

# The sunshine boys?

## Weather office breaking up that old gang

By Ian Haysom  
Journal Reporter

You've heard their voices, grimaced at their forecasts, grinned at their radio banter.

Now feast your eyes upon their faces.

Nick Nickerson, Ray Sauve and Frank Harvey are three of the most celebrated public servants in Ottawa. The Big Three at the weather office — the faceless guys who tell you there's a thunderstorm on its way when you're going camping or an imminent drought when your carrots won't grow.

But Nickerson, Sauve and Harvey's celebrity days will soon be over, thanks to some reorganization at the Uplands weather office.

Officer-in-charge Murray Forbes says we'll soon be hearing more radio presenters — 10 in all — over the next few months: "As of July 1 the status of many of our people changed, so they'll all be getting a chance at presenting, depending on their shift.

"Ray, Nick and Frank will still be on the radio but not quite so often."

It doesn't worry any of them too much. All three point out that presenting the weather on CBO, CKOY or the various other English and French language radio stations in Ottawa, Hull, Brockville and Smiths Falls, is only a minor part of their work.

"In all we do a total of 14 broadcasts or radio and newspaper briefings between 6 and 9 a.m. and that's pretty hectic," says Sauve, "but we also have to do full briefings for all aircrews leaving Uplands, handle written weather requests and 101 different functions."

Sauve, from Arnprior, has been with *Environment Canada* 19 years. He's

worked on the Arctic ice patrol, on the west coast and has been at the Ottawa office 10 years. He says he is often recognized, curiously, by his voice rather than his name.

"If I'm at a party people often tell me they've heard me rather than seen me somewhere. It doesn't take them long to find me out."

He comes in for his fair share of ribbing, but he says he takes it in his stride: "They always ask how come we're never right. People always remember the cloudy days. But it's more in fun than anything.

"Oh yes, I've been wrong many times. Unbelievably wrong. It happens. Often there are so many variables that you have to get off the fence. You can't tell listeners it's going to be a sunny-cloudy-hot-showery day so you try and pick the most likely system. Sometimes you're right, sometimes you're not."

Frank Harvey, who joined the weather office in 1967 direct from the services, says many people think the weathermen create the weather: "People really do get onto us if there's a bad storm and ask us why we didn't do something about it. Or someone will call the office and in all seriousness ask if we can make it sunny for their daughter's wedding or a picnic the next Saturday.

"We say we'll try and help. But we subtly point out it's in someone else's hands."

Harvey, a Vancouverite, says he doesn't mind the celebrity status — "a lot of people say they know me now, just by my voice" — but he won't be sad to move out of the limelight: "I enjoy the aircrew briefings most of all. The pilots know their stuff and we know what they

want. We tell them what kind of systems they're going to encounter on their flight. It's stimulating."

Maritimer Nick Nickerson is the most high-profile presenter at the weather office. He's a natural on the radio, kidding with the announcers, making fun of everyone and everything he can, and a celebrity now in his own right. But he doesn't regret the change either: "I do the presenting. It's part of the job. But I enjoy all of the job, particularly the briefings, and less radio won't matter too much."

He says he tries to be a little different: "You've got to get the attention of the listener, make the weather interesting, particularly if you're going to tell them it's going to be the worst day of the year."

Nickerson says he has no inside track on the weather: "Oh, sure, I try and pick the best time of the year for my vacation. I look at the records and so on. But it doesn't always work.

"Earlier this year I went down to Florida. I looked up the charts and it said Florida averages six days of rain in February. Well I got all of them at once. We were wearing ski jackets at Disney World."

Nickerson is also known as Trace Nickerson and Partly Cloudy Nickerson at the weather office. The nickname dates back two winters: "I was doing the weather on the radio that afternoon and I said we'd have a partly cloudy night with maybe a trace of snow. But I said otherwise it would be clear and fine the next day.

"Everyone woke up the next day to one of the worst snowstorms they'd ever seen. I've got it in the back ever since."