

Awaiting Accolade

► **CATFISH!** The word is usually spoken scornfully, as of an inferior creature, little better than the worm he gulps for bait.

Admittedly, things are against the catfish socially. He hasn't much for looks, or grace, or agility, or fighting spirit, like the patrician trout, the lordly bass, even the robber-baron pike. He is content to



Photo Courtesy Rohm &amp; Haas Co., Phila.

### MICROMAX PLOTS CURVES FOR BUSY CHEMIST

Busy with a dozen details of his work with Plexiglas, this chemist is relieved of at least one duty—plotting temperatures of the reaction taking place in the metal cylinder at his left.

After putting the thermocouple in place, he merely runs their leadwires to the Micromax Recorder, and automatically secures temperature curves which are as satisfactory as those he could prepare himself by going through the manual routine of measuring couple emfs.

For Micromax details, see Catalog N-33A, sent on request.

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dwell in the muddy slums of the aquatic world, snouting in the bottom slime for food and willing to eat almost anything. Only the carp will consent to live in worse quarters than a catfish will put up with. He is the pig among fishes.

That porcine metaphor, however, contains the catfish's vindication as well as his condemnation. For the pig, too, is unbeautiful, delights in mud, gobbles garbage, yet becomes most excellent eating when properly dressed and cooked. And just as the pig achieves a degree of splendor in the big wild boar, there is a catfish that comes very near to nobility—the big channel cat of the larger Midwestern rivers.

In that part of the country, at least, people have learned to appreciate the catfish that comes very near to nobility a really properly fried catfish can taste mighty good. They have made a virtue of necessity, for their rivers yield no trout, and you may have to drive for scores of miles to find even fair bass or pickerel fishing.

Similarly in the South, the catfish becomes a tasty dish in the hands of a cook, especially a Negro cook, who really knows his subject. Negroes, with their combination of poverty and frequent talents for cooking, have made some notable contributions to American cuisine out of once-plebeian, now-patrician meats—shad, for example, and terrapin. Catfish Africaine may yet appear as a featured item on the menus of our best restaurants.

Science News Letter, August 10, 1946

#### GEOLOGY

### Engineers Study Arctic Building Problems

► **PERMAFROST**, the permanently frozen ground of the polar regions that covers one-fifth of the earth's land surface, is hazardous territory for building structures, reports of American and Russian research in the Arctic reveal.

U. S. Army engineers constructing northern wartime bases discovered that swelling, subsidence, landslides and icing were among the dangers of building on a frozen surface, while Russian engineers have been studying the problem in Siberia for 20 years.

By changing the ground temperature and mechanical conditions of the earth, buildings on permafrost can bring about their own doom by causing ground thaws or sinking, the reports indicate.

In Siberia, studies of permafrost have

shown that the frozen layer may be only a few feet deep or can in some cases extend several hundred yards down into the earth. In the southern Arctic, the permafrost layer is sometimes buried beneath a thin surface that thaws and freezes with the seasons.

Permafrost is nothing new, much of its present area having been frozen since the Ice Age.

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#### PHYSICS

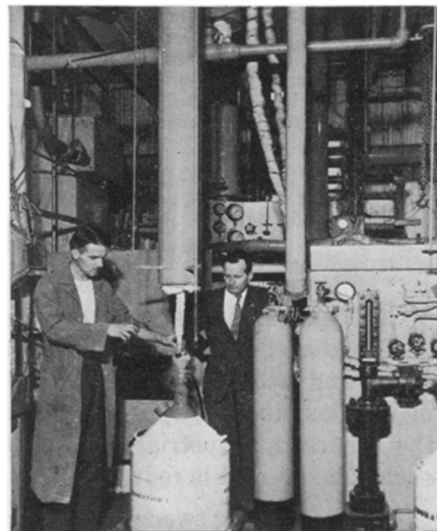
### Near-Zero Cold Goal Of Ohio State Apparatus

► A **TEMPERATURE** of within one-thousandth of a degree of the unattainable absolute zero of cold will shortly be achieved in the low temperature laboratory of the Ohio State University that was built secretly during the war,

The magnetic cooling cycle to be used is available in only two other cryogenic laboratories in the United States.

Superconductivity of metals at very low temperatures is also on the research program announced by Prof. Herrick L. Johnston, director, who revealed that the low temperature apparatus, rushed into operation in 1942, did work on the atomic bomb project.

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**LIQUID AIR**—At Ohio State University's War Research Laboratory, a laboratory technician withdraws liquid air from the liquefying apparatus at a temperature of 308 Fahrenheit degrees below zero. Extremely low temperatures played an important part in the University's atomic research for the Manhattan Project.