

taught to do this. Carrier and catapult operations, mass formation flights, protracted exacting missions and operations under adverse weather conditions or in darkness must be carried out. A Navy pilot must be able to cope with complex problems in navigation and to carry out exacting orders and make split-second judgments.

The Navy does not search for any Apollo-like, or movie-idol type of physical build in their aviators. Physical dimensions of aviators are limited by the

size of the cockpit, Commander Liljencrantz indicated, and by good health and general Navy physical standards. Beyond that no relation has been found between the build of the individual and his success in flying.

But the best of physiological performance is none too good for the flyer, he said. The mechanical performance of airplanes now exceeds the limits of physiological performance of the men who must fly them.

*Science News Letter, November 22, 1941*

## PSYCHIATRY

## Board of Experts Proposed To Guide Men Back to Sanity

### If Such a Group Had Been Employed Years Ago, Hitler Could Not Have Come Into His Power, Scientist Holds

**T**O BRING men back to sanity after this war, governments should officially employ boards of scientific experts in psychiatry, anthropology, and semantics, it is proposed by Director Alfred Korzybski, of the Institute of General Semantics.

If such a group of experts had been on duty years ago, Dr. Korzybski said, (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, September) they would have studied "Mein Kampf" which politicians did not then read or understand. They would have reported officially that a sick man was getting into power and could have predicted the consequences.

"With that enlightenment, those in power could have met the situation more intelligently, and thus avoided the unbelievable blunders such as appeasements. More than that: if such an inevitable diagnosis by government experts had been officially published, even the people under mentally sick rulers would

have refused to follow their leadership. The world is learning its lesson too late."

Anyone who studies hospitalized mental patients and their writings, Dr. Korzybski said, cannot miss seeing in "Mein Kampf" and the speeches of various Nazis a pathological use of language which completely disregards its proper use of conveying thought or information.

Such a "sick use" of language for deliberate distortions abolishes predictability and so breeds fears and anxieties among the people subjected to it.

When a new weapon like the magnetic mine appears, it is turned over as a problem to experts in physics and engineering. The "war of nerves," "war of verbal distortion," and "war of linguistic pathology" are also important problems for experts and should be referred, Dr. Korzybski indicated, to such a board of scientists as he proposed.

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less fireworks-like eruption of brilliant experimental solutions of difficult problems, interspersed with equally brilliant outrageous pranks.

R. W. Wood showed how to produce a stream of atomic hydrogen, now the foundation of a non-oxidizing welding process. He performed the first experiments that eventuated in the present-day sodium vapor lamps. He devised a beacon-lamp using ultraviolet radiation, that enabled convoys to maintain formation at night while remaining invisible to the periscopes of submarines. He solved the riddle of the purple gold of Tutankhamen. He found a way to make cheaply the fine-ruled gratings that split sunlight into its spectrum. He did a thousand other similar feats—usually, legend declares, in about fifteen minutes per feat.

The same R. W. Wood set street idlers agape by apparently spitting fire into a rainwater puddle—the trick was done with a bit of metallic sodium. He kept cats off the back fence by planting sensitively explosive nitrogen tri-iodide on it. He carried a pint jar of blue dye all the way to Yellowstone Park (on his wedding trip, at that!) just to make Morningglory Pool bluer than it had ever been before, to the amazement of a flock of tourists who didn't see him drop it in.

He emulated Renaissance geniuses who dabbled in poetry on the side—but not too seriously. His two little classics, *How to Tell the Birds From the Flowers* and *Animal Analogues*, have passed through many editions. He carried on a ceaseless war against mediums and other frauds, showing them up mercilessly with tricks ever so much smoother than their own.

Past seventy now, and gray-haired, R. W. Wood is still a curiosity-driven, irrepressible boy.

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## PHYSICS

## Outrageous Pranks Sparkle In Life Story of Prof. Wood

**A** NEGLECTED advantage of science is the tremendous amount of fun you can get out of it—provided you have a sufficiently lively imagination and not too many stilted inhibitions. This advantage has been realized to the full by one of the most notable of the world's leaders in physics, Prof. R. W. Wood

of the Johns Hopkins University, whose biography is just published, (*Reviewed SNL, this issue*).

Prof. Wood appears in this book, which comes out under the authorship of William Seabrook, as a veritable modern Faust, a figure growing into a legend even in his own lifetime, for his cease-

### ● RADIO

*Wednesday, November 26, 3:45 p.m., EST*

On "Adventures in Science," with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over Columbia Broadcasting System.

Dr. Don W. Gudakunst, medical director of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, will report on the infantile paralysis outbreaks of 1941 and tell of studies of cause of spread and methods of treatment of the disease.

*Saturday, December 6, 11:45 a.m. EST*

Sidney D. Kirkpatrick, editor of Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering, will discuss magnesium from seawater.

Listen in each later Saturday at 1:30 p.m.

*Monday, December 1, 9:30 p.m., EST*

Science Clubs of America programs over WRUL, Boston, on 6.04 and 11.73 megacycles.

One in a series of regular periods over this short wave station to serve science clubs, particularly in high schools, throughout the Americas. Have your science group listen in at this time.