

CHAT WITH THE WEATHER MAN.

RELEASE Friday, August 7, 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Speaking Time: 10 Minutes

ANNOUNCEMENT: In our chat with the weather man today, we are going to hear something of how the United States Weather Bureau and the men who "go down to the sea in ships" work together for their mutual benefit ----- Well, Mr. Ob Server, let's go! ---

Mr. L. E. Brotzman told me a rather striking story about two American sister ships and a storm at sea. I am going to pass that story on to you, because it is a fine illustration of one of the newest of our weather services.

Mr. Brotzman, by the way, is the meteorologist who has been engaged in the "ship visiting" work of the United States Weather Bureau at New York in the interest of our part in the international ocean weather service. Mr. Brotzman is now being sent to New Orleans in the further development of that work.

As you know, our Weather Bureau has for many years had the hearty cooperation of seaman of all nationalities and in every part of the globe. Every year it gets reports from more than a thousand ships scattered through the seven seas. Sailors on those vessels make daily observations and forward them to Washington by mail. Those reports are highly valuable for purposes of record and study.

Several years ago, the United States Weather Bureau established another marine weather service by which ships in nearby waters cooperating with the Bureau make observations and forward them by radio. These messages in code are consolidated with those from other ships and from selected land stations, are rebroadcast and picked up by ships at sea. From that information, it is possible for ship's officers to chart weather conditions along our coast and to a considerable distance out to sea. Those who cooperate with the Weather Bureau are supplied with base maps for making such charts. That service is highly valuable, not only to ships, but to the Weather Bureau in preparing forecasts, especially in tracing the approach of West Indian hurricanes during the hurricane season.

Two or three years ago, Mr. E. B. Calvert, chief of the Forecast Division, of the United States Weather Bureau and representatives of leading European weather services met at Copenhagen and worked out a plan for international cooperation in such a service extending all the way across the ocean.

Under that plan, each nation was to select a certain number of ships, to cooperate in this work. The number selected by each nation was to be a certain percent of the ships under its flag. An international weather code made up of numbers was adopted so that reports would be equally understandable by all nations. Ships plying the shipping lanes of the North Atlantic were all to forward observations by radio to Washington when they were in the western Atlantic and to a European station when they were east of that line. Those reports are made up into one message and rebroadcast to ships at sea for their use. In other words, reports from the different selected ships along the different travel routes are consolidated and rebroadcast for the benefit of all.

But let's get along to that story of how this thing works. Mr. Brotzman tells me work under the international arrangement was actually started about two years ago. Thirty American ships have already been assigned to this selected ship program in the North Atlantic. These are new ships not included on the other two lists of ships cooperating with the Weather Bureau.

And practically every time one of these ships comes into port at New York a representative of the Weather Bureau visits it just to sort of keep in touch with the ship's officers and the weather reporting work and explain how to make weather maps to any new men on the job.

You understand, each selected ship is provided with all the necessary forms and blank maps on which to chart the daily weather reports from other ships and from the land stations. That is, each ship captain is encouraged to plot the different reports so as to get a definite picture of the weather such as our regular forecasters use in making the daily forecast.

At first, Mr. Brotzman says, some of these experienced seamen were not inclined to go in for this map making aboard ship. The sailorman is a good judge of the weather where he is and modern ocean liners are so big and strong and safe that ship captains have become accustomed to set their course and stick to it, no matter what the weather along the path.

According to Mr. Brotzman, however, most of the mariners are now making the maps, and making them serves the ends of good seamanship.

For instance, there was this case of the two American ships which left England for New York. They were sister ships of similar build and power, and both ably manned. The first ship left Portsmouth two days before the second. The second ship, however, reached New York two days ahead of the other, with a big saving in fuel and operating cost.

The difference was that the second ship used weather maps drawn by its own officers from reports received by radio. It was one of those in the selected ship program.

The first ship running blind as to weather conditions ahead along her route plowed right into a storm and was held back by strong head winds. The second ship from her charted reports knew where the center of the storm was, and went around it. In fact, she actually managed to get tail winds which added to her speed. Of course, it is not often that such a big saving as that can be made, but any saving in time and cost is not being overlooked by the ship captains.

Practically all the trans-Atlantic ships now make maps and Mr. Brotzman finds that after making maps for a while, the ships officers realize the need for accurate reports and take more pains in taking their observations.

These daily ship reports have enabled the forecast division of the Weather Bureau to draw fairly good maps across the Atlantic and have been a big aid in making forecasts for trans-Atlantic ocean flights.

New York is only one of three centers which it is now planned to use in the further development of our share in this international marine weather service. Similar work has recently been started to secure the cooperation of thirty more American boats from among those operating in southern waters from New Orleans, Galveston, Port Arthur and other ports and going to South America and Africa.

Eventually it is hoped to establish another center at San Francisco for boats operating out of that port. And remember this is an international affair. While our Weather Bureau is getting the cooperation of American ships, the other nations are likewise lining up vessels which fly their flags. No matter what the nationality when those boats are in the Western Atlantic they report to Washington, and when boats under our flag pass 35 going east they report to the other side. Each side exchanges reports. And the messages, no matter from what ship, are sent in a number code and re-broadcast in a number code which is the common language of this growing weather service for all the people on the high seas, and the lands that lie beyond. And one of the very important features of the new scheme is the work of visiting ships and keeping in personal contact with the ships officers to insure regular and accurate reports on every trip to sea.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Your old friend, Ob. Server, will bring us another chat with the weather man two weeks from today. These talks come to you through the cooperation of Station _____ and the United States Department of Agriculture of which the Weather Bureau is a part.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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July 23, 2010