

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

# Radio Service

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INFORMATION

PROGRAM..... CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN

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RELEASE

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Fifty seven varieties of weather information in the Weather Man's Chat this evening. All of it comes direct from the Weather Bureau. The Chat is released every Wednesday by the United States Department of Agriculture through Station \_\_\_\_\_.

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('Phone rings).

"Hel-LO. Yes.-- Weather Man speaking. You say you want to know when it rained last? On the twenty first. You're welcome. Good day".

The Weather Man hung up the receiver, and turned to us. My friend, Bourne, and I had dropped in on him at his office to pass the time of day. We found the meteorologist in one of his less busy hours.

He mentioned to the 'phone on his desk. "That's a funny thing", he declared.

"Looks about normal to me," said Bourne smiling. "About like my telephone."

"Oh, I don't mean the telephone," our friend : replied. "I mean the short conversation I just had".

"What about it"? I asked.

"Man wanted to know when it rained last. I told him, 'on the twenty first'. Then he explained that he'd lost his umbrella the last time it rained. Said he thought if he could remember when we had our last rain storm, perhaps he could remember where he left his shower stick. I told him.. He thanked me and hung up."

"Get many 'phone calls like that one?" Bourne wanted to know.

"Not many exactly like that one", the Weather Man answered, "but you'd be surprised at the heavy business we do in telephone questions and answers. Take the case of that damaging flood down in Tennessee about February 3rd. I'll wager that our men down there worked 18 or 20 hours a day during the high water period. We've known as many as 2,500 'phone calls to come in one day. Sometimes there are 200 an hour. They usually put on special operators in such emergencies, but then the people all want to talk to the meteorologist direct. Seems like no one else will quite do."

"A man will call up during a flood, or a threatened flood. 'How much water are we going to get?' he'll ask. 'Fifty feet', we'll answer. 'I can only stand 45 feet', he'll reply and hang up. Then he'll make a grand rush to clear his property off the threatened land, or get his family and live stock to safety".

"But how do you know how much water you'll actually get?" I asked.

"Through science and experience", said the Weather man. "After you've been in the highly important and thrilling game of flood and river stage forecasting for 10 to 40 years in a certain district, you'll know that district and all its ways. Then you'll have the daily reports from scores of other trained observers to help you out. Our men often forecast the exact height of high water at a particular place several hours before it begins to rise and in some cases, like the lower Mississippi, as much as two weeks ahead.

"Don't you meteorologists ever make mistakes?" Bourne asked.

"Sure we make mistakes. You can't be right all the time. But we do the best we can -- and call it all in the game when occasionally things come up to overturn our forecasts".

"The Weather Man paused at this point and Bourne broke in with a question.

"Arn't farmers and sailors weather-wise on the whole?" he asked. "I've heard that their methods of predicting the weather are considered pretty sound".

"Farmers and sailors are weather wise", he replied. "By reason of their occupations which depend so much on the weather, they soon come to know the weather's moods and habits. They read the signals in the sky all right, but a lot of the signs people believe in aren't any good. For instance, birds and animals know nothing about weather forecasting, in spite of many people's faith in their accuracy and prophetic knowledge. The position of the moon has no bearing on the weather either, although a circle around the moon may be a good indication of a storm within 24 hours. The appearance of the sky at sundown is a pretty fair indication of what the weather will be the coming day, but it doesn't always tell the truth. Of course the clouds in the sky are very good weather signs. With a perfectly cloudless sky, a storm ordinarily isn't likely to occur in the locality for 24 hours, but there are exceptions to this rule as well. Learn to read the clouds. There are rain clouds, wind clouds, and fair weather clouds".

"Doesn't the direction of the wind have a lot to do with it?" I asked. "A wind from the West suits everyone best, doesn't it?"

"Not always", our friend told us. "As a rule, the direction of the wind has no importance in making 48-hour weather forecasts. But for day-by-day forecasts of the weather, the direction of the wind is of the highest importance.

As a rule, winds blowing from North to South, by way of the East, are rain winds. Ordinarily winds coming from the westerly side are fair weather winds. Notice I say, as a rule, and ordinarily. There are exceptions. The changing winds in any locality are shown on the weather map as a storm comes on and passes by".

"What simple rules could you give a farmer so that he could forecast his own weather with fair accuracy?" questioned Bourne.

"The farmer should learn the significance of local signs in the heavens such as clouds and halos, the wind direction and speed. One may often tell something about the coming weather by one's own feelings, especially as regards rain. You somehow feel it in the air. We also feel a coming thunderstorm. Drier air is an almost certain indication of fair weather. When a storm approaches the barometric pressure falls and it rises as the storm passes on. It's quite easy to learn to read this instrument. Of course, these signs are not 100 per cent accurate. The old saw, 'All signs fail in dry weather', is more truth than poetry."

"Why don't we have as much snow as we had 25 years ago?" was my next question.

"Aha!" said the Weather Man, "I thought that question would come out sooner or later. On the average, we do have as much snow as we used to. Winters with light snow just happen. So do winters with heavy snow. The Northeast portion of the United States has had heavy snow winters for several years hand running. Nine years ago, Chicago and the Middle West had the snowiest winter on record in 50 years. In January of 1918, snow was piled up 15 feet high in the streets."

"I guess we just don't notice winter like we used to", Bourne put in. "But isn't a lot of snow and cold weather healthy?"

"That's another belief that has been with us a long time", our friend replied. "I'm not sure about the answer, either. Experts on weather and its relations to disease tell us that there are certain curative properties in the air of different localities. Nearness and distance from large bodies of water, -- altitude, -- sunshine, -- moisture in the air all help to make the air healthy or unhealthy. A climate should be well suited to out-door life. There are two kinds of climates: Negative and positive. Positive climates produce a tonic effect in people. Both sea and mountain air have this tonic effect. But sea air is mostly a sedative in its effect while mountain air is stimulating. Certain places are famous as health resorts and there's no question about their great value".

At this point in our talk, the 'phone rang again. The Weather Man asked to be excused while he answered it. So, Bourne and I, knowing we had stayed long enough, made our farewells and left the Weather Man to his telephone questioners.

# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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