

NATIONAL
WEATHER SERVICE

ALBUQUERQUE,
NEW MEXICO

RECENT AND
UPCOMING
COOPERATIVE
OBSERVER AWARDS:

- **February 2009**
The White Family
San Jon, NM
100 Years of Service
- **April 2009**
Carmichael Laiwakete
Zuni, NM
20 Years of Service
- **August 2009**
Fred Smith
Near Thoreau, NM
15 Years of Service
- **August 2009**
Diana Rush
Ragland, NM
25 Years of Service



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Joe's Place	2
Change at NWS ABQ	3
Observing for 100 Years	4
San Jon Observing (cont)	5
NM and ABQ Precip	6
StormReady	7
By The Numbers	8



New Mexico Skywatcher

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Inside This Issue

Spring has arrived, and so it is time for the Spring edition of the New Mexico Skywatcher! The National Weather Service office in Albuquerque is pleased to bring you this newsletter, an informative publication for our Cooperative volunteer weather observers, as well as the emergency managers and SKYWARN spotters of northern and central New Mexico.

First, the National Weather Service would like to recognize our observers listed to the left for their years of excellent service. Specific observers that we would like to congratulate include the White Family of San Jon. Gerald White, the current observer in San Jon, is following the precedent set by his

grandparents who began recording weather observations in 1909. The Weather Service is extremely grateful to the White Family for their 100 years of service. See pages 4 and 5 for a detailed history of the White Family's remarkable accomplishments.

On pages 2 and 3, we will include a final address from Joe, our Observation Program Leader, as he retires. Next, we would like to direct our emergency manager readers to page 7, where you will find a detailed summary of the "StormReady Program". Finally, some precipitation data from around the state has also been included.

Author: Todd Shoemake

The Radio Room

Few things please me more than to see something good grow and benefit others, and this just about sums it up for the amateur radio program and station WX5ABQ. The fun began in early December during our annual SKYWARN Recognition Day. On the air with both HF and VHF/UHF gear, we logged 137 contacts, worked 24 states, and contacted our colleagues in 21 other National Weather Service offices from Sacramento, CA to Melbourne, FL, and from Billings, MT to Lake Charles, LA. Thanks to some improving band conditions, these results reflect a solid upturn in our experience. Thanks for being part of a great day!

Despite the shiny numbers, I am most proud of a somewhat smaller number: 57. Fifty-seven New Mexico hams worked WX5ABQ during the event allowing me to thank our year-in, year-out ham operators for their help. As I filled out QSL cards to confirm those contacts, I felt like the experience had been an enormous success, thanks to you! By the way, if you did work us and would like to receive a QSL card for your contact, send along a self-addressed envelope and I'll get one of our nice new yellow QSL cards in the mail to you right away. Additionally, you will want to check out <http://hamradio.noaa.gov> for more information on how things went for SRD '08 across the nation.

Ham radio is all about communication, and we now have our own WX5ABQ newsgroup on www.nmhams.com! Check us out, and consider signing up. You'll keep up to date with all we've got going on at the station. You can post your comments as well, in the finest tradition of good two-way communication.

WX5ABQ has enjoyed splendid hospitality this round, and thanks to the Caravan Club and the Albuquerque ARC for having us as guest speakers. As SKYWARN training accelerates into full swing, keep track of where we are appearing by checking out our home page at weather.gov/abq, and then clicking on the "SKYWARN Training" link near the top. You will have our schedule. We hope you will set yours to match ours and we can see you in person at one of our upcoming SKYWARN sessions. I am looking forward to it. See you on the bands! 73 de Tim, KM4KS (Trustee, WX5ABQ)

Author: Tim Shy

Joe's Place

The days are getting longer, temperatures are getting warmer, and summer is on its way. As an observer, there are a few things to be reminded of in the weeks ahead. For those of you with a standard 8-inch rain gauge, it's time to place the inner measuring tube and funnel inside the gauge. This will make observing easier, and it will prevent moisture in the gauge from evaporating.

In May 2009, postal rates will change, and a first-class mail stamp will increase to \$0.44. If you still have envelopes left with insufficient postage, please let us know, and we will send you additional stamps to cover the cost of mailing. We would also like to thank everyone for their prompt return of the observation data at the beginning of each month. Sending in your monthly forms before the 5th of each month allows our staff to quality check the data in a timely fashion before sending it to the National Climatic Data Center. If you are interested in switching from paper observations to an electronic format (WxCoder III or IV-ROCS), contact our office and we will gladly assist you.

