

An Introduction to the Weather Bureau

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Weather Bureau

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The first few days I spent at WBAS, Houston, Texas were a little confusing because at first I did not know what was expected of me. But I soon learned my way around the station, got acquainted with the personnel, and became familiar with some of the simpler jobs that I was to do, such as filing, teletypewriter, data, and answering the telephone.

I was then put to work reading Circular N and the Synoptic Code Manual as a basis for my work with the observers. After a few days of studying, the routine for taking observations was explained to me. I began taking practice observations and making the usual Aviation and Synoptic observations under the supervision of one of the regular observers. Learning about observations turned out to be my biggest project. It seemed that the more I learned the more I realized there was yet to be learned.

Although I spent the greater part of the summer working with the observers, I put in some time with the public service part of the Houston station. Working here I assisted the forecasters by learning to operate the teletypewriter machines and sending out hourly readings, state and local forecasts, national summaries, advisories, etc. to news media and other subscribers; plotting the pseudo-adiabatic chart; and recording special rainfall and river readings which are received regularly at the Houston station.

On quieter days in Houston I was able to pursue the study part of my Student Trainee program. I was supplied with a number of books from which I learned some of the basic concepts of meteorology and I was taught some of the fundamentals of map analysis.

To me one of the most interesting experiences of the summer was finding out what can happen when something important develops. The morning of August 7th was unusually quiet until about 11:30 when we received a pilot report which at first was a little hard to believe. The eye of a small tropical storm had been spotted just 50 miles east of Matagorda, or about 90 miles south-southeast of Houston. Apparently, it had developed from a weak easterly wave in the Gulf of Mexico. We were able to see the small spiral band it formed on our radar and by about noon the Galveston Weather Bureau had issued a local statement

hoisting small craft warnings. By 12:30 p.m. the New Orleans Hurricane Warning Center had issued the first advisory on Tropical Storm Abby. Our telephones were ringing off their hooks and I helped by answering them and making a number of recordings of the advisories for local radio stations. Since Abby developed so suddenly and so near the coast, I was able to see the Weather Bureau warning system go into action immediately in an emergency situation, and I, in a small way, was able to be a part of it.

This summer has proved to be an interesting and valuable part of my development toward a career in meteorology. I have found that the Student Trainee program is an ideal type of on-the-job education which can not be provided by any school. It has exposed me to observing, which is the foundation of all meteorology, and introduced me to a primary application of meteorology, forecasting for the public.