

Friday, June 12, 1959

Elkton High School Freshman Operates Weather Station

Has Records Dating From 1956 Start

NAKED CREEK WEATHER STATION — Winds have howled here at 70 miles per hour. The thermometer has dipped to 14 below. The farmlands and occupants have sweltered in 102-degree heat.

People around here can remember these weather extremes vaguely, but 14-year-old Lowell Kooztz, an Elkton High School freshman next year, can pull out the books and show you the exact date.

That is, if it comes between April 1956 and the present.

How come?

Lowell has his own weather station. He has carefully been keeping records since he started in the weather observing business in 1956 at the age of 11.

His professional looking operation includes the following equipment, from which he records readings daily:

Rain gauge, barometer and barograph, anemometer, minimum and maximum temperature thermometers, hygrometer, and the old weather vane. All told he figures he has invested about \$100 dollars in his weather equipment.

"I worked for it, cutting thistles and stuff like that," says Lowell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Layton Kooztz, who operate a general farm across from Naked Creek between Shenandoah and Elkton.

Lowell can easily explain that his anemometer measures the speed of wind (he's seen it hit about 70 twice); the hygrometer measures relative humidity; the bar-graph records changing barometric pressure, and so on.

He calls in morning reports to Harrisonburg radio and TV station WSWA to give data on the minimum temperature and the sky overcast, plus information on wind speed, present temperature, barometric pressure and the like.

During the school year he gets up at 7 o'clock and during the summer, which he spends helping out on Dad's farm, he's up at 6 a. m. and outside checking the thermometers and the rain gauge.

Some of the highlights of Lowell's career have been: 2.56 inches of rain that fell here June 3; the low of 14 degrees below zero, January 18; the deepest snow, 13.5 inches, March 9, 1958; lowest barometric pressure, 29.05, March 6.

And of course, the high winds that shook the walls on which the anemometer gauge is attached: they came — at 70 miles per hour



LOWELL KOONTZ WITH OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT



INSIDE, LOWELL CHECKS RECORDS, BAR GRAPH

— July 11, 1958 and January 21.

Not too many of Lowell's figures come from his pre-1958 stage. He considers his figures from January of 1958 to be more "official."

"I don't trust the temperatures," he says of his earlier readings, whose veracity he suspected as he learned more about the weather business — which incidentally

he has picked up all by himself in school courses and by reading books.

Lowell would like to become one of the 7,000 U.S. Weather Bureau reporting stations in the nation. He even wrote to Washington asking to become a part of the network, but it turned out his services are not needed right now because the Bureau has re-

porting stations established at Dale Enterprise, Stanley and Timberline.

But rather than getting discouraged, Lowell has forged ahead into a new project: copying in his own ledgers the complete weather records for this region of the Valley as kept by operators of the weather station at Dale Enterprise.

The oldest known records hereabouts, the weather data Lowell is painstakingly duplicating go back to 1880.

Lowell says it takes him an hour to record a year's data. He's about half-finished his 70-hour project.

And after that? Someday in the future Lowell thinks he might like to work for the U.S. Weather Bureau. But as a weather observer, not in forecasting.

And how about forecasting? Lowell says he's tried it occasionally for his own amusement with about 80 per cent accuracy.

What does he predict for the summer ahead? Lowell doesn't like to make long range predictions yet, but he admits it may be a hot one.

And, no, "not as dry as last year."