10 Year Award. Photo by Ralph Troutman, OPL, NWS Nashville, TN.

**Garnetta Snyder** of Tripoli, IA, shows her 10 Year Length of Service Award. Photo by NWS HMT Brad Fillbach, Des Moines, IA.

From left, NWS Indianapolis HMT Ed Terrell presents 10 Year Awards to **Sam and Alan Sievers** of Vincennes, IN.
Don Olson of Montpelier, ND, is a 35 year observer and recipient of the John Campanius Holm award. Don is so proud of his service as an Observer that he created a Cooperative Weather Observer float on his truck for the "all school" reunion in Montpelier last June.

Don created a Coop float for his truck.

Don Olson of Montpelier, ND received his 35 Year Length of Service Award from CPM, Sandra Wiche, Bismarck, ND.

Don is also on the local church council and cemetery board, the school redistricting board for Stutsman County, the Montpelier Township board, the Ypsilanti Equity Elevator board and the Montpelier Shipping Association. Don is a member in good standing of the American Legion. While in the Army during the mid 1950's, Dan served on the Presidential Honor Guard.