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Jefferson Awardee "Stretches" the Limits



From left, **Sandy** (wife), **Madison** (granddaughter), Awardee **Mike Overturf**, **Anna** (daughter), and NWS Hastings, NE, Meteorologist in Charge (MIC) **Steve Eddy**. Photo by NWS Data Acquisition Program Manager (DAPM) **Marla K. Doxey**.

Michael "Stretch" Overturf of Clay Center, NE, was presented the prestigious Thomas Jefferson Award at the American Legion Hall in Sutton, NE.

It was an honor to present Mike with this award because he has been an exceptional Observer since July 1978. From then through the end of September 2016, he had taken 13,595 observations with not even one missing observation. Not missing an observation hasn't been without its challenges. Mike recalls going out on crutches to read the precipitation after two separate knee surgeries. He also persevered after major heart surgery a few years ago. As

a testament of their true dedication to duty, he and his family made sure no data was missed during these challenging times.

The presentation started with NWS Hastings DAPM **Marla K. Doxey** providing background information on the Thomas Jefferson Award. Marla also explained exactly what qualities the selection committee looked at when it selects a recipient for this award. The team can select no more than five outstanding Observers each year for this highest NWS Observer award.

Mike's dedication has resulted in the measurement of 1024.43 inches of precipitation and 925.7 inches of snowfall

Mike recalled that "back in the day," when he first started as an Observer, he had to call the Weather Service collect when he had precipitation to report.

over his NWS years. The wettest year was 1993 with 44.67 inches, the wettest year for his site since 1915. His driest year was 1988, with only 17.20 inches. The season with the most snow was 1983-1984, with 55.0 inches of snow. Mike measured the least amount of snow in 1999-2000 when only 8 inches of snow fell all season.

Mike recalled that "back in the day," when he first started as an Observer, he had to call the Weather Service collect when he had precipitation to report. Personnel would hesitate to accept the call and ask, "Do you work for the Weather Service?"

Now he enters his data through an interactive phone program called IV-ROCS. In 1995, NWS Hastings took over responsibility for the Observers in our area. Mike soon became one of our favorites because he provided other valuable weather information along with a pleasant chat.

Being a Storm Spotter in addition to an Observer, he knew to give precise information each time. Mike is known for calling us all hours of the day and night to report hazardous weather events such as damaging winds, heavy rain and snow, blizzard conditions, large hail and tornadoes. There have been times when you could hear the hail hitting his truck as he called in his report.

He is also a Storm Spotter instructor at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, where he has been a veterinarian for the past 47 years. Mike taught hunter safety classes to area youth for nearly 30 years.

Mike has truly seen and experienced the weather extremes in Nebraska. For instance, in 1990, a tornado passed near his farm, twisting a tree, which became known as the "Tornado Tree." Interestingly, it continues to stand to this day even though trees next to it have been damaged or uprooted from tornadoes.

The citation on the Jefferson Award reads, "For your superior service in reporting precipitation and snow depth from Clay Center, Nebraska. Your willingness to work with agricultural officials on rainfall data for drought and flood programs exemplifies



an outstanding ethic among Cooperative Observers," which only touches a small part of the true dedication Mike has to his weather reports, his family and his friends.

State Senator **John Kuehn** expounded on his relationship with Mike while working at the Meat Animal Research Center. "Throughout the years Mike was the perfect employee; always thinking of others; doing what needed to be done before being asked; a true and model public servant to his community."

Jerad Reimers, rep. for Congressman **Adrian Smith**, spoke of how important it was to recognize the work and accomplishment of people like Mike and how important the information they provided was to Nebraska and its economy.

A letter from **Natalie Umphlett**, High Plains Climate Center, thanked Mike for his precise reports for the past 38 years. She noted that it is reports like his that help create a climate record for his area. She also noted the truly exceptional fact that there are no missing observations in Mike's record!

Letters from Governor **Pete Ricketts** and Senator **Deb Fischer** also congratulated Mike on his outstanding work as a Cooperative Observer.

MIC **Steve Eddy** presented Mike with the Thomas Jefferson Award, along with a letter from **Chris Strager**, NWS Central Region Director.