As the chances for rain and thunderstorms increase through the Spring and Summer months, you can be of great assistance to the National Weather Service in Albuquerque by reporting severe weather conditions in your area. Please report any sightings of funnel clouds, wall clouds, tornadoes, strong winds, wind damage, large hail, or flooding to our office at 1-505-243-0702. Your information can help forecasters make vital and quick decisions, and verify issued warnings. Please don't forget to enter this information on your B91, B92, or B83a. You can find instructions and examples on these forms. If you need supplies or more forms, please contact our office at the number listed above.

Sadly, at least six of our Cooperative observers passed away during the last year and a half, and a few more are suffering from poor health. Over the next several weeks we will be searching for individuals interested in fulfilling the duties of these former observers who are gone, but certainly not forgotten. Many of these former observers have instituted a long period of historical weather data, and we hope to re-establish these Cooperative sites as soon as possible in order to minimize any gaps in climatological data.

The Cooperative Observing Program is one of the most important sources of weather data around the world, and the climatological records of the United States are based heavily on this data. The observers for this program supply a service beyond price, and display an attitude of "service above self". I have been involved with Cooperative Program Management (CPM) for 15 years, and have

led the program for 14 ½ years. In my opinion there is no better group of people than the Cooperative weather observers. On another sad note, April 3, 2009 was my last day at work. I will miss my co-workers very much, but I think I will miss the people of the Cooperative Program even more because of the volunteer service they do for our country.

Thanks again for your service in the Cooperative Observing Program. I hope your summer is enjoyable!

Author: Joe Alfieri



Left: Joe Alfieri and Editha Bartley (Gascon Observer)

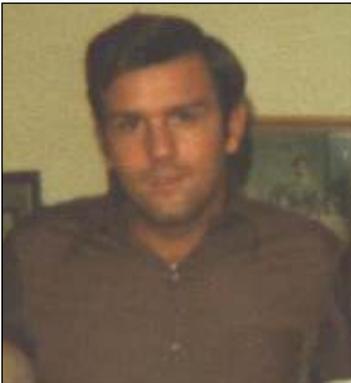


**Joe Alfieri
Observation Program
Leader**

Another Change at NWS Albuquerque

Joe Alfieri, Observations Program Leader (OPL) at the Albuquerque National Weather Service Forecast Office, retired on April 3, after 37 years of Federal Service.

After receiving an honorable discharge from the Air Force in 1975, Joe entered on duty at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Albuquerque, NM as a Weather Service Specialist, taking surface and upper air observations. While working rotating shifts at the forecast office, Joe decided to return to his collegiate studies, and enrolled at UNM in 1978. During the spring of 1984, he changed his major from Business Computer Systems to General Management and received a degree in 1986. A few years later, Joe was selected to fill the position of Cooperative Program Manager/Trainer (CPM/T), and later became the Observations Program Leader (OPL), overseeing the observation and Cooperative Programs.



Above: A young Joe Alfieri before his career began in the National Weather Service.

As part of his job, Joe traveled many miles across New Mexico, maintaining weather equipment, visiting/training Cooperative weather observers, establishing new Cooperative sites and presenting awards. Joe's travel took him to many locations across the state. One unique Cooperative site he visited was 19 miles northeast of Pietown, located in the dry rim rock country of western New Mexico at an elevation of 8000 feet. The Cooperative observer, Nancy Coonridge, owns an organic goat cheese dairy there. Her Alpine, Nubian, and La Mancha goats graze the dry high desert range daily.

One of the things Joe loved the most about his job was meeting with Cooperative weather observers and their families. Across the state he formed many friendships during these past several years. As an avid baker during his free time, Joe not only baked birthday cakes and other treats for the staff at the weather forecast office to enjoy, but many times he took freshly baked homemade goodies to share with observers that he visited.

Joe often returned from his trips with stories of places he went, people he met, or things he saw. On one such trip, he saw a very large rock on the side of the road between Black Lake and Ocate that had been painted to resemble some type of creature. He took a picture of it and called it "The Rock Monster".



Above: "The Rock Monster" captured on camera by Joe.

Many times Joe also bought things to share with family and co-workers, like organic goat cheese from western New Mexico and freshly grown peanuts from the eastern plains. The 25 pound bags of peanuts he brought back from Portales will always be remembered and appreciated.

