

Glacier symposium Gunnar Østrem, March 22, Norway

Gunnar Østrem, honorary member of the IGS, celebrated his 85th birthday on 25th March 2007. In honour of his birthday, the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy directorate (NVE) arranged a Glacier Symposium. The half-day symposium took place on 22nd March, which was also World Water Day, at NVE in Oslo, Norway. Twelve speakers from Norway and Sweden were invited to give talks concerning glaciers or climate. Gunnar himself started the proceedings with a dazzling presentation of his work establishing mass balance measurements in Canada in the 1960s. For forty minutes the audience were enchanted by his narration and Gunnar's excellent way of conveying his experiences there. The other presentations were also of high quality. In real Østrem-manner, ice cream and sweets were served in the coffee break.



Gunnar presented his work in Canada at the symposium. Photos: Hallgeir Elvehøy

The symposium assembled an audience of about 50 people, among them IGS Secretary General, Magnús Már Magnússon. The program, list of participants and images from the symposium is available at www.nve.no/bre (direct link: http://www.nve.no/modules/module_109/publisher_view_product.asp?iEntityId=10399)

After the symposium there was a enjoyable reception at NVE for specially invited guests. Many people gave short speeches relating past experiences doing fieldwork with Gunnar, and how his work had influenced them. Everybody emphasised Gunnar's outstanding enthusiasm for his work and his ability in encouraging colleagues.



Reception at NVE after the symposium. Photos: Hallgeir Elvehøy

Gunnar Østrem is a very enthusiastic and active person. Even though he has been retired for 15 years he is still full of the joy of life and is always looking to the future. In particular, he has a great enthusiasm for glaciology. He still takes part in professional conferences and symposia and just last year participated in both the IGS-symposium in Cambridge, and also in the North West Glaciologists Meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska where he even gave a talk. After the meeting an excursion to Gulkana glacier had been arranged. Not only did Gunnar come along, he also walked all the way to the glacier!

Gunnar was employed at NVE for 30 years. In 1962 he established the Glacier Division, whose main task was to initialise a network of mass balance measurements in Norway for the planning of water power plants. Gunnar made an important contribution to developing methods for mass balance measurements. Due to his experience he was later invited to Canada to be responsible for establishing a Canadian network of mass balance investigations and has written a manual for mass balance measurements. Østrem was appointed professor in physical geography at the University of Stockholm, and has been visiting professor at Carleton University in Ottawa. Østrem's scientific production is considerable. He is author or co-author of about 80 scientific articles or publications – eight of them after his retirement – and the last one was published in 2006. Gunnar Østrem has received the Norwegian honour "The Kings Order of Merit" in gold for his achievements. He has also received a Danish and a Swedish mark of honour. He is honorary member of the IGS.

Nils Haakensen