Over 60 family members, coworkers and friends celebrated Mike's award.

Meet the West's Oldest Climate Correspondent

Reprinted from the *High Country News*

Anna Mae Wright has spent seven decades recording the weather. In many households, 6 p.m. means dinner time. But for 89-year-old Anna Mae Wright and her family, that hour marks another daily routine stretching back more than seven decades: “Weather-reading time.”

Since the late 1940s, each evening Wright has faithfully documented the temperature, precipitation and other meteorological data outside her home near Redrock in southwestern New Mexico, using equipment installed by the National Weather Service. Over the years, the recording process has become a staple of daily life, fit in alongside tending the garden's tomato

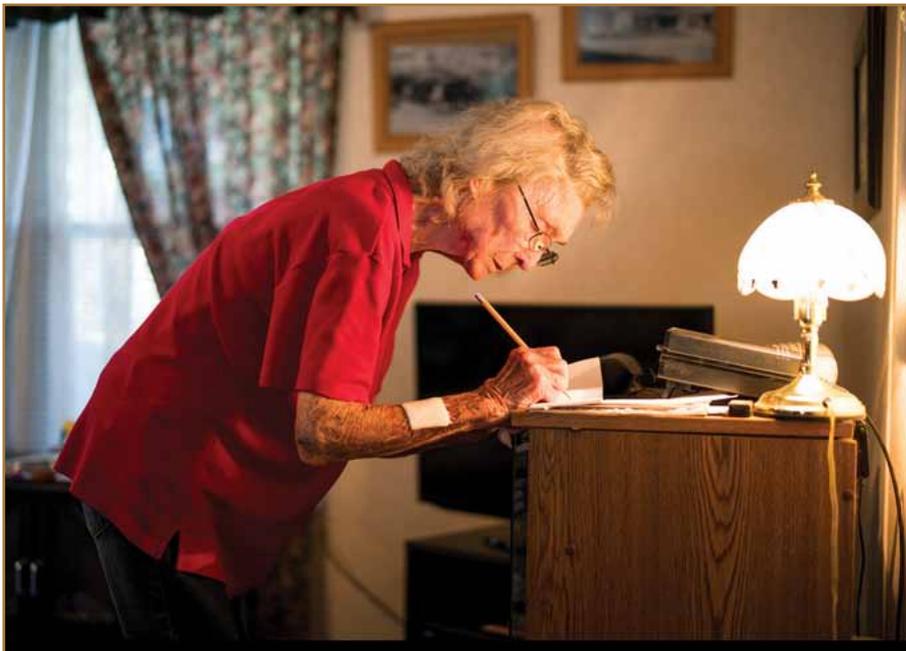
plants, crocheting and knitting, and sending her four kids to school—at first in Redrock, a tiny, unincorporated outpost on a remote stretch of the Gila River, and later, 30 miles away in Lordsburg, after the local school closed due to low enrollment.

Wright began the ritual with her husband, Ralph, recording the 24-hour highs and lows and other readings on their 320-acre farm and mailing monthly reports to the National Weather Service. Since Ralph's death in 1997, she has carried on the tradition mostly alone, sometimes helped by her 60-year-old son, Bill Wright. She now ranks as the West's longest-serving member of the Weather Service's Cooperative Observer Program, a network of more than 8,000 volunteers nationwide.

“The rural folks, they're the most

interested,” says Frank Kielnecker, a Weather Service employee in the regional office that Wright reports to. “I've never had to call her and say, ‘What's the deal? You're not reporting on time.’”

Although she has accumulated many awards honoring her decades of public service,



*Anna Mae Wright fills in her weather report.
Photo by Jay Hemphill, ©High Country News*

Wright says she does not spend much time reflecting on her achievements. “I feel proud,” she says. “It gives me a sense of self-worth.” Her son takes pride in her dedication but sees it as entirely natural, since farmers and ranchers like them “tend to be interested in the weather anyway.”

Though their work remains largely anonymous, the Cooperative Observers are providing crucial information about global climate change. The crowd-sourced approach allows for precise data to be gathered from far-flung corners of the West, such as Redrock, and—in cases like Wright's—provides a continuous record for which there's no substitute.