During his retirement, Joe is looking forward to doing more of the things he enjoys the most: baking, playing golf, and watching old movies and musicals.

At the office or on the road, Joe touched the lives of many. We wish him well in his new endeavors. He will be missed by all at the weather forecast office, both past and present.

Author: Maxine Pacheco



Above: Joe Alfieri, Tim Shy, Mark Fettig, and Brent Wachter gather around for the final Weather Balloon release of Joe's career on March 30, 2009.

San Jon: Observing for 100 Years

On February 1, 1909 Jesse and Arba White, of San Jon, became Cooperative Observers for the U.S. Weather Bureau, which was under the Department of Agriculture at that time. After Jesse died in 1931, Arba continued the volunteer job until 1959. She was awarded the John Campanius Holm Award after 50 years of service to the Weather Bureau in 1960.



Above: Arba White celebrated 50 years of service as a cooperative observer in the year 1959, adding to her already remarkable resume.



The Whites came west from Iowa for health reasons, settling near San Jon in April, 1905. A weather station was established there in 1907 by Mr. H.C. Miller. The Whites took over in 1909, first recording the temperatures (high, low, present), prevailing wind, precipitation, and character of day on a wall calendar (which also recorded the number of eggs gathered and places visited that day). The weather data was then transferred to the official forms to be sent to the Bureau. Mrs. White graduated from Eastern New Mexico Junior College at age 57. Before retiring, she worked as a school teacher, newspaper editor, farmer, and rancher. She recalled the big snow of 1918, the big rain (6 inches in 24 hours) of 1930, and the dust bowl days that followed. In 1959, a letter to Mrs. Arba White from the President of the Air Line Pilots Association stated that "air line pilots place extreme reliance on accurate weather information..." (as provided by the cooperative observers).

It became family tradition that it would rain on July 17 (Arba's birthday). From a "Life Sketch" written in 1954, Mrs. White stated that her friends were quite sure that "it will rain on July 17". She continued to say that "...in the 49 years she has lived there, there have only been 4 or 5 years that it has failed to rain on that date". Each year her grandchildren still search the skies for any signs of precipitation on this date.

The weather reporting was turned over to Arba's son, Clark White, in 1959, and he recorded the weather until 1969. During his tenure, the weather station was moved from the homestead (two and a half miles southwest of the community of San Jon), into town. The thermometers were read and reset daily. The rain gauge was emptied and recorded as needed. When Clark became Postmaster of San Jon, the Cooperative Weather Observation duties were given to Mrs. Clark White (Fern). At some point, the observing actually became a paying job. In the 60's Clark received \$3.50 per month for his observing.

In the 1980's the old weather box became mostly a yard ornament with the thermometers still intact inside. The temperature was now measured with an electronic device which delivered the temperatures to a digital readout inside the house. In other words, one did not have to get "out" in the weather in order to read the weather (unless there was precipitation, of course!). If there was a power failure of some sort, the device would read: "HELP". Then the observer would once again rely on the old weather box and its thermometers. Fern continued the reporting during her years of employment as Village Clerk, then as Mayor of San Jon. In 2000, she was awarded the John Campanius Holm Award after 30 years of service to the National Weather Service.

(Continued on page 5)



Above: Fern White received the John Campanius Holm Award in 2000 for her outstanding service.

Observing for 100 Years (continued)

