

ATMOSPHERE PEOPLE

Meteorologists are experts in meteorology, environmentalists care deeply about the environment, oceanographers are immersed in oceanography, but there just isn't a word for people who get involved with the atmosphere.

Henry Hengeveld, who for the past six years has been advisor, Carbon Dioxide Related Matters at AES Downsview, bandies one or two invented words about: "atmosographer", "atmosphile". But he soon laughs them off. "By profession I'm a climatologist . . . my specialty is CO₂ and the greenhouse effect", he explains.

Henry adds that his connection with the atmosphere could be regarded as an expansion of his outlook, very necessary in 1988, since it's the year of the big World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere (Toronto, June 27-30). For the past nine months Henry has spent less time on CO₂ and has become a very active member of the Conference Secretariat, located in the "basement" of the AES Downsview building.

The work has been varied and challenging . . . some involvement with "high level diplomacy", quite a bit of administrative work (which doesn't appeal to Henry that much) and the chance to be a media spokesman for the Conference in the Globe and Mail and on radio and national TV.

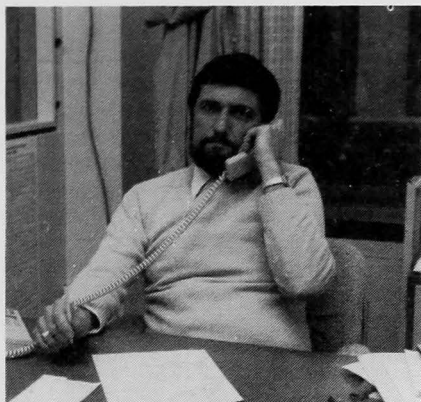
All in all, Henry seems tailor-made to be an atmosphere person. He was brought up on a dairy farm in Fenelon Falls, Ont. where he enjoyed a very close relationship with atmosphere and weather. In fact, his closeness to the atmosphere was so meaningful, he remembered it during his whole period of science studies at the University of Toronto (where he obtained both a B.Sc. and an M.Sc. degree). When the time came for him to select a career, he unhesitatingly chose meteorology, joining the Meteorological Branch of the Department of Transport in 1968.

By the time the Branch had been incorporated into AES in 1971, Henry had pursued further studies in remote sensing and had joined the Ice Branch as a remote sensing meteorologist.

During the following nine years, he absorbed a wealth of ice data and expanded his horizons to take in the entire weather and climatology of the Canadian Arctic. He was content to be based in Toronto, but admits the highspots of the job were the weeks he spent aboard ice reconnaissance planes in the North doing ice observation work and the trips he made in military aircraft to the North Pole and over the Greenland ice cap.

Henry claims he made another giant leap forward when he obtained the carbon dioxide job in 1982. "That's when I first became aware of climate change and saw the atmosphere as a single entity, from a planetary perspective".

It wasn't long before Henry saw that there were other "greenhouse gases" contributing to climate change . . . methane and chlorofluorocarbons for example. The latter gases play a major role in depleting the ozone layer, which is essential to human health and well-being. It was obvious



Henry Hengeveld

that all the elements of climate change were interlinked. Henry spent a fascinating six years piecing together all the data on climate change and interpreting them in popular form for a wide audience.

His involvement with the Conference on the Changing Atmosphere was just one more step in raising Henry Hengeveld's planetary consciousness level. Despite all the hustle and bustle of inviting delegates and organizing workshops, he has had time to hone his philosophy and beliefs on some important life or death issues.

He thinks a lot about the responsibility people have to maintain stewardship for this earth, possibly the only body able to support life in the universe. "We do not own this planet. It has been entrusted to us. We have an awesome task to make sure it remains in good shape for those who come after us".

On climate change in general, Henry thinks it's the most serious world issue after nuclear war. "It's not just the CFCs, CO₂, the acid rain, or the arctic haze . . . It's the combined total effect of all these man-made threats at once. In unison their impact could be enormous. In climate change issues, the sum is certainly greater than its parts."

Now that the hubbub of the Conference is drawing to a close, Henry looks forward to returning to his CO₂ Related Matters job. For one thing it is more scientific and more focussed. "Mind you," he adds, "I wouldn't have missed the Conference for worlds. It expanded my outlook immeasurably. I now tend to look at every issue in an integrated, holistic way".

Henry admits he has come a long way since he spotted his first rain cloud up in the sky over the farm. But he maintains that science is not the whole answer to our problems. "The existence of life on earth can not be explained by scientific principle alone. That's all the more reason for protecting it here on earth."

Despite, or perhaps because of his philosophical/theological views, Henry Hengeveld manages to remain every inch the complete atmospheric scientist.