

In Memorial: Dewey McArthur Walston Jr., Class of 1989

We were all shocked to hear of the death of Dewey Walston on January 14. Dewey came to UNCA as a freshman in 1985. Immediately, it was apparent that Dewey already had a great knowledge of meteorology and was instinctively a brilliant forecaster. But college wasn't that easy for Dewey. He struggled in the math and physics courses. In the end, he got through all the required corequisite courses and continued to excel in his meteorology classes. Dewey also worked part-time at the National Climatic Data Center. This was in addition to internships at the NWS and a local TV station. Dewey was part of a small and tightly knit group of students- the Class of '89: Bill Capehart, Melody Hall, Christi Harbour, and Mark Keehn. All have been very successful in their careers. Dewey graduated in May 1989 with Distinction in Atmospheric Sciences. He immediately landed an intern position with the NWS at Norfolk VA. His rise through the NWS was described by one superior as "meteoric". After only three years, he won a journeyman forecaster position with the NWS Office in Pittsburgh. In 1994, he transferred to the Sterling VA Forecast Office which services the Washington DC area. He remained there as a forecaster although having opportunities for advancement in other positions. He just loved forecasting the weather. Dewey was known for his insightful forecast discussions and soon became recognized around the country as one of the best forecasters in the NWS.

Dewey's worst and best moments were tied to the same event- the famous snowstorm of January 2000. Like all of the other forecasters that day, Dewey went with the models and predicted a minor snow accumulation. In his heart, he knew something was wrong and, to the day he died, regretted not going with his "gut feeling". The next day, Dewey sent out a memorable discussion, basically chastising himself but also giving every forecaster a cautionary note on blindly following the models. He became a hero to the other NWS forecasters, even more so when his superiors took him to task for publicly questioning the accuracy of the forecast models.

Dewey's death was a great loss to the Sterling NWS Office and to community of operational meteorology. As for me, Dewey was my kindred spirit. We shared a love of weather. Often we e-mailed each other, most recently the week before he died. I will miss him, as will many others.

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