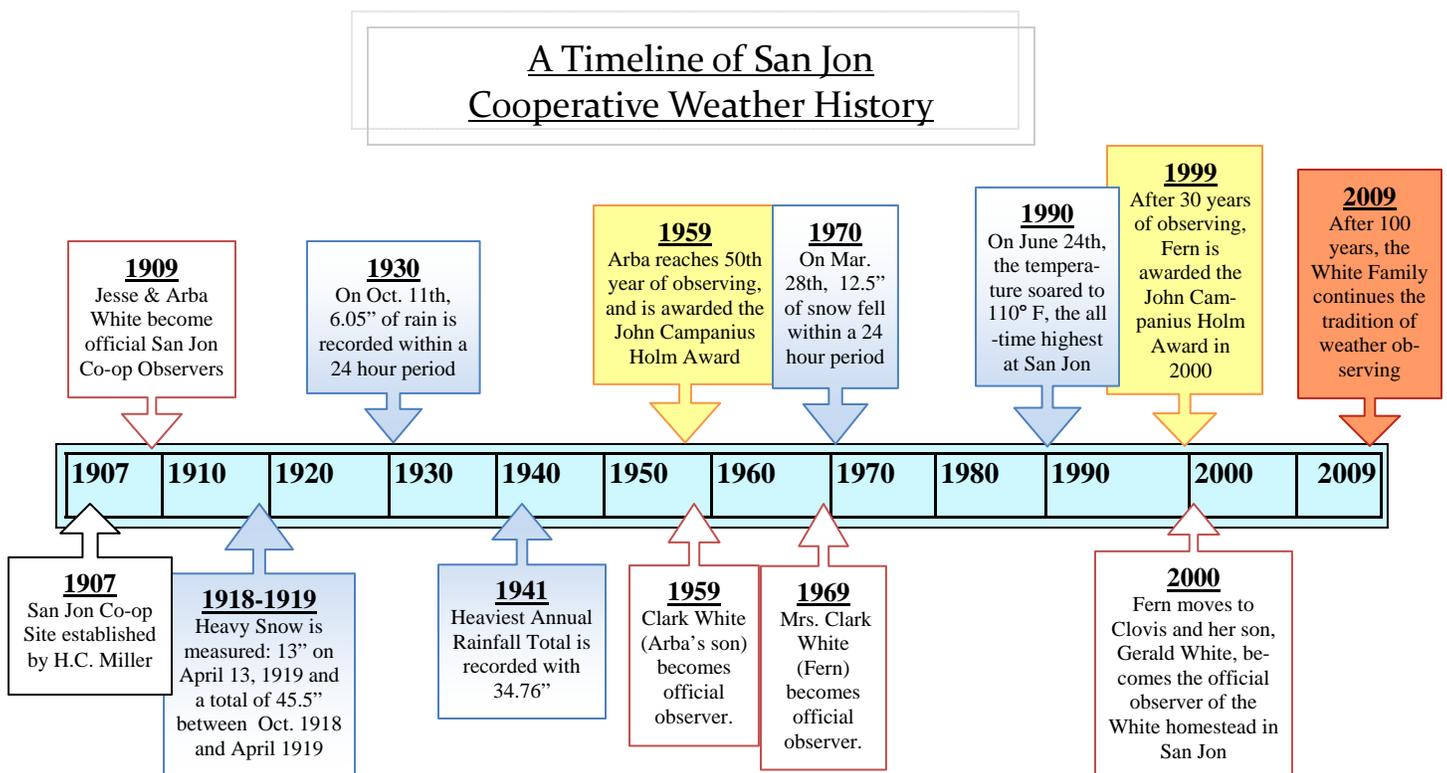
In 2000, Fern White moved to Clovis, NM. Her son, Gerald White, moved to her former home in San Jon, and became the official weather observer for the community, continuing the family tradition of observing the weather for the little town in eastern New Mexico. The weather reporting has become even more modern in this computer age, as now (2009) the temperatures are reported online by computer. The weather station location is recorded by GPS technology.

Mrs. White’s daughter, Carol Nash, is a retired first grade school teacher living in Clovis, New Mexico, and she has become the official White family historian and archivist. She has kept, organized, and researched family history, photos, and stories covering well over 250 years of this family’s narrative. Mrs. Nash is able to provide a detailed story with almost every photograph in the extensive White family collection. It is a moving experience to connect with this family’s history by way of a moment caught in a photograph that is over one hundred years old. Indeed, one is able to imagine the enormous effort it required to live in those days, persevere through the hard times, and celebrate the good times.

Following the tradition started by his grandparents, Gerald’s observant eyes are still constantly searching the skies for the next change in the weather or the atmospheric phenomena that require reports to the National Weather Service. Through the past 100 years these phenomena included tornadoes, “Blue Northerners”, dust storms that blocked the sunlight and left sand piled on windowsills, flooding rains, thunderstorms that sometimes hailed out precious crops, damaging winds, smoke, haze, aurora, snow and ice storms, solar haloes, rainbows, comets, cloud formations, etc.

John Campanius Holm was a Lutheran minister and the first person known to take systematic weather observations in the United States. The Reverend Mr. Holm took daily observations in 1644 and 1645 near what is now Wilmington, Delaware. The White family is proud to continue the legacy of observing and recording weather conditions for the United States National Weather Service which Rev. Holm began so long ago.

