

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN.

Friday, March 20, 1931.

ANNOUNCEMENT: And now for a chat with the weather man. Every two weeks, our old Ob. Server goes to the meteorologists of the United States Weather Bureau for fresh weather news. This time, he goes to the ends of the earth with them in the search for cold facts about this ever changeable subject.

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Now that Spring is just around the corner, we feel more comfortable in chatting about the cold of Arctic and Antarctic nights.

For that is just what I've been talking to Mr. William C. Haines, of the United States Weather Bureau, about. Mr. Haines, was the meteorologist on both the Byrd North Pole Expedition and the Byrd South Pole Expedition.

Of course, up in this half of the globe, we think of Arctic weather as being the last and lowest word in coolness. But take it from Mr. Haines, who has been both places, the Arctic can't hold a candle-light to the Antarctic for "winter and rough weather."

And speaking of candle-light, it was so cold in the Antarctic that the kerosene in an ordinary kerosene lantern froze. It wouldn't rise in the wick, and the light went out. It was so cold at times, that you could blow out your breath against the wind and hear it freeze as it passed your ears. Mr. Haines says the sound was a sort of swishing noise like that of snow blowing over a frozen drift.

However, he never heard his breath freeze that way except when the thermometer registered 60 degrees below zero or lower. You see, the low-down cold stories are not mere explorers tales for temperate-climate consumption. Mr. Haines kept the record of the weather. There in "Little America" at the edge of the barrier ice of the lofty Antarctic continent, he had a complete Weather Bureau station. He made all the measurements made in a first-class Weather Bureau station in this country, over a continuous period of 14 months. In addition to the temperature, and pressure, and cloudiness, and wind direction and velocity obtained by the ordinary station, he made 400 soundings of the upper air by means of pilot balloons.

He tells me that in the middle of July it was 72 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. And for three days in July it was down to 70 degrees below zero.

But that's not hinting that it was colder than in January. Remember, the seasons in the Southern Hemisphere are just the reverse of ours. July was the coldest month for the year averaging 45 degrees below zero and September ran a close second averaging 44 degrees below. May, June, and July are the months of the long winter night in the Antarctic. Mr. Haines and

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the other members of the Byrd Expedition saw the sun go down in April, and the next time they saw it was in the latter part of August.

As long as the sun was above the horizon in the warmer months of November to February and merely swung around in the sky, there were definite daily changes in temperature in reference to the noon-time position of the sun as with us.

The temperature even in the comparatively warm mid-summer months of December and January fell below zero at times, and this would be what most of us would call bitter cold. Mr. Haines says the temperatures in the Antarctic sometimes fluctuate widely, and in a surprisingly short time.

Northerly winds down there bring warm weather, and in the Antarctic night, Mr. Haines found his thermometer recording a rise of temperature from 49 degrees below zero to 16 above in less than twenty hours. That is, a jump of 65 degrees.

I started to say a jump of the mercury of 65 degrees, but alcohol thermometers were used. Mercury thermometers couldn't be used at any such temperatures. Mercury freezes at 38 below zero. Mr. Haines tells me that mercury froze like a chunk of lead down there. He threw some out on the snow, and it froze instantly like molten lead dropped on a floor.

Those sharp rises in temperature usually come with the blizzards, the most dreaded weather menace in Antarctica. The blizzards come every week or so. Mr. Haines recorded 37 honest-to-goodness blizzards during the year, not to mention many more which might be classed as blizzards by folks who have never seen the genuine article as displayed in the Antarctic.

When the wind gets up to about 20 miles an hour it begins to pick up the drifted snow and adds it to what is falling. With a thirty mile wind, it is unsafe to get away from camp. You can't see more than a few feet ahead. There's little chance to get back.

You know the great British explorer, Scott met death in the Antarctic when he was trapped for days by a blizzard when only a few miles from plenty of food and fuel.

There was less fog in Little America than in Spitzbergen where Mr. Haines was stationed during the Byrd North Pole flight. However, Mr. Haines says it is remarkable at what low temperatures moisture particles can stay liquid in the air, as he has observed dense fog in the Antarctic at temperatures considerably below zero.

But the reasons for that are still under investigation, and Mr. Haines may have something more to say about that later, and also about those peculiar rings around the sun and other optical phenomena found so conspicuously at the ends of the earth.

Besides, the weather measurements made at the Station, other measurements were taken by other members of the party in their exploration of the interior of the continent.

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This "Little America" station, you understand, was just on the edge of the vast Antarctic continent, considerably larger than the entire United States, and all ice covered except the higher mountains, some of which rise bare to heights of nearly three miles above sea level.

Yet this ice-clad continent, Mr. Haines says, must have once enjoyed a more genial climate for geologists of the expedition found evidence of coal formations which must have been laid down when thick vegetation covered these frozen and as yet largely unexplored regions, containing the largest blind spots still left on the world's weather maps.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: You have just heard a brief outline of weather conditions at the ends of the earth, as described by Mr. Wm. C. Haines, meteorologist with the Byrd Expedition. Two weeks from today we will have another little chat with the weather man on some other feature of our ever-changing weather. This feature is presented by Station ----- in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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