

ENVIRONMENT CANADA  
ATMOSPHERIC SERVICE

ENVIRONNEMENT CANADA  
SERVICE ATMOSPHERIQUE

# ZEPHYR

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**ZEPHYR**

**DECEMBER 1971**

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## DR. PATRICK D. McTAGGART-COWAN



Patrick Duncan McTaggart-Cowan was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1912 and emigrated with his parents to Vancouver B.C. in 1913.

His early education was received at Queen Mary and Lonsdale Elementary schools and North Vancouver High School from which he matriculated in 1929.

He graduated with first class honours from the University of British Columbia in 1933, and then proceeded to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, receiving an honours B.A degree in Natural Sciences from Corpus Christi College in 1936. Natural Sciences was a generic term at Oxford, for what is today known as Nuclear Physics but was then called Quantum Mechanics. At this point he joined the British Meteorological office in London and was appointed officer in charge of the Meteorological service in Newfoundland. It was during his tenure of office that the original meteorological research was carried on which resulted in trans-atlantic aviation capabilities prior to World War II.

With the outbreak of the second World War he became chief meteorologist for the RAF Ferry Command and his distinguished career earned him the M.B.E. This was the period when he was, in mingled exasperations and affection, dubbed "McPhog" by the members of the R.A.F. TC who classed his "Met" briefings just slightly below the "Scriptures."

BOAC Air crew were among the original group who flew the ferry service across the Atlantic and it was not an infrequent occurrence to receive a long-distance telephone call from California, where the new aircraft were being delivered, requesting a flight briefing from McTaggart from there to Montreal.

This was the era of tremendous expansion and change and Meteorology overnight arose like a "phoenix from the ashes," of daily "probs" to the status of a science. This also was the period when the sacrosanct portals of this male world was invaded by the female of the species – large numbers of technical staff were required as assistants and cypher personnel.

McTaggart-Cowan gained the co-operation of McGill University and female graduates were channelled into his orbit to do their part in the great "War Effort." That his choice was effective was born out by the fact that his women assistants were known to the R.A.F. TC as "McTaggart-Cowan's Bevy of Glamour."

Taking part in this endeavour was no sinecure for college girls – around the clock staffing – with rotational shifts and the forty hour week unheard of luxuries but the arduous task was rendered slightly less so in the knowledge that no one was asked to work as long or any harder than the "boss" himself.

At 6 a.m. mass briefings of up to fifty crews was the order of the day – and proceeding this the girls were required to "redo" their hair and make-up to present an attractive picture to the departing flyers.

In the earliest days of ferry crossings while McTaggart was at Gander his word was law above the word of air marshals, commanders-in-chief, Prime Ministers and Presidents, and won the respect of pilots with his uncanny accuracy in analysing the weather for trans-atlantic flights and his organizational abilities received the acclaim of Military authorities. The application of meteorology to human endeavour was undoubtedly expedited by World War II, where so many, serving with the armed forces, came rather forcibly upon the limitations imposed by the weather and climate conditions, and the assistance that could be gained from meteorological information. Their wartime experience is now being applied in civilian life and is resulting in an ever increasing demand for weather services.

In 1945 Dr. McTaggart-Cowan was loaned to the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization as Secretary for Air Navigation, and in 1946 he came to Meteorological headquarters in Toronto as chief of the forecast services division and assistant director and subsequently in 1959 he became director of the branch which position he retained until 1964.

Recognition of his services to Canada was made when he was awarded the M.B.E. and Coronation medal and his part in aviation was recognized when he received the Robert M. Losey Award from the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences in the United States for his "outstanding contributions to the science of Meteorology as applied to Aeronautics."

Dr. McTaggart-Cowan was awarded an honorary D.Sc. by U.B.C. and the accompanying citation presented him as "a wartime legend and a dedicated public servant."

Something of the scope of his interests and activities can be gained from a brief resume of the scientific and International appointments he has filled; Member, International Commission for Synoptic Meteorology, and Aeronautical Meteorology; President, Canadian Branch-Royal Meteorological Society; Councillor, later Vice-President, American Meteorological Society; member Executive Committee W.M.O; President, Regional Association IV WMO; Governor, Arctic Institute of North America.