“It's a long-term climate record at some very remote locations,” says Kielnecker,

“I've never had to call her and say, ‘What's the deal? You're not reporting on time.’”

Yearly temperature averages over the last 15 years have regularly been higher than those observed from 1901 to 2000, often by at least 2 degrees.

making it especially valuable to researchers who typically consider even 30 years a barely suitable window to examine climate trends. The records collected by volunteers make a difference on a local level as well, forming the most comprehensive daily source of temperature and precipitation readings. Short-term forecasts and even warnings for severe weather are often based on Observer data, which are uploaded to the National Centers for Environmental Information in Asheville, NC, each month, and entered into a massive database that's available to the public.

Wright's routine has rarely varied over the years, although she no longer sends in written monthly reports. In 2006, she started submitting information by computer, after the Weather Service outfitted her with the appropriate equipment and training.

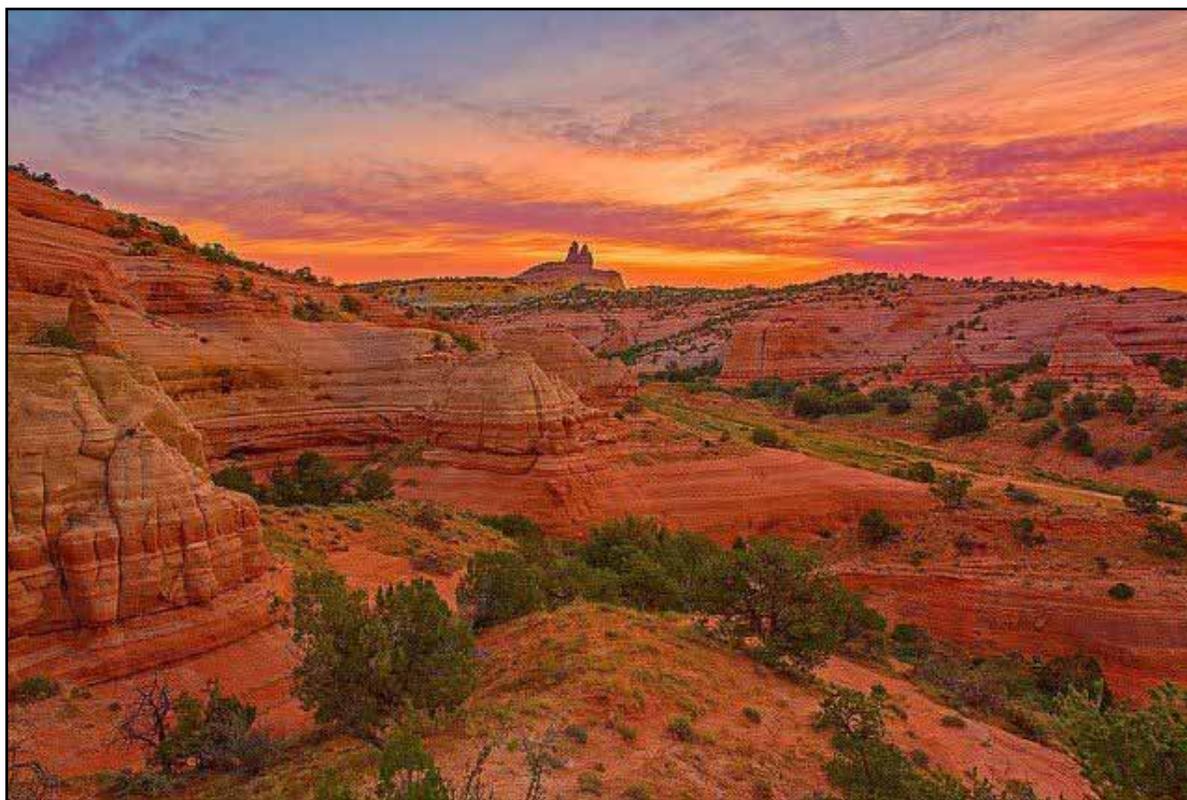
While her rhythm has remained constant, regional data show that the climate itself seems to be shifting on her watch. Average annual temperatures in the Weather Service's Southern Desert Climate District of New Mexico reflect a steady climb, with the five warmest years all occurring since 2000—including

the sweltering years of 2014 and 2015. Yearly temperature averages over the last 15 years have regularly been higher than those observed from 1901 to 2000, often by at least 2 degrees.

