

SEPTEMBER 8, 2008 F.A.H.P. NEWS

How They Taught Weather Forecasting, 1943 (Part 1): Civilian forecasters had come a long way before World War II, but their expertise came largely from knowing the area where they were located and the peculiar weather phenomenon that was likely to occur there. However, a small group of highly-technical men, notably at M.I.T. and the University of Chicago, delved deeply into what caused severe storms, rapid temperature changes, etc. Mathematical formulae aimed at seeing what happened to a molecule of air when lifted from the surface to several thousand feet above the ground, and other similar things, formed the basis for six or eight courses taught at these schools about meteorology. These courses relied heavily on calculus, vector analysis, and, to a lesser extent, physics. When we were thrust into the war at the end of 1941, and air power was to play a major role in its outcome, as many as 5,000 inductees were enrolled into one of the weather training programs operated by the Army Air Force and the Navy.

In 1942 it was inevitable that an 18-year-old in good health was going to be drafted unless he enlisted previously. I registered for the draft in the Odd Fellows Hall at Centerville on June 30, and enlisted in something called the Enlisted Reserve Corps in the Coleman duPont Building at M.I.T. on December 11. Naturally my parents were anxious to keep me out of active combat, and we learned of the meteorology program, to which those with a few months' college could apply. Those with 2 years or more of engineering school could apply for "Meteorology A"; those with one full year could apply for "B", and those with less could apply for "C". I should have applied for "C", but since I had one term at M.I.T. behind me and had not failed a course, I took a chance and applied for "B". "A" students were promised a commission in 8 months (33 weeks of accelerated work), "B" in 6 months of "Pre-Meteorology", then the 8 months of "A", and for those accepted in "C" an additional 6 months for a total of 20 months. Those accepted into the "C" program early in 1943 never made it to become forecasters, as the Air Force realized by the spring of 1944 that they were soon going to have too many, and except for those scheduled to be commissioned in June that year, the program was wiped out. Fortunately, I was accepted into the "B" program and my orders came through on March 15, 1943, to report to Brown University, Providence, RI, "immediately".

The seven units or "flights" at Brown numbered about 225 new recruits, and I was the only one they forgot to provide with basic training. For at least a week I marched around with my new companions (we had to march everywhere- that's how the army did it, you know), the only one in civilian clothes. I got my uniform along with a high fever from the many inoculations, but then things leveled out, I gained some fine friends, and despite the rigorous academic and military program, we were treated well for the six months at Brown. Bill Schwoebel's uncle, Francis Courtney, then from Philadelphia, was a part of this program. We had several foreign professors who were hard to understand, but I found some of the courses, such as Climatology and Oceanography, quite interesting. We were on an "octile" system, where we were graded from 1 to 8 every three weeks or so, and those who stayed in 7 and 8 very long were forced out of the program. A weekend pass during this period was from 1:00 P.M. Saturday to bedtime Sunday night, but I came home by train three or four times in the six months. Several of us

went to Boston for a Saturday afternoon and evening on at least two occasions, and I went to a Red Sox game at Fenway Park where Babe Ruth and his wife came in and sat down in the stands to the applause of those in attendance. During our one-week break from classes in late June, we were taken by bus to a Navy Rifle Range at Sachuest Point, RI, where they taught us to shoot a military rifle. I liked that, having been a trapshooter. Except for that trip, every time I left Providence I was on a passenger train, pulled by a steam locomotive- nice! At the end of September, about 150 of us moved on to M.I.T. (and about 15 to Chanute Field, IL) for "Meteorology A". (The story will be continued in a future "News").

Good work sessions took place last week, and despite the rain-out on Saturday as Tropical Storm Hanna passed through, 4 of our cars went to Chadds Ford on Sunday and had a very successful and beautiful day. Two Stanley cars, operated by Steve Bryce (Model 735) and Kelly Williams (Model 607), the Rauch & Lang electric driven by Dan Citron, and the '32 Packard under the care of Jerry Novak, made the 20-plus-mile round-trip over the hills in good order. The water tank was removed from the Model 78 roadster, the solder over the whole tank has deteriorated, and Jim Personti and Geoff Fallows removed the top and cleaned the inside with muriatic acid. Research indicated that this was a new tank made by Keebaugh Sheet Metal Company in 1999. We question the type solder that was used, but are also testing our water supply here to see if chemicals therein may have contributed to the problem. Our present thought is to try to line it with a material that will stick to the copper and make a permanent seal. Bill Schwoebel worked on the swivel joint on the Model CX's steam pipe, Steve Bryce, Jeary Vogt, and Mark Russell completed the burner refinement for the Model 76 and the burner is in place. Bob Jordan and I adjusted the rear gears on the Model K and made other minor repairs. Brent McDougall, Anne Cleary and Dave Lumley cleaned up the locomotives after their runs on August 31, and Dave and Steve Jensen did some track and switch work and made a repair to one of the Auburn Valley passenger cars.

This week we need to get the Museum and grounds cleaned up for the Lions Eye Bank "charter" on Saturday, Sept. 13. The group will be smaller than originally planned, as about 125 guests are expected. The Lions are providing the food and certain other things they've asked to do, such as photograph subjects in front of one of our cars in the Museum. Details will be worked out at the Events Committee meeting this week. The cars entered for the Hagley Show on Sunday, the 14th will also need to be readied and thoroughly cleaned this week. I'm not sure of the exact cars going, but it looks like 5 or 6 steamers and the Rauch & Lang electric.

The Events Committee will meet tomorrow night, Tuesday, Sept. 9, at 7 P.M. in the FAHP office. Dan Citron and James Wagner are meeting with me this week to plan details for the future occupant of the 3rd floor of the big house.

Finally, I apologize for not giving proper recognition last week to Art Sybell, chairman of the August 31 record-breaking event, and to Richard Bernard, overall chairperson for our summer on-site activities, for such a successful day. Thank you both for your hard work. Tom