Additional awards and honours have been legion culminating with an Honorary LLD, from St. Francis Xavier University; his publications ran the scientific gamut from the beginnings of trans-atlantic aviation to Task Force Operation Oil.

In 1964 Dr. McTaggart-Cowan resigned from the Meteorological Service to become President of Simon Fraser University and at the dinner tendered by the Met. Staff in his

honour, he was presented with a scroll commemorating the establishment of the McTaggart-Cowan Services Award Fund. The scroll was tied with ribbons of forest green and salmon pink which were suggested as appropriate colours for the new University.



*Mr. Harold Hutchon presents Dr. McTaggart-Cowan with a scroll commemorating the establishment of the McTaggart-Cowan Science Award Fund.*

The latest winner of this award is Mr. Bernhard Brecknoff, an honours student in the Physics Department of Simon Fraser University.

In 1968 McTaggart-Cowan became Executive Director of the Science Council of Canada and was head of the Task Force, Operation Oil (clean up of Arrow oil spill in Nova Scotia).

P.D. McTaggart-Cowan married Margaret L. Palmer of Vancouver and they have one daughter, Gillian Hope (Mrs. J.A. Elliot) and a son James Duncan who is currently completing his Doctoral studies in Meteorology and bids fair to follow in his famous father's footsteps.

## SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF CENTENNIAL PLAQUE

739 West Hastings Street  
 Vancouver 1, B.C.  
 November 15, 1971

Mrs. Hilary Wearne,  
 Brook House, 11 Station Road,  
 Hythe, Kent,  
 England.

Dear Mrs. Wearne:

It was good to be told by Mrs. Linley, the temporary occupant of your son's home at Telkwa, how to reach you by letter, following our earlier one on the Meteorological Centennial Award to Harry Wearne.

We were saddened indeed to hear of his death, and of the later loss of your home by fire. Please accept our belated condolences, and our best wishes to yourself and family for the years ahead.

Our Mr. E.D.M. Williams called at the Greg Wearne home on 30 September, to make a presentation of the Centennial Plaque on behalf of the Atmospheric Environment Service. It was a puzzle to decide whether to leave the plaque there, in your absence, or to suggest that you might like to collect it enroute home when you return to British Columbia.

After discussion with Mrs. Linley, and in the hope of sensing your preference, we decided to leave it in her care for you. Mr. Williams photographed it there, and a copy of the photo is enclosed. The inscribed nameplate reads:

*Presented to W. Harry Wearne  
 in grateful recognition of his service  
 as voluntary climate observer  
 1922-1968  
 Atmospheric Environment Service  
 Environment Canada*

We hope this is satisfactory to you. It was a real disappointment to us that a proper presentation could not be made, and that we could not directly celebrate with you and your husband the esteem in which he was held, and which we sought to recognize by the Award. Please accept our due thanks and appreciation to you both.

We hope that your family visit to England has been a happy one, and that you will enjoy a safe return to your well-loved home grounds in the Bulkley Valley.

Sincerely yours,

W.M. Mackie,  
 Regional Superintendent,  
 Observational Services.

MBRT, Toronto

Brook House  
Hythe,  
Kent

Nov. 23.71

Mr. W.H. Mackie  
739 West Hastings Street  
Vancouver 1, B.C.

Dear Mr. Mackie

Your letter with enclosed photo was here yesterday when I returned from a visit. Thank you very much indeed for the appreciation of my husband's service as a voluntary observer, which you express so well.

It is kind of you to send me the photograph and I look forward to having the Centennial Plaque in my small house on my son's ranch.

It is bitter that Harry could not have lived to receive the Plaque and to have had the Award presented to him by you personally.

There is this consolation that if the award had been one year earlier while he was still alive, it would have gone in the fire which destroyed our house and all its contents in May of this year.

From him and myself I tender my thanks to the Canadian Meteorological Service.

