UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN. Wed., Nov. 16. 1927

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

ANNOUNCEMENT: In his firstthree talks, the Weather Man has told the audience of Station_____how the Weather Bureau issues flying-weather, flood-stage, and fire-weather warnings. Later in the year, he is going to tell you about other important work the Weather Bureau is doing. But he thinks it's about time to tell you how the Bureau is organized. Incidentally, he's going to tell you a bit more about himself. So stand by.

---ooOoo---

"I've found that most folks would rather tell you what they're doing than who they are".

It was the Weather Man speaking. He looked at me and smiled philosophically.

"That's true", said I. "But our radio audience wants to know who you are. There'll be planty of time later to tell them all about what you're doing".

The Weather Man smiled again and I began to wonder if he was smiling at me. I straightened my tie and waited.

"By the way, have you heard that the Weather Bureau has opened a weather station in Nicaragua?" he asked.

He couldn't lead me off that way. I was after some personal information.

"That's all very interesting, of course", I said, "and it will make a good talk a bit later in the season. But our radio friends want you to introduce yourself, Mr. Weather Man. So stand up and make a pretty bow and speak a little piece".

"Isn't that a bit informal?" the Weather Man asked. "We don't spend much time bowing and speaking pieces--- we meteorologists".

"I was joking", I said. "Now here's a good way to begin. You just said that you're a meteorologist. Please begin by telling me what a meteoroligist is. Just pretend that I have never heard of a meteoroligist before".

"Sometimes I wonder if you have", said the Weather Man.

"Pheeeew! That was cutting". I smiled. So did the Weather Man. Then

he began---

"In the first place, a meteorologist is not the man who makes the weather. That's a pretty old joke by now, but I notice some folks are still using it".

That made me a bit uncomfortable. The Weather Man went on---

"Of course man can protect himself against the weather. But I don't know any man who has any success trying to stay off a storm or change its course.

"The word meteorologist comes from the word meteor. Meteor really means, a thing of the air. A shooting star is a meteor, but so is a cloud, a rainbow, a thunderstorm, or a cold wave.

"Meteorology, then, is the science of the weather. A meteorologist is a scientist who makes a study of that science and seeks to know the processes that operate to cause weather changes and then to apply that knowledge for the benefit of mankind".

I broke in with a question.

"How long has this been going on?" I asked.

"Well", said the W. M., "meteorology is perhaps the oldest of the sciencies. And yet modern meteorology is comparatively new. The weather has been studied and written about ever since man began to study and write. Scientific meteorology, however, is somewhat recent. Today, for instance, no mariner would think of putting out to sea without having a reliable barometer on board. But Columbus made his adventurous voyage--- Magellan sailed around the globe--- and Drake explored the Pacific coast many years before Torricelli invented the barometer in 1643. Today men read the thermometer with interest, in the hopes of seeing a record for heat or cold broken. But the Pilgrims and their descendants endured almost 100 stiff New England winters without even knowing how cold it was. Although Galileo invented a crude clinical thermometer in 1590, Fahrenheit didn't develop a practical thermometer for ordinary use until 1714 and it probably didn't come into common use until some time after that".

"Where's all this getting us?" I asked.

"Be patient", begged the W. M. "I'm telling you about the beginnings of weather forecasting. You want the end before you get the beginning."

"You embarrass me", said I.

The Weather Man continued---

"Benjamin Franklin was one of the first American meteorologists. Back in 1743--- some years before you were born--- while he was studying an eclipse of the moon, Franklin learned that although the winds in a storm which prevented him from taking an observation of the eclipse at Philadelphia

were blowing from the northeast, this same storm reached Boston after it had passed Philadelphia--- although Boston is certainly northeast of Philadelphia. That led Franklin to a study of the movement of storms and that movement is one of the things in which modern meteorologists are interested. Franklin's discovery laid the foundation for the modern science of weather forecasting.

"The first practical weather forecasting service in the United States was organized in 1869, by Professor Cleveland Abbe, under the auspices of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, to serve the Ohio Valley. The Government took up the work soon after and, in 1870, under the direction of the Chief Signal Officer of the U. S. Army, a public weather forecasting service was established. Weather forecasts were based on telegraphic reports received from 22 stations. For more than 20 years, the work was carried on by the Signal Corps, but in 1891, the Weather Bureau became a civil establishment, under the Department of Agriculture. It remains that to this day, although the 22 stations have grown to many hundred, and the weather service operates, not only on the Continent but out into the surrounding oceans as well".

"What is the Weather Bureau's main object today?" I wanted to know.

"The forecasting of storms was the principal object of the weather service right in the beginning", declared the W. M. "And, while the work has been so extended as to take in many other activities, the preparation and distribution of forecasts continues to be the most important duty of the Weather Bureau to this day.

"These forecasts are of different classes suitable for different needs. General forecasts are made for States and sections of States. More specific forecasts are prepared for the vicinities of important cities and are issued under the heading, Portland and Vicinity, New York and Vicinity, Miami and Vicinity, St. Louis and Vicinity, and so on. These forecasts are printed in the newspapers, broadcast by radio, posted in public places where everyone may see them, or hear them. Then there are the special forecasts, as for example: Warnings of high winds, for the protection of shipping along the coasts and on the Great Lakes--- cold wave warnings, to protect property from damage by sudden and extreme cold--- frost warnings, for the protection of tender crops--- livestock warnings, for the protection of stock on the range--- alfalfa forecasts--- spray forecasts--- fire-weather forecasts--- flying weather forecasts. Among the most important of the special services is the river-stage and flood forecasts. I told you about that the other day, though.

"These forecasts save millions of dollars every year", continued the W. M. "For example, a recent official estimate of the saving in connection with the use of Weather Bureau advices in the protection of perishable freight is 100 million dollars a year. The aid of frost experts in the citrus regions of California, the pear-growing valleys of Oregon, and elsewhere, often makes the difference between success and failure. The warnings for a single cold wave recently amounted to a saving of more than 3-1/2 million dollars. Few investments made by the Federal Government pay so large

dividends as the relatively small sum appropriated for the Weather Bureau".

I was interested. The Weather Man took a long breath, and resumed his talk.

"These weather records are assembled and published and are on file in the various Weather Bureau offices, in public libraries and elsewhere and are used in countless ways by engineers, contractors, transportation companies, manufacturers, homeseekers, health seekers, investors, physicians, tourists, merchants and others.

"The assembling and distribution of this mass of weather information, from all parts of the country, is directed by Professor Marvin, head of the Weather Bureau, through numerous divisions of the central office in Washington, D. C. There is a head for each division. As the respective names of the divisions indicate, at least in part, the work carried on by that division, I think I'll give you the names of the divisions. Here they are: Office of the Chief, Office of the Assistant Chief, Office of Chief Clerk, Aerological Investigations, Agricultural Meteorology, Climatological Division, Editor, Forecast Division, Forecasting, Instrument Division, Library, Marine Division, Meteorological Physics, Printing Division, River and Flood Division, Solar Radiation Investigations, Stations and Accounts Division, Supplies Division, and Telegraph Division. It would take me about all winter to go into the work of each division fully. Perhaps you wouldn't have time to wait that long".

I laughed and told the Weather Man that he had already given me enough for today's radio talk. I told him that I believed the radio audience would know much more about the Weather Bureau when they heard his conversation. He thanked me for the good words and I bade him good day and left his office.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Later on, the U. S. Department of Agriculture will release other chats in the WEATHER MAN series. These talks will go into the work of the various divisions which the Weather Man just got through mentioning. Look for them every other Wednesday.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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