

CHAT WITH THE WEATHER MAN

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Let's have a chat with the Weather Man. Our old friend, Ob. Server, has been talking with officials of the United States Weather Bureau about some of this unusual weather, we've been having. Now he is ready to tell us about it ---- Well, Mr. Ob. Server? ----

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I venture to say some of us will be talking about this winter's weather for years to come.

Of course, one of the most usual things the weather does is to be unusual. Recently, however, it seems to have been unusually unusual.

Take the weather on January 21, for instance. On that day, climatically speaking, New Yorkers were living in Augusta, Georgia; Chicago was at Vicksburg, Mississippi; Columbus, Ohio, was living in Montgomery, Alabama, and Washington, D. C. was climatically down in Florida and Keokuk, Iowa was at Galveston, Texas. That is those northern cities were getting the temperature usual in those southern places at that time of the year.

And while the entire eastern half of these United States were getting abnormally warm weather, running some twenty degrees warmer than usual, folks in parts of the west were getting weather that was 10 degrees colder than normal for that time of the year. And, you recall, that warm weather in the East and abnormally cold weather in the West was not just for a day or so. The averages for the early winter have been record breakers.

Mr. J. B. Kincer, of the U.S. Weather Bureau who was showing me a few days ago just how unusual that unusual weather has been, seemed considerably worried at that time. Mr. Kincer is chief of the Bureau's division of agricultural meteorology and gets the reports on the effect of weather on the crops. He said we needed cooler weather. He figured that the buds on many fruit trees in the eastern half of the country were coming out too much for safety. He was afraid they might get so far out, they would be killed off by a sudden touch of normally cold weather.

The danger of warm weather to fruit in the East reminded him of the danger from cold weather which the fruit went through in the West earlier in the winter. You may recall, snow fell in orange and lemon groves in California in the middle of December and in the latter part of November. In December, one big lemon grove had five inches of snow,

In connection with the November cold in California, Mr. Kincer pointed out to me a neat piece of work by the Fruit Frost Service of the Bureau. The forecaster sent out by radio warning that within less than 48 hours there would be need for heaters in orchards to protect the fruit from frost and cold damage. When that warning was broadcast, however, the weather was warm and cloudy and many unsuspecting orchard owners did not "listen in". Fearing this might be so the men in the fruit frost service of the Weather Bureau called up the managers of every citrus packing house in central and southern California and gave them personal warning of the coming low temperatures. These managers got busy relaying the warning to their growers, orchard stoves were filled up, and everything prepared for the cold snap. As a result, much fruit was saved, but the damage was heavy where there was little protection. -----

That was practically at the beginning of a winter which has broken records for cold weather in many parts of the West, at the same time it has hung up new records for mildness in the Eastern half of the country.

It is much the same story in regard to snowfall. The East during the first two months of winter has been remarkably free from snow. The grass was still green in southern Michigan past the middle of January. In the California mountains, on the other hand, there was an unusually heavy snow fall of 9 to 12 feet on the ground in the latter part of December. And when farmers in northwestern Iowa were snowbound, those in the southeastern part of the same State were reported as mud-bound.

However, that wide difference between weather in the eastern and western halves of this country is the most usual thing about this weather we have had. As a rule, when the East is cool the West is warm, and when the West is cool the East is warm. When it is abnormal one way in one part of the country, it is abnormal the other way in some other part of the country.

But, as you know from recent experience, you can't even count on that. Last year was exceptionally warm everywhere in the country. No State in the Union had an average temperature below normal in 1931. New Mexico had exactly normal, but every other State averaged above normal.

On the other hand, in 1930, year before last, we had the driest year on record. Last year, however, was outstanding as a year of normal rainfall. Only five states had above normal amount of rain. Most had just about normal; except part of the Southeastern States, Georgia in particular, and, of course, Montana and South Dakota, where the rainfall was the least on record.

Now maybe you are thinking we can count on the years averaging up. On the theory that "all that goes up is bound to come down," you might figure that the warm weather the East has been having will be followed by cold weather. And the unusual cold weather in the West by a warm spell.

But weather forecasting is not such a simple thing as that. The swings of temperature from day to day, week to week, month to month and year to year are so irregular that Mr. Kincer tells me they are of little help in actual forecasting.

For instance, with two months of unusually warm or unusually cold weather, some of us might be tempted to guess that February will be considerably the other way. Mr. Kincer and other Weather Bureau officials have dug up the past

records of such conditions. They say that judging by past records, the changes of this February being warmer or colder than usual seem to be just about 50-50.

You probably have noticed yourself when we have rain one day there is a little more chance there will be rain the next. The weather seems to run in series. Since 1918 we have been having a series of warm years. Yet no one can say just when a series of cold years may set in. Weather is a highly variable proposition, whether you take it by the day, week, month, or year. It is apparently irregular even in its irregularities. If there is any order to such changes it is still undetected and unusable for practical long range forecasting.

The meteorologists of the United States Weather Bureau study all available records for any helps in making forecasts, but as yet accurate weather forecasts must be based on actual weather in sight and are made only some 36 to 48 hours in advance of the arrival of the predicted weather conditions in the territory for which the forecast is made.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: You have just listened to the chat with the Weather Man presented by Station \_\_\_\_\_ in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. We will have another chat on the weather two weeks from today.

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# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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