Your sincerely,

Hilary Wearne

## NOUVELLES DU BUREAU METEOROLOGIQUE DE ST-HUBERT

par Paul-A. Ladouceur

Le Service de l'Environnement Atmosphérique du Canada a pris possession du Bureau Météorologique de St-Hubert le premier Mai 1971. Depuis ce temps, le personnel s'est employé à améliorer graduellement les services en ce qui a trait au public, à la radio, télévision, climatologie etc . . .

Actuellement, il nous est assez difficile de donner un service adéquat à tous les usagers, étant donné que nous sommes situés sur la Base des Forces Armées Canadiennes qui est très difficile d'accès (cause sécuritaire) et aussi à cause d'une pénurie de personnel qualifié.

La situation devrait s'améliorer au printemps, alors que nous déménagerons dans un bureau tout neuf qui sera situé de l'autre côté de l'aéroport.

De toute façon, nous vous tiendrons au courant des derniers développements, et nous vous enverrons des photos de cette SUPER Station Météorologique dans un avenir prochain.

## AIR POLLUTION DIFFUSION STUDIES IN WESTERN CANADA

During the early part of October, a joint Air Pollution survey was undertaken in Ft. McMurray, Alberta, (the site of the Alberta Tar Sands), and at a power generating station in Southern Saskatchewan. The purpose of the study was to determine the diffusion characteristics of the atmosphere under specific topographic and meteorological conditions in order to devise models which will describe the processes by which effluents emitted into the atmosphere will be dispersed.

A total of nine people were involved in the study — 5 from AES and 4 from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. A mobile facility was used for sounding the atmosphere for wind and temperature while a fast responding SO<sub>2</sub> meter was attached to a helicopter to trace the distribution of sulphur dioxide in the atmosphere as it moved downwind from a point source.

## REMOTE ALTIMETRY RISK STUDY

A project has been undertaken by the AES Forecast Research Section to determine quantitatively the risks and errors involved when aircraft attempt to land at remote sites where no current altimeter setting is available. Specifically, the study is concerned with errors arising from use of an altimeter setting from a distant site which was possibly made at an earlier time, in order to establish the minimum let-down altitude to which an aircraft can descend while in cloud. It is, of course, well-known that the true height will be less than the indicated altimeter height if the landing site is at a location where the MSL pressure is lower than that at the altimeter observation site, if the pressure tendency is falling, or if the landing site is higher (lower) than the altimeter site and the temperature is colder (warmer) than the "standard atmosphere".



Extreme value analysis was applied to obtain the extreme height errors as a function of risk, lag time, separating distance, temperature, altitude difference, season and geography. It was found that large height errors occur during the winter over Hudson Bay and along both the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines and that significant errors can also occur in the Rocky Mountain region during cold winter days and when an aircraft attempts to let-down at a higher site than the altimeter site. It was computed, for instance, that an extreme height error of 720 feet over Newfoundland, compared to 360 feet over north-western Ontario, will occur with a risk of 1/10 million during the winter when the altimeter setting is one hour old and the let-down location is fifty miles away from the altimeter site.

### WINNING FLOAT – TRADER DAYS PARADE BROADVIEW, SASKATCHEWAN

Early in June 1971, the Broadview and District Lions Club solicited entries to the annual parade held in conjunction with "Trader Days", part of Broadview's Saskatchewan Homecoming celebrations. Al Janzen, O.I.C. Broadview Weather Station, encouraged the staff to come up with an entry which would stimulate local interest in the operations of the weather station and the Weather Service generally. Cliff Anderson, staff member, thought a colorful scale model of the station site using the theme "Canadian Weather Service – 1871-1971 – 100 Years of Service" would be appropriate and work was begun.

A utility trailer was modified by removing the fenders and adding skirting around the edges. A large wooden back, representing a sphere on a stand, was also added. Three hundred and fifty red plastic carnations were used for the lettering on a background of 1200 white tissue carnations. The buildings, grounds and instrument area complete with U-2A wind tower and cups which actually turned, were depicted with considerable detail. An estimated 150 man hours were spent on the project by staff members A.M. Russell, B.A. Barrett, L.D. Weiss, C.N. Anderson and A.L. Janzen. By July 16, the day of the parade, the float was completed. Of the 27 floats entered, first prize was won by the display from the weather station.

