

March 23 was AES's "Big Thank You Day"

Officially it was called World Weather Observer Day, but hundreds of AES staff will simply remember March 23, 1983 as the day of the Big Thank You.

It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for employees to express appreciation to more than 2,000 volunteer weather observers in all parts of Canada. In every occupation and age group, they observe and record the weather day after day in backyard or workplace observation stations sending information on temperature, precipitation and other parameters once a month to AES. All this forms an invaluable data base for answering climate questions in key economic, social and scientific areas.

Events were held all over Canada, but the tone of the day was set at AES Downsview headquarters. Personnel jammed the auditorium to watch ADMA Jim Bruce and recently retired Canadian Climate Centre director general Morley Thomas honor two specially-invited veteran volunteers. They were 91-year-old Vernon Tuck of Grimsby, Ont., Canada's oldest weather observer who has maintained a volunteer station at his home since 1944 and who retired as an optometrist only three years ago and Robert McPherson, a farmer from Waseca, Sask., who took over his father's observation station in 1951.

Both guests received the newly-created Morley K. Thomas award for 30 years outstanding individual service. In addition, Mr. McPherson who was accompanied by his wife, received a 75-year longevity award for the station, established in 1908.

In his speech Mr. Bruce said that Canada's weather people, meteorologists and climatologists, could not do their jobs without the unseen and often unheralded work of volunteer weather observers across the country and around the globe. ADMA also reiterated a point made by Environment Minister John Roberts in a letter sent to all volunteer observers: he was proud that the number of volunteers associated with the weather service exceeds that of paid employees.



One of the highlights of volunteer climate observer day was the honoring at AES Downsview of two specially selected veteran observers: Robert McPherson (centre left) of Waseca, Sask. and Vernon Tuck of Grimsby, Ont., Canada's oldest observer. They are flanked by Morley Thomas (left) and George McPherson, director, AES Ontario Region.

The Downsview ceremonies also stressed the international aspect of the day: that Canada is one of the 157 member countries of the World Meteorological Organization and that each year this UN agency sets aside March 23 to highlight some aspect of meteorology or climatology. This year the theme was the vital world-wide contribution of the weather observer.

Thank You Day was also a major event in the AES regions. More than 20 Morley K. Thomas awards were distributed either on the day itself or during that week. At the same time AES officials handed out dozens of Certificates of Achievement or Awards of Merit to volunteers with 5-20 years meritorious service.

In the Pacific Region surface station supervisors Dave Phillips and John Luckett embarked on an adventurous two day journey to isolated Cortes Island off the north east coast of Vancouver Island to present an MKT Award to veteran observer Mrs. Gilean Doug-

las. The journey involved three ferry changes and a rugged hike through steep, forested terrain to reach Mrs. Douglas's home. Along with the award, the AES pair brought some hard-to-obtain fresh fruit; in return Mrs. Douglas who is also a writer, donated one of her books. The Region distributed 12 other awards to volunteers.

In Western Region the main interest of the day centred around presentation of both an MKT and a "longevity" award to Thomas Waite of Ranfurly, Alta. (about 120 km east of Edmonton). The weather station was established by Mr. Waite's grandfather in 1905 and has been on the same farm and run by the same family ever since.

Central Region's main Observer Day award centred round an institution rather than an individual. Agriculture Canada's Regina station received its 50-year longevity citation. The occasion ties in with another event due to be celebrated this December — the centennial of weather recording at what is now

the Regina airport weather office.

Just prior to Observer Day, Steve Hardaker of Ontario Region spent a week travelling more than 1500 km handing out Achievement or Merit awards to some dozen volunteer observers. On the day itself Steve played a busy part in the Downsview ceremonies acting as guide and companion to 91-year-old Mr. Tuck.

In the Atlantic Region AES regional director Des O'Neill attended an award ceremony for Mrs. Warren Gray of Kemptville, N.S. who has been a volunteer observer for 31 years. Her husband, an avid outdoorsman, who helps her with her weather recording work, was also on hand. Meanwhile in Aroostock, N.B. Mrs. Georgia Curry was honored at a ceremony attended by Fredericton weather office OIC Lloyd Veinot. It marked her 37 years service as an AES volunteer and for widowed Mrs. Curry it was a big family occasion.

Despite different levels of involvement by Downsview headquarters and the various AES regions, all Observer Day events had one thing in common: good media coverage.

The Downsview ceremonies received exposure on CBC national radio, on Toronto television and on CKO Information Radio. The Toronto Globe and Mail did a front page interview with Mr. Tuck. Morley Thomas appeared on CFRB's popular Betty Kennedy Show and on CBC's Radio Noon.

In the Pacific Region Kelowna

weather station OIC Ralph Janes spoke about Weather Observers Day on CBC and the broadcast was carried on 93 outlets. In addition, Vancouver weatherman Phil Reimer mentioned the Big Day during his regular morning weather presentation. There was also media coverage of several AES award ceremonies at the local level.

Both Western and Central Regions saw considerable media coverage of their main award ceremonies. Even veteran Thomas Waite who is said to be reticent about his observation work, was interviewed on Edmonton's CFRN Radio during the presentation on his farm.

The media in Ontario Region went

wild over the Big Day. Regional Offices received dozens of calls from daily and weekly newspapers, local and big city radio stations, requesting interviews with the local volunteer observer. Even though AES usually discourages such direct media exposure, officials waived the rules just this once to honor a unique occasion.

In Atlantic Region most media coverage centred around the two veteran MKT winners. Mrs. Curry's presentation was covered by Fredericton television and the weather office managed to obtain a videotape of the proceedings not only for their records . . . but also as a valuable souvenir.



A major regional celebration took place at Aroostock, N.B. where Mrs. Georgia Curry, a volunteer observer with 37 years experience receives her Morley K. Thomas award from Lloyd Veinot, OIC Fredericton Weather Office. Looking on is Bob Reid, CBC TV weatherman.