

CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN

Wednesday, Feb. 22.  
1928

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

ANNOUNCEMENT: Every Man His Own Weather Observer. That's what the Weather Man is going to talk about today in his regular bi-weekly chat released by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Some bad signs and also some good ones will come in for attention by this expert observer, so please stand by.

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"My Aunt Het has it all figured out---" said I to the Weather Man as we sat in his office the other day, talking about this and that.

"Your Aunt Het has what figured out?" asked the W. M., putting the accent on the what.

"When it's going to rain", I said with a wink. "When her nose itches, it's going to rain. She says it never fails to work".

"In that case we'd better give her nose a job in the weather office", the Weather Man smiled.

I laughed right out. "You'd have to give Aunt Het a job, too", I said. "But my Cousin, Bill White, says his rheumatism tells him when wet weather's on the way".

"Interesting, if true", my friend said. "I know a man who plants his potatoes by the light of the moon and believes that walking under a ladder on Friday means 13 days of hard luck".

"Yeah", I drawled.

"Say, John, let's be serious", the W. M. said. "When you want to do a little amateur weather forecasting, look to the wind, the clouds, and--- the barometer. These three are worth more to the average man than most of the other weather signs put together".

"But every man doesn't own a barometer", said I. "We can all see when the moon changes".

"Will you ever be serious!" he exclaimed. "You can learn to read the clouds and the wind with a bit of practice. And there aren't many towns of any size at all that don't boast at least one barometer. Then, too, the weather maps issued by the U. S. Weather Bureau list the barometric readings for each day of the year. Follow these. It's a mighty small town where you won't find a weather map posted one place or another".

"Sure", said I. "But what do the readings mean? Here, take this weather map for instance. Look at those wavy black lines. Map looks like a crazy quilt--- the kind Grandma used to make back in the days when we wore ear muffs and had wax fruit in glass cages in the parlor. You tell me those black lines show the barometric pressure. All I see are the lines running every which way and the figures at the ends of them--- 30-point-zero; 29-point-9-30-point-1, and so on. They mean about as much to me as astrology."

"Be calm", said the W. M. "I don't expect YOU to know everything all at once. Sit down a minute and I'll tell you something about those lines.

"Now, a barometer's an instrument that registers the pressure of the atmosphere. There are different kinds of barometers just as there are different kinds of weather, and none of them are very complicated instruments, except the automatically recording ones. I can't take time now to explain the mechanics of a barometer, but the usual wall barometer has a thin column of mercury inside a glass tube. The air has weight which is termed as pressure. The height of the mercury inside the tube balances with this pressure of the atmosphere. A column of mercury thirty inches high, about balances the normal atmosphere's pressure at sea level.

"All right. A falling barometer--- in other words, a low reading--- generally means foul weather. This<sup>s</sup>/especially true when the wind's from the east. A high, or rising barometer generally spells a clear-up or clear weather. And this is particularly true when the wind's out of the west. 'Wind from the west suits everyone best', you know. Well, a combination of wind and barometric readings is the best guide we have to future weather".

"How does a low barometer cause stormy weather?" I wanted to know.

The Weather Man smiled again. "It doesn't", he said. "A low barometer is the result of certain conditions of the atmosphere that usually go with a storm. Do you understand? A falling barometer doesn't cause a storm, John. A storm coming causes a falling barometer. For instance, if your barometer reads 29-point-8 inches and if the wind's right, that's an almost sure sign that foul weather's just around the corner. This condition, this kind of storm, is usually followed within 24 hours by a clear-up and, in winter, by colder weather. If the tube reads 30-point-1 and a fair wind's blowing, it means fair weather with small changes of temperature, to continue for one or two days. In spring and summer--- in most parts of the country--- a low barometer usually means wind and rain, and in winter, snow or sleet. Of course it depends on the geography".

I had a question I wanted to ask at this point. "What are these areas of low barometric pressure that you weather men talk about?"

"Areas of low barometric pressure are really whirlwinds of greater or less size and intensity, John", said the W. M. "That means, high winds blowing anti-clockwise inward into the funnel or circle. Areas of high barometric pressure, on the other hand, are featured by winds blowing spirally clockwise and outward, see?"

"I think I do", said I.

"You see", he went on, "the air tends to sweep inward to the areas of low pressure. And the wind directions produced by this tendency of air to seek low pressure areas are largely responsible for all local weather signs. South winds bring warmth--- north winds bring cold--- east winds, in the middle latitudes, show the approach from the westward of a low pressure area, or a storm--- and west winds indicate that the storm has passed to eastward and that a clear-up is in order. It varies some in summer and winter, but not so very much. The rule remains about the same".

My friend went on with his explanation. "From the Mississippi and Missouri valleys to the Atlantic Coast--- and also on the Pacific Coast--- rain generally comes with a falling barometer. In the Rocky Mountain and Plateau regions, and also on the eastern Rocky Mountain slopes, the rain seldom begins until the barometer starts to rise after its drop. Weather men know the variations in this rule and take account of them. The condition also varies some from summer to winter, as we know".

"Well", I said, "if all you say is true, why can't we make some hard-and-fast rule which will show just which barometric readings and wind directions mean stormy weather and which mean fair weather?"

"Pretty hard to make the weather follow what you call rules", the sky reader said with a smile. "But really there is something of a rule. Doesn't always work--- no rule does, seems to me. Usually it's pretty near the truth, though. Taking the United States as a whole, we can make out a table of wind and barometric indications and what they mean most of the time. In fact, the Weather Bureau has already made such a table and has been following it for more years than you have lived".

I blushed modestly.

"I won't have time to give you all the details", he went on, "but I can tell you the main parts of the matter. Listen closely and I'll tell you what certain barometric readings and wind directions mean as a general thing---

"Wind direction, southwest to northwest and barometer reading 30-point-1 to 30-point-2 and steady, means fair weather with slight temperature changes for one or two days. Wind direction, southwest to northwest, barometer 30-point-1 to 30-point-2 and rising fast, means fair, to be followed within two days by rain. Wind direction, south to southeast, barometer 30-point-1 to 30-point-2, and falling slowly, rain within 24 hours. Same wind directions, and the barometer falling fast, means rising wind and rain within 12 hours. Wind direction, southeast to northeast, barometer 30-point-zero or below, and falling slowly, rain will continue one or two days. Same, with barometer falling rapidly, spells rain with high winds, to be followed within 36 hours by a clear-up and, in winter, colder weather. Wind south to east, barometer 29-point-8 and falling rapidly, means a severe storm coming, to be followed

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within 24 hours by a clear-up and, in winter, by colder weather. Wind blowing into the west, barometer 29-point-8 or below and rising fast, means clearing weather and colder".

"That's a good thing to know", said I. "And I'm going to take your advice and watch the weather maps and the barometer and wind from now on".

"Oh, I've given you only part of the story", said the Weather Man, "but I'll be glad to go into the matter further some day if you want to hear it".

I assured my friend that I would and said good-day.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Another CHAT BY THE WEATHER MAN, taking up another interesting phase of the weather and its ways, will be put on the air by Station \_\_\_\_\_ on Wednesday, March 7. Don't forget.

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# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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