Special thanks are extended to A.M. Russell for his fine organizing and to Al Janzen for the use of his facilities.





## HYDROMETEOROLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT – OKANAGAN STUDY

Work is continuing on the analysis of Okanagan Basin monthly precipitation and evaporation for the Okanagan Project. A model has been developed for monthly mean precipitation distributions based on 30-year normal records and incorporating snow survey data collected by the B.C. Water Resources Service. From regression analyses based on 5-km grid square physiographic variables the long term monthly mean maps are printed by the Climatology Division computer. For individual months in 1971 and 1972, observations of precipitation departures from normal from the enhanced basin network will serve as an input for computer analysis using the IBM Stampede Program. Combination of these maps with the normal maps will then yield individual monthly precipitation maps.

A preliminary model for "lake evaporation" has been developed based on analyses of Class A pan data from network stations in Alberta and British Columbia. Grid-square analyses of monthly mean lake evaporation over the Okanagan Basin are being prepared based on variations in elevation and latitude. Individual monthly analyses will be carried out using observations from the enhanced basin pan network for 1971 and 1972 and the mean maps. Ratios of actual evapotranspiration to lake evaporation will be based primarily on a grid-square analysis of cover characteristics using available land use maps plus recent large scale aerial photography. Monthly analyses of precipitation and actual evapotranspiration will be compared with grid-square run-off analyses being produced by B.C. Water Resources Service and all maps will be adjusted to ensure consistency from a water balance point of view. Three reports on AES analysis and research activities in the Okanagan Project have been prepared to date.

## ICE ACCRETION STUDY – GANDER AND TORBAY

Installation of ice sensing equipment has been completed at both Gander and Torbay with the cooperation of airport maintenance staff. Mr. Chainé of the Climatology Division personally supervised the installation during a two-week visit to Newfoundland. The Newfoundland and Labrador Power Commission has indicated interest in the project and volunteered its assistance during the installation phase.

## PARLANT FRANCAIS A LA DIRECTION CENTRALE

Saviez-vous que trente-sept personnes à la direction centrale du Service de l'Environnement Atmosphérique apprennent la langue française, dont trente-trois participent au cours d'immersion? C'est vrai, et d'ailleurs, peut-être que cela explique les difficultés qu'on a lorsque l'on essaie de nous rejoindre. Mais, de la persévérance! On deviendra bilingue bientôt.

Il y a un groupe d'étudiants dans la section de prévision qui s'appelle "Le Club français 315". Il s'est établi l'an dernier à l'ancienne direction centrale. Le 17 décembre, 1971, ce club-ci a organisé une réception en l'honneur des professeurs et du personnel du Centre d'enseignement du français au nouvel édifice. Cette réception a consisté en une visite aux différentes sections suivi par une dégustation de vin et de fromage. Cinquante-trois personnes y ont assisté, la plupart des étudiants et vingt invités. Vous seriez étonnés de nous entendre parler la plus belle langue du monde à la réception, spécialement après quelques verres de vin. Pensez-vous!

## REFRESHER COURSE – FORECASTING WORKSHOP VANCOUVER WEATHER OFFICE

The Professional Development Unit of the Training Section conducted a month long training program at the Vancouver Weather Office in November. The training program consisted of two parts, a refresher course which reviewed the basic concepts and procedures used in operational forecasting, and a forecasting workshop carried out on a real-time operational basis.

The entire staff of the Vancouver Office and three meteorologists from nearby Canadian Forces Bases participated in all phases of the program. The instruction was provided by four meteorologists from Field Training ably assisted by an Operations Technician from Headquarters Technical Training Unit. Mr. P.J. Johns of Forecast Division provided liaison services with the Region as well as advice and assistance during the training program itself.