Unfortunately, Observers like Wright are becoming increasingly rare, says Kielnecker, as rural communities lose population and fewer people maintain a lasting attachment to the land. "People don't stick around anymore in a rural place as long as Ms. Wright has," Kielnecker says, noting that participation in the Cooperative Observer program has tapered off in southern New Mexico.

But the steady stream of data from Redrock shows no signs of slowing down. Wright is still making meticulous notes about everything she observes from her ranch house — rain, snow, sleet, lightning, hail. Her son, Bill, has taken over the family farm and says he'll also take over weather-recording duties whenever her career draws to a close.

That could be a while yet. "I think I'll stay with it as long as they want me to, as long as I'm able to," says Wright. "I like it."



Landscape near Redrock, NM, from Pinterest.com

Thomas Jefferson Award



From left, NWS Western Region Director **Dr. Grant Cooper**, Awardee **Rev. Willis Busentiz**, and NWS Billings, MT, MIC **Keith Meier**. Photo by Observation Program Leader (OPL) **Larry Dooley**.

Dr. Grant Cooper, Director, NWS Western Region, and **Keith Meier**, MIC, NWS Billings, MT, presented the Thomas Jefferson Award to **Rev. Willis Busentiz** during a ceremony at the NWS Billings forecast office.

Willis, who takes observations in Busby, MT, has provided timely, accurate and dependable weather data for 43 years, totalling nearly 16,000 observations during his NWS career.

He began reporting daily observations at his home on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation August 1, 1973. He has never missed a daily observation unless there was total equipment failure. His wife, **Nadine**, acts as his backup when he travels for work.

The cooperative station in Busby is one of only five in Big Horn County, a large county of more than 5,000 square miles, population around 13,000. Weather data from this station is vital to the area.

Willis has experienced a variety of weather in his 43 year history. This area experiences extreme temperatures ranging from a -52°F low in December of 1983 to 109°F high in July of 2002. Annual average precipitation since 1948 is 13.55 inches, making this a very dry region. His record daily snowfall total is 18 inches in March 2002 and his maximum rainfall total is 3.75" in March of 1988.

John Campanius Holm Awards



NWS Western Region Director **Dr. Grant Cooper** and NWS Billings, MT, MIC **Keith Meier** presented Observer **Bill Schwarzkoph** of Forsyth, MT, with a prestigious John Campanius Holm Award for outstanding service as a Cooperative Observer. Bill has provided timely, accurate and dependable weather data totalling nearly 15,000 observations during his 41 years of service to the nation.

Bill began reporting daily observations in 1975 and has never missed a daily observation unless there was total equipment failure. His wife, **Cheryl**, acts as his backup when he is away from home.

This area experiences extreme temperatures ranging from -44°F in December of 1989 to 110°F in July 2002. Annual average precipitation in

From left, NWS Service Western Region Director **Dr. Grant Cooper**, Awardee **Bill Schwarzkoph**, and MIC **Keith Meier**, NWS Billings, MT. Photo by OPL **Larry Dooley**.

this dry area is just 3.55 inches. Bill's snowfall record is 17 inches recorded in December 1984. His rainfall record is 3.49 inches measured in August of 1998.

