

# Letters to the Editor

To the Editors:

I would like to comment on case studies in general. It is easy to collect data for a particular event, and use standard techniques to reanalyze and examine what happened from the hindcast point of view. This is an excellent way for forecasters to see where they may have erred or done well, and increase their experience level. If case studies are well done they can be interesting and informative. From this point of view, case studies are encouraged. However, the question arises as to whether case studies belong in formal publication. Quite often the tech report or tech memo route is more appropriate. Case studies usually produce nothing new in terms of techniques or insight into a particular event or its cause. They also tend to be saturated with too many figures. I'm not suggesting that case studies be eliminated from the Digest, I'm just offering some food for thought.

Richard P. McNulty  
Severe Weather Editor

Editor's note: How about it, readers? How do you feel about case studies in the Digest?

## Book Review

Publisher: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, U.K.

Copyright: 1982 37 pages, 150 color photographs

Book Numbers: ISBN 011 400334-3

The handbook entitled Cloud Types for Observers, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, is an excellent reference and information source concerning the study of clouds. Throughout the book, there are approximately 150 full-color cloud photographs which accurately illustrate the characteristic features of each type. Descriptions are well-written and easily comprehended. To make it adaptable to the observer's work, heavy-duty enameled paper and spiral-loose-leaf binding are used to facilitate rapid page turning.

Cloud Types for Observers is divided into four sections; the first three discuss basic classifications of clouds as defined by the World Meteorological Organization; the final section depicts special phenomena such as rare clouds, rainbows, halos,

virgae, and other features. The last page and back-leaf consists of a chart with descriptions, associated weather occurrences, and height ranges for the British Isles (which may apply elsewhere).

There are nine types of clouds in each of the three classification sections. These nine are summarized on a "title" page which begins each section. The diagram on the title page enables the observer to quickly scan the illustrations to find the cloud, and then turn to the pages within the section for additional descriptions and photographs. Throughout the book, the WMO and British cloud codes are used; the latter are printed in red to avoid confusion.

The first book section examines the low-altitude cloud family, mostly cumuloform clouds. "Fair weather" cumulus, stratocumulus, stratus, and cumulonimbus clouds are some of the nine which are illustrated. Excellent photographs are available for each cloud type in the family.

The second and third sections discuss the middle- and high-altitude cloud families - altocumulus and cirriform, respectively. The excellent photography helps to eliminate the confusion an observer may experience while identifying either of these families; the unique features are clearly seen in these pictures. For example, the halo phenomenon commonly exists in the cirriform type while it never appears with the altocumulus or altostratus families. The majority of the photographs include the horizon so the observer may estimate the relative size of cloud elements. An interesting point is that many of the pictures are taken in Bracknell, Berkshire County, the home of the Royal Meteorological Society.

Rare clouds and other optical features are discussed and illustrated in the final section. Some phenomena included are nacreous and noctilucent clouds, jet contrails, halo and corona displays, irisation, mamma-clouds, crepuscular rays and others. In addition, satellite cloud pictures, red evening skies, and clouds formed by power plant plumes are reviewed. Concluding this section is a paragraph concerning nighttime observations; this is valuable to those observers who may be on night-shift duty.

In each book review, one paragraph is reserved to discuss a fault or faults of the book under examination. After studying this book several times, the reviewer has

nothing significant to add concerning faults. The book is devoid of typographical errors; the photography and organization of the illustrations are excellent; and the text or descriptions are clear and concise. The British have always used an exact manner to present information on a subject and this book is no exception. There was one item which required additional research; the term "castellanus" (altocumulus family) was thought to be an error. However, after consulting the Glossary of Meteorology, this word was found to be correct -- and also preferred over the more archaic term "castellatus." The reviewer concurs.

In conclusion, Cloud Types for Observers is a product of excellent photography, design, planning, and information availability. It is not meant to be an all-encompassing atlas for clouds -- but only for those which an observer or hobbyist may see while looking daily at the sky. This book is

highly recommended for any library, professional or private. It should be widely distributed in other countries besides the British Isles. With this volume, any serious or general weather observer will have an excellent beginning for study of the ever-changing spectacles of the sky and to better appreciate one of nature's finest displays of beauty -- the clouds.

FOOTNOTES

1. Merlin W. Zook is an air quality meteorologist and forecaster for the Bureau of Air Quality Central, Department of Environmental Resources, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, at Harrisburg. His duties include daily air quality forecasts and general forecasting. Mr. Zook is a frequent reviewer for the Digest.

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