The training program was designed to put particular emphasis on an experimental approach to forecasting "weather systems" in detail (i.e. areal extent, intensity and other quantitative or semi-quantitative features). Exercises carried out in the classroom dealt, as far as possible, with weather situations in the eastern Pacific Ocean or British Columbia. Also emphasized were procedures that used data and parameters not normally utilized in forecast offices, and the principle of exploiting all available data, particularly in the Pacific,

A special series of lectures on Numerical Weather Prediction and Satellite Photo Interpretation was presented during the last two weeks of the course. The Training Section was fortunate in obtaining the valuable assistance of Mr. W.L. Gutzman of the CAO who dealt with the problem of, "The Assessment of NWP Guidance", during this period. The Vancouver meteorologists also participated in the lectures with a series of very interesting reports on what is quite obviously a very lively research and development program on the Regional level.

Informal feedback from the staff as well as a formal but frank assessment of the training program in cooperation with the management of the Vancouver office suggested that the course was well received by the staff and considered to be very worthwhile. A number of changes or modifications in present forecast operations are being planned as a result of the program. The Vancouver office intends to adopt some aspects of the "weather systems" approach immediately and will carry out a continuing study in this area.

Just prior to the training staff's return to Toronto, the Vancouver staff, in a most gracious gesture, presented tiepins to each member of the training team. The tiepins, which will long be treasured were set with native B.C. jade, collected, cut and polished by a member of the Vancouver staff.

## QUATRE SAISONS DANS UNE SEMAINE



"QUAND ON VA DANS LE NORD,  
ON Y VA PRÉPARÉ!"

### PROGRESS REPORT ON METEOROLOGISTS (B.Sc.) COURSE 28

Twenty-eight students from an initial enrollment of 34 on Unit I training last June completed Unit II training on December 17, 1971. Of the 28 students who will enter Unit III training on January 4, 1972, one will be required to write 2 supplemental examinations in order to obtain a clear record on the academic phase of training.

Seven of the students on course are French-Canadian. Many of these are fully bilingual and while some of their marks are probably depressed due to language problems all acquitted themselves well. In the group of seven the distribution of the weighted average grades was as follows:

Division I – One (Mr. Felix ranked number one in the class)  
 Division II – Five  
 Division III – One

Three of the students who completed Unit II training had earlier qualified as meteorological technicians. Of these, Mr. Devine has more than 10 years service and acquitted himself very well on the Met. (B.Sc.) course by obtaining a first-class honour weighted average.

Two students from the Quebec Region graduated from McGill with a major in Meteorology. Each obtained good Division II standing on Course 28.

## Statistics – Meteorologists (B.Sc.) Course 28

Region	Initial Input	Resigned or Released Unit I	Resigned or Released Unit II	Clear Record and Standing on Unit II			Number of Students with Supplementals Unit II
				Div. I	Div. II	Div. III	
Pacific	6	—	—	1	5	0	0
Western	3	1 (Res.)	1 (Res.)	1	0	0	0
Central	6	1 (Rel.)	—	0	4	0	1
Ontario	6	—	—	3	1	2	0
Quebec	11	1 (Rel.) 1 (Res.)	—	1	7	1	0
Atlantic	2	—	1 (Rel.)	0	0	1	0
Total	34	4	2	6	17	4	1

## PERSONNEL

The following have accepted positions as a result of recent competitions:

Competition 71-MET-CC-53 Operational Supervisor (MT) 4  
CFWO Edmonton

— C. Finlay

Competition 71-MET-CC-48 Meteorology (MT) 8  
Training Section  
R & T, AES HQ.

— W. Pugsley  
M.E. Trueman  
K.D. Gardner  
M.W. Balshaw  
L. Berntsen

Management Development  
Hydrometeorology Section  
Climatology Division

— J.R. Sandilands

The following transfers took place:

W.H. McRuer To: Ice Forecast Central – Ottawa  
From: CFWO Winnipeg

R.C. Harvey To: Arctic Weather Central Edmonton  
From: Goose Weather Office

## IN MEMORIAM



## C.E. STEVENS 1916-1971

The sudden death of C. Elmer Stevens in Moncton, N.B. on December 4th was a serious blow to his family, his friends, his staff and to the scientific community of Canada. He was Regional Director of the Atmospheric Environment Service of the Atlantic Provinces. His untimely passing at the age of fifty-five has deprived the newly organized Department of the Environment of the counsel of an experienced administrator and scientist of stature that it can ill afford to lose.