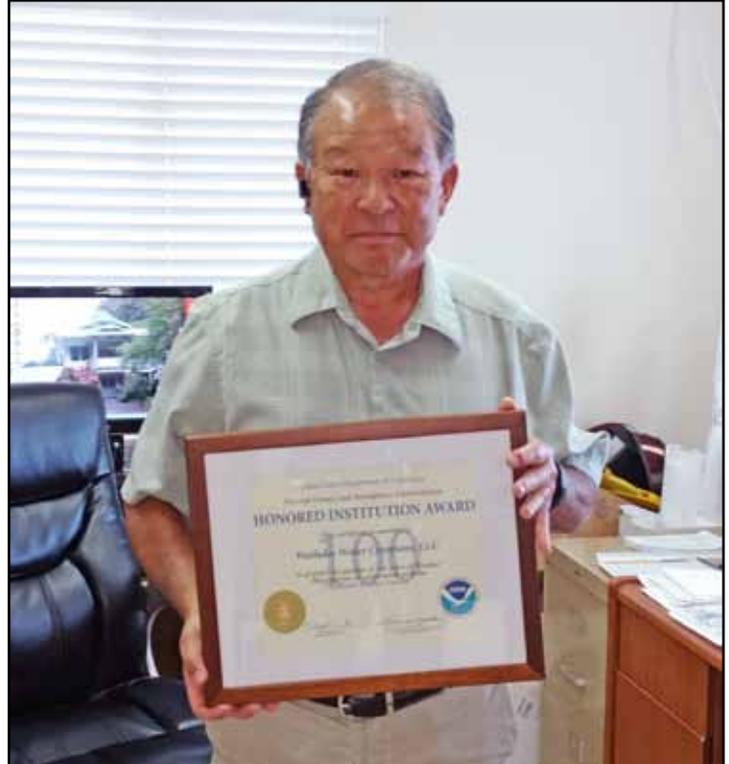
125 Year Honored Institution Award

Haleakala Ranch Company received an 125 Year Length of Service Award for its outstanding service to this nation's climate record. Receiving the award is **Ken Freitas**, Ranch Foreman. Ken has worked on the ranch for 58 years. Photo by **Karyn Arakawa**. Presenting the award was Cooperative Program Manager (CPM) **Jerome Saucier**, Data Collection Office, Hilo HI.



100 and 75 Year Honored Institution Awards

Wailuku Water Company, LLC received a 100 Year Length of Service Award for the contributions its staff has made to maintaining the nation's climate record. Receiving the award is **Clayton Suzuki**. Presenting the award was CPM **Jerome Saucier**, Data Collection Office, Hilo HI.



NWS presented a 100 year Honored Institution Award to the **Montana State University Southern Agricultural Research Center** at Huntley, MT. The station began officially recording daily weather observations in 1910.

In the 100 plus years of service, the staff has taken more than 38,000 daily observations. The site has never missed sending a daily observation. The station is one of oldest in Montana. The equipment has been in almost the same location since the site began taking readings.



From left, Observer **John C. Pulasky**, NWS Western Region Director **Dr. Grant Cooper**, Superintendent of the Southern Agricultural Research Center **Ken Kephart**, NWS Billings, MT, MIC **Keith Meier** and Observer **Tom Fischer**. Photo by OPL **Larry Dooley**.

100 and 75 Year Honored Institution Awards

Aaron Vista, maintenance, and Registered Nurses **Jane Dellaport** and **Rosalyn Anecito**, employees at the **Maui County Hospital Systems, Kula Hospital** accepted a 100 Year Honored Institution Award on behalf of the hospital. The award was presented by CPM **Jerome Saucier**, Data Collection Office, Hilo, HI.



Hawaii State Division of Parks received a 75 Year Length of Service Award. Receiving the award is **Jeremy Ganzagan**, Park Maintenance Supervisor, East District. Presenting the award was CPM **Jerome Saucier**, Data Collection Office, Hilo, HI.

75 Year Honored Institution Award



The southeast entrance **Yosemite National Park Ranger Station** was presented with a 75 Year Honored Institution Award by NWS San Joaquin Valley, CA, OPL **Bill Peterson**. Thank you to all of the Park Rangers, past and present for your hard work and dedication. The park recently received its 100 year service award. This is a "newer" station in the large park.

55 Year Benjamin Franklin Award

Dorothy and Bill Bullard of Morrisonville, IL, received the Benjamin Franklin Award for 55 years of service. Friends and family attended the award presentation at a local restaurant. The Bullards began taking observations in 1961, and have submitted more than 20,000 observations over the decades.



From left, WFO Lincoln, IL, MIC **Ernest Goetsch**, Awardees **Dorothy and Bill Bullard**, and DAPM **Billy Ousley**. Also attending were Met Interns **Chuck Schaffer** and **Scott Baker**. Photo by Hydrometeorological Technician (HMT) John Parr.