Authors: Carol Nash and Gerald White



StormReady Communities Are Prepared

On April 23, 2009 the National Weather Service in Albuquerque will recognize Quay County as the second StormReady County in the state of New Mexico. Quay County will be joining over 1400 communities all across the nation in earning this recognition. This recognition will be doled out to Keith Henderson and Mike Cherry (Emergency Management officials in Tucumcari) after they spent several months strengthening the infrastructure of their Emergency Operations Center (EOC). In addition, needed modifications were made to their 24-hour dispatch center and their Emergency Operations Plans. These dedicated public servants deserve all of the credit for this wonderful accomplishment.



In obtaining this recognition, they will join San Juan County and the City of Hobbs as the only StormReady-recognized communities in the entire state of New Mexico. The NWS is also proud to announce that they are working closely with the University of New Mexico Main Campus in Albuquerque, and the City of Albuquerque itself, toward obtaining this recognition. It is hoped that these communities will be able to obtain “StormReady” recognition sometime in the near future.

What is StormReady? It is a nationwide community preparedness program that uses a grassroots approach to help communities develop plans to handle local severe weather and flooding threats. The program is voluntary and provides communities with clear-cut advice from the local National Weather Service forecast office, state officials, and local emergency managers.

The program began in 1999 with seven communities in the Tulsa, Oklahoma area. To be recognized as StormReady, a community must establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center; have more than one way to receive severe weather forecasts and warnings and to alert the public; create a system that monitors local weather conditions; promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars; and develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

Sadly, New Mexico continues to lag behind surrounding states in committing to this program. There seems to be a widespread and inaccurate perception among many people in the state that New Mexico “never gets any severe weather.” While the only thing that can remove this perception is time and education, in the meantime it leaves those communities that have not taken the time or put in the effort to better respond to hazardous weather situations, vulnerable to the effects of catastrophic storms.

It should also be stated that just because a community is not recognized as “StormReady,” does not imply that this particular community is unprepared to respond to severe weather. Also, no assumptions should be made regarding their level of preparedness in the absence of StormReady recognition. It could simply mean that they have not yet chosen to undertake the recognition process, which involves a thorough audit of their response plans and operational facilities by the National Weather Service.



Similarly, becoming StormReady does not ensure that a community is “storm-proof.” Although, it certainly helps communities strengthen their response to severe weather in a truly considerable manner. It is reasonable to conclude that these improvements can save lives. During catastrophic weather events, communities all around the country attribute improved life-saving responses directly to infrastructure and operational improvements procured through the StormReady program.

Is your community doing what it can to become StormReady? If you would like more information on this program, please do not hesitate to contact Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Jesus Haro, at your National Weather Service Forecast Office in Albuquerque. You can also visit the StormReady website located at <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov>.

Author: Jesus Haro

By The Numbers

The 2008-2009 winter season was similar to the 2007-2008 winter season. The early part of the winter brought well above normal to near record breaking snowfall to the northern mountains, while the January through March period was generally below normal. The southern and eastern areas of the state were quite dry once again this winter season. If you draw a line from roughly Raton to Silver City, west of this line precipitation was generally above normal this winter, while east of this line it was below to well below normal. The top four winter snowfall totals from our Cooperative observers are listed below.



East Santa Fe
December 16, 2008
(Photo Courtesy of
Patti Berry)

Location	Snowfall (Oct-Mar)	Co-op Observer
Angel Fire	142.0 inches	Lisa Sanchez
Gascon	85.0 inches	Editha Bartley
Wolf Canyon	83.6 inches	Betty Curry
Chama	77.7 inches	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

As is typical during the winter months, a few cold outbreaks sent temperatures plummeting well below zero over the higher elevations. The most notable cold spells were in late December, especially on the 27th and 28th. Other cold periods included January 7th through the 21st, and the end of January through early February. The table below lists the coldest temperatures this past winter, which were not as cold as last winter season.

Author: Chuck Jones

Location	Coldest Temperatures	Date	Co-op Observer
Fence Lake	-22 degrees	Dec 27	Gaile Harper
Dulce	-18 degrees	Dec 28	BIA Forestry
Zuni Pueblo	-14 degrees	Dec 27	Carmichael Laiwakete
El Morro	-13 degrees	Dec 27	National Park Service
Tierra Amarilla	-13 degrees	Dec 28	Mundy Ranch

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