Mr. Stevens was born in Moncton, received his early schooling there, and attended Acadia University and the University of Toronto. He joined the Meteorological Service in 1939 and served on the staff of the newly opened forecast office in Halifax. During the War, he acquired broad experience at stations throughout Canada and provided instruction and forecast services to many Commonwealth pilots-in-training under the Joint Air Training Plan.

Following the War, he spent periods of duty in the forecast offices at the airports of Moncton and Goose Bay. As Officer-in-Charge, he directed the oceanic and military forecast services at Goose Bay and worked in close harmony with the Armed Forces of Canada, Britain and the United States. He was promoted in 1958 to an important administrative position at Meteorological Headquarters in Toronto. The USAF Base Commander, Colonel Beck, presented Mr. Stevens with an award for meritorious service to the Armed Forces of the United States before he relocated.

Before taking up his appointment at Headquarters, he served for a year in a liaison capacity with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Air, Department of Transport in Ottawa.

He resumed his post in Toronto in 1959 and was promoted to the position of Regional Meteorologist for the Atlantic Region in Moncton in 1963. All forecast offices, weather observing programs, research and operational services pertaining to meteorology in the four Atlantic Provinces came under his jurisdiction. His promotion to Regional Director, Atmospheric Environment Service, came this year with the transfer of the Service from the Ministry of Transport to the newly created Department of the Environment.

Mr. Stevens was selected for attendance at the National Defence College Course, at Kingston, for senior military and civil officials in 1966-67. Throughout his career he participated in many managerial seminars and scientific gatherings sponsored by both Canadian and American organizations.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society, a member of the American Meteorological Society and of the Canadian Meteorological Society, a past President of the local chapter of the Professional Institute of the Public Service, and also an executive member of the Moncton Branch of the Federal Institute of Management.

His honours included a plaque from the United States Armed Forces, the Centennial Medal of Canada, and letters of citation from ranking government officials of Canada. Even beyond these are the respect and devotion he commanded in his fellow Public Servants and his many friends, colleagues, and acquaintances throughout Canada and the United States.

The dedication to duty which he displayed left him little time for recreation although he enjoyed gardening, curling, and bridge. He served his Church, the First United Baptist of Moncton, through his faith, and his work as Chairman of the Finance Committee.

His pride in his family knew no bounds and his loved wife, Doris, afforded him the firm support that he merited in the discharge of his heavy responsibilities. He happily saw his daughters following his academic footsteps - Lynne (Mrs. John Fudge) at Acadia University and the University of New Brunswick, Laurie, a registered nurse furthering her education at the University of New Brunswick, and Lee at Acadia University.

His work is his memorial. His loss to the Public Service of Canada is a most untimely one. His family, his colleagues, and his friends can view with pride his accomplishments and this is the measure of consolation which remains to them.



## FAREWELL DINNER TENDERED TO CAO PERSONNEL

On December 3, 1971, a farewell dinner and social hour was held at La Diligence Restaurant in honour of Messrs. C.H. James and P.C. Haering, both of whom left CAO during the month. Mr. James has accepted a position at the National Historical Museum in Ottawa, under the Secretary of State; Mr. Haering is being transferred to the Weather Office at Goose Bay.

Following the dinner the guests of honour were presented with gifts in the form of cheques, from the staff of CAO.

The presentation to Peter Haering was made by Bob Stoutjesdyk who had collaborated with him on the Executive of the P.I. for some time, and Mr. James received his gift from Mr. James Leaver, who as O.I.C. of CAO had been assisted and supported by Charlie James for many years. Mr. Paige Knight acted as MC.

Much of Peter's acceptance speech dealt in light vein with his reasons for going to Goose. He also expressed his appreciation of the experience he had gained at CAO and of the friendships he had formed there.

Charlie James spoke of his long career at CAO and in the Meteorological Service generally, touching upon its highlights, and describing some of the changes he had witnessed. He also expressed his appreciation of the friendships he had formed through the years and of the interest derived from his work.