50 Year Honored Institution Awards



The **Burbank Water and Power Valley Pump Plant** received its 50 Year Honored Institution Award. The award was presented by MIC **Mark Jackson** and OPL **Bonnie Bartling**, NWS Los Angeles/Oxnard, CA. Personnel at the Burbank Pump Plant take and report daily maximum, minimum and at-observation temperatures as well as daily precipitation. The staff also email their Fischer-Porter upgrade data monthly to NWS OPL **Bonnie Bartling**.

A 50 Year Honored Institution Award was presented to the **Cherokee, IA, Public Works** staff by NWS Sioux Falls OPL **Brad Adams**. **Todd Miller** accepted the award on behalf of all the staff at the Public Works Maintenance shop. Cherokee is nestled along the Little Sioux River and has a rich history of early American settlers. Pioneers moving west settled in the Cherokee area as early as 1856.



50 Year Honored Institution Awards

From left, the **Hawaii Department of Health** personnel **Shantell Pu** and **Tiare Brede** accept a 50 Year Honored Institution Award for Kalaupapa rainfall reports in Kalawao County, HI. Not pictured are Observers **Solomon Naeole Jr.** and **Andrew Cuello**. Photo and presentation by OPL **Mark Farnsworth**, NWS Honolulu, HI.



From left, **Pulama Lanai Water Company** personnel **Duke Schaefer**, **Bernie Giron** and new Observer **Patrick Untalan** accept the 50 Year Honored Institution Awards for two sites: **Kaumalapau Harbor** and **Malauea**. Not pictured is long time Lanai Observer **Kimo Hanog**, who was working on a water main. Award presented by OPL **Mark Farnsworth**, NWS Honolulu, HI.

50 Year Honored Institution Awards



From left, staff members **Pete Linsner** and **Matt Laizure** accept a 50 Year Honored Institution Award for the **Morton Arboretum** in Lisle, IL. Rainfall records have been kept by the arboretum since June 1966. Photo by NWS Chicago, IL, HMT **Amy Seeley**.

The **Mooreville, NC, Water Plant** received an Honored Institution Award for 50 years of service. Receiving this award was **Todd Hammonds**, Plant Operator. The award was presented by OPL **Chris Horne**, NWS Greenville-Spartanburg, SC.



50 Year Honored Institution Awards



The **Tehachapi Cummings Company Water District** was presented a 50 Year Honored Institution Award. The company has been a proud NWS partner, providing monthly rainfall data for the Tehachapi area. A special thanks goes out to **Alex Steele** and **Joe Sasia**, who have a combined 65 years of reporting.

Staff of the **Toho Water Authority** in Kissimmee, FL, recently accepted a 50 Year Honored Institution Award. Photo and award presentation by OPL **Peggy Glitto**, NWS Melbourne, FL.



50 Year Honored Institution Award

A 50 Year Honored Institution Award was presented to the National Park Service staff at the **Pipestone National Monument**. The award was presented by NWS Sioux Falls MIC **Sally Johnson** and OPL **Brad Adams**. NPS personnel **Cody Goraczkowski** and **Alice Erickson** accepted the award on behalf of the staff at the Visitor's Center.

The Monument was named for the "catlinite" or pipestone used traditionally to make ceremonial pipes as far back as the 17th century. The National Monument was established by an act of Congress on August 25, 1937, as a way to preserve the quarry rights of Native Americans.



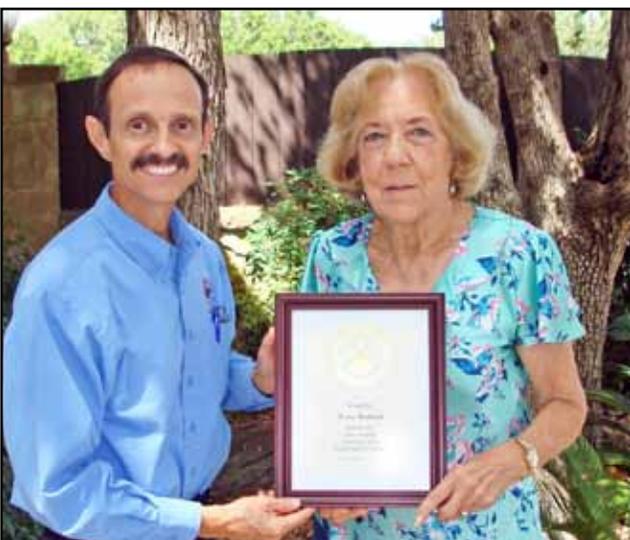
Staff at the **Vero Beach, FL, Water Treatment Plant** recently accepted a 50 Year Honored Institution Award. Photo and award presentation by OPL **Peggy Glitto**, NWS Melbourne, FL.

