

A little over 52 years ago a quartermaster named Jake was standing a mid watch on an old four piper when it began to rain. It was during that mid watch that Jake made the remark that was to be heard throughout the Navy—"It's raining!".

Before the end of that cruise Jake's designation was changed to QMA, he was issued a pencil and thermometer, and hence called, the "Ship's Weather Guesser".

Up until the beginning of World War II Jake had very little information or equipment to work with. At best, he could forecast a cold front that could only be detected by the Mark I Eyeball.

When the cold frontal passage and Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had subsided, the Navy Department took a new look at the requirements and needs for its own weather bureau. As a result, in 1942, Jake became an aerographer's mate designated AerM. With continued need for Jake's service, in 1948, he was given his rightful place in the Naval rating system as an "AG", which is still worn today.

Of course Jake has long since retired but the challenge he met back in 1923 is still alive and being met by today's AG—but, with a few changes.

If Jake were to hold an inspection of the Naval Environmental Service Unit on the Saratoga today, he would find the OA Division consists of nine Aerographer's Mates and one officer. The unit is integrated with the ship's company. He would also be amazed at the weather service unit in Saratoga and their functions directed by the Naval Weather Service and operational commands.

Jake would find radar and satellites being used as a basic meteorology tool. His mouth would gape at the speed with which raw weather data is exchanged via radio teletype and facsimile over a worldwide meteorological communications network.

Sailors of the Naval Weather Service Command have come a long way since Jake first sharpened his pencil and prepared to write the first operational Navy forecast.

Today, the Naval Weather Service Command has broadened its activities to include research in the associated fields of meteorology and oceanography. Computerized weather, a product of the Fleet Numerical Weather Center at Monterey, Calif., has become a reality in the past decade. Automatic weather stations have been placed in many remote parts of the world and at sea.

The man that said "everyone talks about the weather but no one does anything about it", was wrong. The weather service command's more than 2,500 officers and men are doing something about it. In today's weather office, as in Jake's office, weather could not be made or changed. However, Saratoga's weather guessers are on tap to insure that forecasts are written on changes before they occur and recorded when they do occur.

...Ed...The previous article appeared in the USS Saratoga's newspaper in December 1969