The evening concluded with a further social period and with personal good-byes to the guests of honour.

## CENTENNIAL PRESENTATION



*Presentation to Mrs. V. Butler of the CMS Centennial Plaque by C.E. Thompson. Mrs. Butler retired last September after 19 years in the CMS, most of which was as OIC at Jasper.*

## TRIVIA

**Doug Sneyd**

***"And now for our 'in depth' weather report. A blanket of smog, comprising 4 parts per million hydrocarbons, 3 parts per million carbon monoxide, 6 parts. . ."***

Toronto Star, 6 January 1972

Not everyone is quelled by our somewhat grandiose title – when Eric Paget of the Pacific Region requested a copy of the new P.W.A. Flight Schedules – the young lady who asked for his name and address didn't turn a hair – much less request a repeat. In due course the flight schedules were delivered to

Mr. E. Paget  
c/o Atlas Ferric Service

She deserves an A – at least for “decisive action” and “imagination.”

#### COLIN'S KEEPING SHOVEL HANDY (Victoria Colonist – December 23/71)

PORT ALBERNI – McCoy Lake weatherman Colin Wilson, who has weather records for Port Alberni dating back to the turn of the century, has discovered another interesting but somewhat fearsome comparison in his records.

Remember the winter of 1964? It wasn't such a terrible winter but it certainly was a December to remember. In 1964, up to the morning of December 22, there was 30.7 inches of snow with 12 inches on the ground. Up to Dec. 22 this year there has been 41.2 inches of snow with 23 inches on the ground.

Precipitation to Dec. 22 in 1964 was 5.76 inches – so far this year it is 5.63 inches.

But few will forget that last week of December 1964. By the end of the month it had shot up to 87.3 inches and at 2 a.m. on the morning of Jan. 1, 1965, there was 52 inches of snow on the ground. And 29 inches of it fell in one night, Dec. 31.

Is the McCoy Lake recorder predicting another such month this year? “I never make predictions” said Wilson cagily. “All I am saying is that to date there is a remarkable similarity in weather conditions between this December and December of 1964.”

He’s not predicting a thing but he’s keeping his snow shovels handy.

NOW, ABOUT THE WEATHER . . . (The Daily Colonist – Victoria B.C. December 19/71)

It isn’t all in the mind. It can be cold here.

There was a recent reminder that the winter season sometimes goes beyond dreary wetness. Although the white stuff had a consistency of slushiness scorned by Prairie immigrants who have migrated because of “the real thing,” there was at least a suggestion that temperatures can fall. And it might be well to consider introduction, not only for the benefit of the transplants but the natives as well, of an innovation in meteorological reporting that is followed extensively on the Great Plains.

It is something known as the chill factor which, apparently, was devised by the Canadian Army at shivering stations in the outbacks of northern Manitoba. The chill factor has to do with the effect of the wind on a given area of human flesh. Rather than actual temperatures registered on the thermometer, it is regarded as the true measure of human discomfort in winter out-of-doors.

It makes sense, despite a psychological claim that has emerged from a graduate research program in the field of Eskimo anthropology at the Regina campus of the University of Saskatchewan. The Leader-Post at the provincial capital says the study should be of practical interest to southern residents. It is understood, says the newspaper, “that the investigation has turned up the intriguing fact that Eskimos in the remote Arctic islands who haven’t been corrupted by effete, technology-ridden white people can, in many cases, raise their resistance to the discomfort of wind chill and frigid air by ‘thinking warm’.”

This may be so, but it should be remembered also that it is a well established fact that the people of the far north, through their very diet, have a better fatty tissue insulation than those of other climates. They also have a cultural conditioning of the skin to stand more cooling without discomfort than urban white people can put up with. They have more functional winter clothing as well.

Thinking warm may have its point, but in these parts even a little wet white resulted in a scurrying for scarves and anti-freeze and some thoughts about this chill factor thing which, thus far, has not spread to the true west, the Pacific coast. If and when it does it should add greatly to a favorite topic for small talk in an area which has much wind in its weather.