

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN

RELEASE Friday, Sept. 30, 1932

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Speaking Time 10 Minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENT: And now for a chat with the weather man. This month and last, the weather man must have felt that tropical hurricanes were coming in bunches like bananas. Those hurricanes give our forecasters a lot of anxious moments, but thanks to the men who go down to the sea in ships, we get better warnings nowadays---and thereby hangs a tale-----

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Mr. Thomas R. Brooks of the Forecast Division of the Weather Bureau tells me that in one of those tropical storms last month a ship riding right out there in the middle of the storm sent in three observations several hours apart that not only gave a perfect idea of the intensity of the storm but enabled the forecaster to calculate the exact direction in which it was travelling and how fast it was moving. This resulted in early warnings to the communities in its path who were told hours in advance where and when the storm would strike.

Yes, sir, and in another of the hurricanes of the past few weeks, another ship sent in its radio report from the very center of another of those tremendous whirlwind storms.

Imagine that ship plunging and staggering through mountainous seas lashed by a gale blowing 80 miles an hour. That was what she was getting when the officer on that ship read his instruments, wrote his report, calmly converted the readings into the weather code words and sent it out by wireless.

Our there in the heart of that howling hurricane, he and his ship were getting rough weather about at its worst. They had their fill of weather. They couldn't use that report. It couldn't help them. But tossed about by wind and wave, in deadly peril from one of those terrors of the tropical seas, a hurricane, that ship's officers were true to the traditions of the sea. They extended help to others.

And Mr. Brooks says that radio message did help other ships at sea and folks along our coast. That message enabled the Weather Bureau to accurately chart the exact path being taken by that hurricane that came so close to Florida before it curved northward and northeastward and swept up our coast sending huge waves tumbling in at Atlantic City and other points. It enabled the forecaster to better tell just what course the hurricane would probably take.

That wasn't the only radio report from ships at sea in those waters. Some twenty-five other ships answered the Weather Bureau's broadcast request for a special report at noon that day. And each day during the hurricane season from June 1 to November 30 anywhere from 25 to 100 ships plying the waters off our South Atlantic and Gulf Coast send in regular reports twice a day giving the barometer reading, the temperature, the wind direction and velocity, and the state of the weather, with the exact position in latitude and longitude of the reporting ship.

Under Mr. Brooks direction those reports are charted on a big map. Especially important are the barometer readings and wind direction reports. They help locate the center of the storm. As Mr. Brooks explains it, a hurricane is a gigantic circular storm or big whirligig of winds. A ship report from nearest the center of the storm will show the lowest barometer reading, and those further and further away from the center higher readings.

In rare instances, the report of an unusually low barometer by a single ship may enable the Weather Bureau ~~man~~ to locate the center of the storm, but ordinarily it is by getting a number of reports from a number of ships that the center is located accurately, although none of the ships may be within many miles of the actual center.

The reports from different ships plying their courses in the seas at various distances around the ocean area in which the storm is brewing show the way the wind is blowing wherever each of those ships happens to be at the regular observation time. When those reports are set down on the map with little arrows pointing the direction of the wind, the circular motion of the winds, counter-clockwise around the storm center, may be clearly seen. The barometer readings are progressively lower as the ships approach the center of the storm.

These gigantic whirls of wind we call tropical hurricanes are many miles across. Of course, that varies. It varies with different storms and at different points along any particular storm's path. Mr. Brooks figures that the average tropical storm that reaches our southern coast in hurricane fury is probably about 75 miles across.

That is, the winds are of gale intensity over that distance. The winds that make up that whirlwind may be blowing 75 to a hundred miles an hour, yet the forward motion of this gigantic whirlwind or hurricane is generally very slow, often only 12 to 15 miles an hour. This powerful weather engine is whirling fast, as the storm itself moves forward in low gear. In fact, Mr. Brooks tells me sometimes the hurricane even stands still. It hovers in one place but the engine keeps spinning with terrific fury.

After a hurricane leaves the warm moisture laden air of the tropics it begins to lose its pep. It loses it fast if it crosses the coastline and moves over land. However, sometimes a hurricane as a distinct storm can be traced thousands of miles. For instance, one of the hurricanes this month was traced from its home in the Caribbean on up past our coast up through the North Atlantic until it was finally lost north of Iceland.

Reports from vessels along the northern shipping routes enabled the Weather Bureau to keep track of that storm. You see, in addition to the special ship service to protect our southern coast and southern waters from hurricanes, the Weather Bureau gets reports from the North Atlantic through the international selected ship service.

That is, a selected list of ships of many leading nations have been chosen by the different countries to make regular twice a day weather reports. The reports are made in an international code. Ships of any of the nations on all the different shipping lanes report the weather to our Weather Bureau by radio whenever they are in the west half of the North Atlantic, and our ships as well as those of other nations report to the other side when in the eastern half of the

North Atlantic. The reports from all the different ships reporting to our Weather Bureau and from selected land stations are consolidated in a report which is broadcast to ships at sea and to Europe for use on the other side.

Many of the ship-masters pick up these reports and from them draw their own weather chart on the map blanks provided by the Weather Bureau. From the weather map charted on the ship the ship's officer can make his own forecast. In other words, the oceans are now dotted with international weather stations, and the men at sea can know the weather over the whole sea and adjacent continents as readily as you can consult the weather tables in your daily newspaper.

Incidentally, those reports of conditions at sea sent in from the scores of ships are included in the weather chart used by the forecaster in making that forecast you read in the papers or hear over the radio. Those sea reports help give him a better picture of what changes may take place in the weather on land.

Radio has added the seas to the weather map and brought on a new era in navigation. The first wireless weather report was received from the steamship New York on September 3, 1905. And the first wireless report actually used in a hurricane warning came from the steamship Cartago, near Yucatan, on August 26, 1909.

Those dates mark the beginning of the new era and the start of a service which has been systematically developed not only by this country but by other countries in all parts of the world. Our land weather service was the child of the electric land telegraph. The great international sea weather service is our radio baby.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: You have just heard a chat with the weather man, presented by this Station _____ in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. We will have another chat with the weather man two weeks from today.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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