

AERONAUTICS

"Thrust-Spoiler" Makes Jet Landings Safer

➤ JET PLANES can now be braked in the air with a new "thrust-spoiler."

The device is expected to shorten the jet landing approach and provide additional safety. In an emergency, the pilot can turn off the brake and regain full thrust instantly.

The thrust-spoiler, built by General Electric's jet engine department for the J-47, could also be installed on the giant B-47 Stratojet bomber.

Described as lightweight and easy to maintain, the device deflects the gases before they reach the jet exhaust nozzle, thus reducing the effective thrust while the engine runs at full power.

A newer modification of the deflector that would reverse jet thrusts for a more powerful braking action is being developed.

Science News Letter, February 5, 1955



Dinosaurs

➤ ALL THINGS must have beginnings. Even the mighty dynasty of the dinosaurs, lumbering beasts that ruled the earth for more than three hundred million years, grew from other forms of life, lived their span and disappeared from the world forever.

The bones of the earliest dinosaur so far known date back to the geologic period known as the Triassic Age, roughly 400,000,000 years ago. The first such bones found in this country were dug up in Connecticut over a century ago—first a few fragments, then a complete skeleton with a skull.

Scientists were able to build up a model of what the creature looked like in the flesh. They named it Anchisaurus.

It was not large, as dinosaurs go. An average specimen reached a length of about six feet. Its bones were light, indicating that it could probably move fairly rapidly. Its teeth showed that it lived on a meat diet. It was a hunter, a beast of prey.

There were no men on earth when the dinosaurs swam the seas and strode the hills. Man did not appear until well within the last million years, and there is no really definite evidence of his existence until the last hundred thousand.

The day of the dinosaur ended long before, about 60,000,000 B.C. (Cavemen had enough to face, what with mastodons, cave bears and woolly rhinoceroses; it is just as well that they were spared casual allosauri and diplodocuses.)

The dinosaurs were huge reptiles. They were not lizards, although when early scientists got around to naming the dinosaur branch of the reptile family, they threw together the Greek words "deinos," meaning "terrible," and "sauros," which means lizard.

Even in its earliest form the dinosaur family showed characteristics that justified its name. There was a small head on a long neck, balanced by a long powerful tail at the other end of the body. The forelegs were diminished, but were offset by tremendous power and size in the rear pair,

which in some of the later "saurians" became so highly developed that their owners were as much bipeds as are men or kangaroos.

There was the general tendency of the body to settle heavily back upon the pelvis, developing the potbellied figure we have come to think of as the real dinosaur shape. Anchisaurus, first of the dinosaurs, was a true granddaddy of his race.

Science News Letter, February 5, 1955

NUTRITION

Motive Needed to Make Men Try to Lose Weight

➤ NEEDED: A motivating force, social, fashion or otherwise, to make men "strive for slimness" the way women have. If found, this motive might lead to progress against that major health problem, obesity, or, in less polite terms, fatness.

So declared Dr. James M. Hundley of the National Institutes of Health, Public Health Service, Bethesda, Md., at the Weight Control Colloquium at Iowa State College.

If we continue at our present rate, obesity will be even more of a problem in the future, Dr. Hundley predicted. He based this on the increase in total population and the increase in proportion of older people, since obesity is more frequent at older ages.




Among the white population in the United States, there are almost twice as many fat men as fat women. But the picture is reversed among the Negroes, with a very high prevalence of overweight among the women, studies have shown.

Definite health hazards are associated with being overweight. Dr. Hundley quoted studies showing that overweight persons were more likely to have not only one but a combination of serious chronic illnesses, such as heart disease and diabetes, high blood pressure and arthritis, high blood pressure and gall bladder disease, and heart disease and gall bladder disease. While it is difficult to prove that overweight causes these diseases, Dr. Hundley pointed out, doctors have seen improvement in diabetes and in high blood pressure when weight has been reduced.

Methods of controlling obesity are "crude but progress can be made," he said.

Science News Letter, February 5, 1955

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