45 Year Dick Hagemeyer Award, 40 Year Service Award



Dean and Eddie Lou Stanchfield were presented with a Dick Hagemeyer 45 Year Length of Service Award from NWS Great Falls, MT. Dean and Eddie Lou record and report daily high and low temperatures along with rain, snowfall and snow depth. Climate records for this station date back to August 1951. The award was presented by NWS Great Falls MIC **Don Britton** (center). Photo by NWS OPL **Matt Moorman**.

Joseph Von Stein was presented with a Dick Hagemeyer Award for 45 years of service by NWS Great Falls, MT, Warning and Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) **Megan Syner**. Joseph reports daily maximum and minimum temperatures, rain, snowfall and snow depth near Cascade, MT. He continues a family tradition dating back four generations to 1883. In all that time, the site has remained within a quarter of a mile of the original site. Joseph's dedication also has been recognized by the prestigious John Campanius Holm Award and the Thomas Jefferson Award. Photo by OPL **Matt Moorman**.



Rose Hudson shows her 40 Year Length of Service Award presented by OPL **Steve Smart**, NWS Austin/San Antonio, TX. Rose has been observing and reporting weather and rainfall data since 1976. Her station name is Canyon Dam, TX. Photo by NWS Science and Operations Officer (SOO) **Jon Zeitler**.

35 and 30 Year Length of Service Awards



Jim Hettinger of Laurelville, OH, has been providing precipitation data to NWS Wilmington, OH, for over 35 years. Jim carries on a family tradition. The award was presented by SH **Julie Dian-Reed**. Photo by NWS Meteorologist **Brian Coniglio**.

Delmar Schoenfish, Observer near Cambridge, NE, received a 35 Year Length of Service Award from DAPM **Marla K Doxey**, NWS Hastings, NE. Delmar is the backup river reader for the Republican River, using the old chain river gauge. **Veronica Schoenfish**, center, has been an Observer since June of 2003. She takes temperature and precipitation readings each morning. Photo by HMT **Michael Reed**.



H. M. "Mac" Northington, Jr. of Northington Ranch accepts his 30 Year Length of Service Award presented by OPL **Steve Smart** NWS Austin/San Antonio, TX. Mac has been observing and reporting weather and rainfall data for the NWS since 1986. Rainfall records from his location extend back to 1963. Photo by NWS SOO **Jon Zeitler**.



30, 25 Year Length of Service and Honored Institution Awards



Earl Hawkins, center, receives his 30 Year Length of Service Award from OPL **John Kyle**, left, NWS Grand Junction, CO. Earl works at radio station **KNEU** near Roosevelt, UT. Station owner **Joe Evans** also was present for the award.



NWS Sioux Falls, SD, honored **Keith and Sylvia Carstens** for 25 years of gathering daily temperature and precipitation data. The award was presented by OPL **Brad Adams**. The Carstens enjoy gardening and sharing their abundant crops with their local church. They also are active in the community and assist with numerous outreach activities.



James Ingram, Manager of the **Poudre River Fish Hatchery** in Colorado accepted a 25 Year Honored Institution Award on behalf of **Colorado Parks and Wildlife**. Observers **Troy Meyer** and **Marde Hersh** are not in the photo. Photo and presentation by NWS Boulder OPL **James Kalina**.



Staff members at the **Circleville Water Treatment Plant** in Ohio were honored for 25 years of temperature and precipitation observations. The award was presented by NWS Wilmington, OH, Service Hydrologist (SH) **Julie Dian-Reed** to Observer **Randy Arledge**. Photo by NWS Meteorologist **Brian Coniglio**.

