

**GREATER ST. LOUIS CHAPTER
AMERICAN METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY
MINUTES OF 20 FEBRUARY, 2003**

The third regular monthly meeting of the Greater St. Louis Chapter of the American Meteorological Society of the 2002-2003 season was held on 20 February at Ragazzi's restaurant on the Hill. Over 30 members and guests were treated to delicious buffet and dessert. Jay Martinelli, as acting Chairperson, did a marvelous job in organizing the dinner and hosting the meeting. At 8:00 Jay commenced the meeting.

Reports

Lou read the minutes of the January meeting at SLU with Dr. James Moore. Except for references to the now extinct Air Weather Service, they were approved as read. The new Treasurer, Danielle Minard, reported a balance of \$720.09, a drop of \$17.50 after expenses and new memberships.

Old Business

Dr. Rao presented a review of his experience at the National AMS Conference at Long Beach. He was especially pleased over the recognition given Bob and Joann Simpson. Bob directed the National Hurricane Center for many years and his wife was a renown scientist in her own right. The next national meeting is scheduled for Seattle.

New Business

Dr. Rao asked for a vote to be taken to make Jay Martinelli acting Chairman in lieu of Jeff Hammond's withdrawal from office. It was seconded and voted unanimously.

Jay confirmed that Bart Hagemeyer is still set for our March 20 meeting. Our April meeting is still without a speaker.

Speaker

Jay gave a very nice introduction to Dr. Russell Schneider, who spoke in place of Dr. Joe Schaefer. Russell is Joe's right hand man at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman Oklahoma. Russell received his BS, MS, and PhD at the U of Wisconsin at Madison and quickly moved to the Environmental Modeling Center at NCEP (National Centers for Environmental Prediction) in 1992. He became the SOO at the Hydrometeorological Prediction Center the next year. In 1997 he joined Dr. Schaefer as the Chief of the Science and Support Branch of the SPC.

Dr. Schneider's topic was "The Severe Thunderstorm Record: A Hybrid of Meteorology and Sociology".

Russell reminded the audience that the prime directive of the SPC is to protect life and property with its forecasts. But over the last 60 years the forecasting of severe mesoscale events has evolved slowly and with an initial lack of public confidence.

Even though he is mesoscale forecast cover winter weather, heavy rainfall, and fire weather, the forecasting of tornadoes tops the list of the most dangerous and unpredictable events. Russell's talk covered the evolution of tornado forecasts and their impacts over the evolution of the Weather Bureau and its transition into the Storm Prediction Center.

Dr. Schneider started with the May 3 1999 Oklahoma City successful tornado outbreak forecast. For the ferocity of the event, few deaths occurred compared to the damage.

Russell then backtracked to the turn of the 20th century, the St. Louis city tornado in 1896, where 255 were killed. He proceeded relentlessly through the next 50 years showing newspaper accounts of how urban tornadoes caused 50 to 100 casualties with no forecast to assist in preparedness.

In 1948 the first tornado forecast was made by the Air Force at Tinker AFB and verified. Ironically, 5 days later the base was struck by another tornado. Up to this point, the Weather Bureau would not issue a tornado watch due to the high panic to success ratio.

But in 1950 the Severe Storm Center was established in Kansas City MO in order to focus on the severe thunderstorm and tornado watch and warning. But in 1953 killer tornadoes in Waco, TX, and Flint, MI, killed over 100 each with little warning.

Dr. Schneider took us through a pictorial view of the significant tornado events of the 60's and 70's, each decade the forecasts improving, deaths reducing, and public understanding and confidence improving.

In the last 10 years urban tornadoes have still occurred, but the need for better forecast still exists. He presented an outbreak from November 2002 in the Southeast. The high risk forecast covered a strong cold front and 3 mesoscale clusters out ahead of the line. Over 100 urban tornado warnings were issued promptly. Yet sadly, 36 were still killed.

Russell stressed that public awareness and education must increase. Too many to not heed warnings and too many still ignore the danger signs and don't protect themselves and their families.

He proposed that major tornadoes could decimate urban centers. Schools, sports venues, airports, and public events could be catastrophes with even good warnings without public policies that implement safety awareness. Death tolls are down, but the public psyche will play a major roll keeping the toll low in the future.

At this point, Dr. Schneider entertained questions from the members. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 P.M.

Louis Hull, Secretary