SUMMARY OF THE FEBRUARY 1987 WEATHER ON THE MONTEREY PENINSULA, CALIFORNIA

General: Monterey’s February was on the mild side, with slightly warmer than normal temperatures, accompanied by above normal rainfall, and stormy conditions at times. Fog was normal and winds above average for the month.

Temperature: Temperatures in February had its recorder-breaking ups and downs but ended up slightly above normal for the month as a whole, as noted by a 53.9°F for the overall average (0.7°F above the 36-year normal), 62.8°F for the average daily maximum (1.0°F above normal) and 45.1°F for the average daily minimum (0.5°F above normal). The absolute high for the month, 80°F was registered on 7 February while the month’s low, 36°F, was observed early morning 22 February.

The month’s weather patterns varied widely between cold-air surges from the Canadian area to intrusions of tropical air from the warmer North Pacific waters to the south. The maximum temperature of 71°F on 5 February tied the record high for the date set in 1961; the warm minimums of 54°F on 8 and 10 February set new records, beating 52°F and 51°F in 1963, respectively, while 54°F on 9 February tied the 1963 warm minimum for the date. The 36°F reading on 22 February set a new low for the date, beating 38°F in 1984 and the 37°F on 24 February tied the low record for the date set in 1955. Although the high for the day only reached 52°F on 23 February it was not a record, which is still be 1969 with a chilly 50°F maximum. However with wind gusts to 33 miles per hour and daytime temperatures hovering in the high 40’s and low 50’s, the wind-chill temperature ranged from the high 20’s to the low 30’s much of the day.

Precipitation: The first above normal rainy season (November 1986 – April 1987) monthly total was registered in February: 3.02” vs. a 36-year normal of 2.82”, bringing the rain year total to 9.49” vs. 13.23” normal. The expectation for the whole rain year, based on 36 years of record, is 19.17”. In many respects February 1987 was much like February 1986, and most welcome, especially this year in view of going into February with only 59% of normal rainfall. By month’s end our position improved considerably to 69% of normal, although Carmel Valley is still running closer to 50% of expectation at this time.

Two major storm periods in February added flavor to the local weather. The 24-hour 1.86” rain that fell from 6 pm 13 February is the single largest value on record for February (36-year record; 6 pm to 6 pm totals), beating 1.36” on 9 February 1978 and 1.65” on 2 February 1958. High elevation locations near Big Sur in the Santa Lucia range to the south and southeast of Monterey measured rainfall up to the 10” category for the storm. Then, again, in the period 21-24 February there was considerable weather activity locally – low on rain but high on dramatic weather events. Two thunderstorm days were recorded in this period: 21 (evening) and 23 (early afternoon) February, and hail up to 1/4” size fell early afternoon February 23. Both of the thunderstorms and hail were firsts for this rainy season. Then to top it off, waterspouts were observed within a mile offshore of Pt. Sur early afternoon 24 February. (See Herald story, Wednesday 25 February 1987 edition.) Though rare for the area, a similar event occurred just last February offshore, directly west of the Monterey Airport.

Maximum wind gusts with the late February storm were clocked at 33 miles per hour (mph) at the National Weather Service Climate Station and 48 mph in Moss Landing and Cannery Row areas. Damage appeared to be insignificant from the winds.

Finally, snow was reported on Chews Ridge Sunday AM 22 February. It is likely that several peaks in excess of 3500’ in the nearby coastal mountains experienced snow in the late February storm.
**Wind:** The Monterey Airport winds (taken from hourly observations 6 am to 11 pm) averaged 7.9 mph, well above the 6.2 mph average of the last four years. The monthly average of the maximum daily gusts at Monterey’s National Weather Service Climate Station, 19.9 mph, is the highest of the current rainy season and above the recent four-year average. Specifics on storm gusts were covered in the precipitation section above.

**Fog:** There were six days with one or more hours of fog (= fog day) in February; this is exactly the 24-year normal. January and February, along with March, represents the least foggy months of the year on the Monterey Peninsula.