20, 15 Year Length of Service Awards



NWS Oxnard-Los Angeles, CA, OPL **Bonnie Bartling** presented a 20 Year Length of Service Award to **Louis Andaloro**, who takes observations at the **Juncal Dam** at Jamison Lake, CA. The **Montecito Water District** has been collecting rainfall data at the Dam for the past 88 years. Photo by Meteorologist **Todd Hall**.



Don and Vivian Button, Observers at Ulysses, KS, were presented with a 15 Year Length of Service Award by NWS Dodge City, KS, WCM **Jeff Hutton**. Vivian is the primary observer and Don is the backup. Don is the Director for Grant County Emergency Management and Vivian is the assistant. The Ulysses station has been in existence since 1889. **Mrs. H.F. McCall** was the longest serving Observer, reporting from 1917–1968. The Buttons took over the station from **Lavon Walters** in 2001.



Dave Cairns of the **Kaweah Lemon Company** was presented a 15 Year Length of Service Award. Dave is real weather enthusiast as you can tell by looking at the antique weather equipment on the wall behind him. Dave commented that the award will look nice next to the 75 Year Award given to his father back in 1979.



Harold Feigel, Observer at Maple City, MI, and canine assistant, **Shadow**, show their 15 Year Length of Service Award. Harold served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years, where he spent most of his time in the South Pacific working on a Rapid Runway Repair project. Photo by CPM **Scott Rozanski**, NWS Gaylord, MI.

15 Year Length of Service Awards



Paula Smith of Andover, ME, accepted a 15 Year Length of Service Award from **Nikki Becker**, NWS Gray, ME. No photo is available.



Robert Parrish III of Waynesboro, GA, accepted his 15 Year Length of Service Award presented by HMT **Doug Anderson**, NWS Columbia, SC. Robert is the latest in a line of Observers for the Waynesboro area dating back to 1891.

Ennis and Susan Geraghty of Columbus, MT, show their 15 Year Length of Service Awards presented by NWS Billings, MT HMT **Vickie Stephenson**, center. Photo by OPL **Larry Dooley**.



Kurt and Kathy (not pictured) **Stiefvater** were awarded 15 year service awards for Salem, SD. Kurt stands next to his rain gauge with his dog, **Jack**. Kurt is also a storm spotter and active in the emergency management community for McCook County. Photo by NWS Sioux Falls, SD, HMT **Tim Masters**.



Larry Woller, center, of Ogden, IL, was presented with a 15 Year Length of Service Award by NWS Lincoln, IL, Met Intern **Scott Baker**, left, and HMT **Eric Laufenberg**. Along with the routine observations, Larry provides frequent reports during changing weather situations any time of the day or night, which helps the meteorologists make forecast and warning decisions.

10 Year Length of Service Awards



NWS Gaylord, MI, OPL **Keith Berger** presented a very special 10 Year Award to **Terry Blakely**, Observer at Kalkaska, MI. Two months after Terry began taking NWS observations, he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. He was given a 30 percent chance to live 5 more years. Ten years later, Terry is thriving and hasn't missed a morning observation. Photo by CPM **Scott Rozanski**.



Sarah and Kenlee Calvin and their daughter from Golden City, MO, received a 10 Year Length of Service Award from OPL **Thomas Olsen**, NWS Springfield, MO. Thank you for your continued support to the NWS Cooperative Observer Program.



Angie Martin, from Dora, MO, received her 10 Year Length of Service Award from OPL **Thomas Olsen**, NWS Springfield, MO. Thank you Angie for your outstanding support.



Val Poulsen of Littleton, MN, accepted a 10 Year Length of Service Award. Photo and presentation by OPL **Nikki Becker**, NWS Gray, ME.



Scott Warren of Glencoe, KY, shows his 10 Year Length of Service Award presented by Meteorologist **Kristen Cassady** of NWS Wilmington, OH. Photo by Meteorologist **Ashley Novak**.



Mr. and Mrs. George Wells of Barnwell, SC, show their 10 Year Service Award presented by HMT **Doug Anderson**, NWS Columbia, SC. The Wells Family has helped to keep weather observation data accumulating going for the Barnwell area since 1894.

**The National
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December, January, February Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks From the Climate Prediction Center

