

METEOROLOGIST DIES TO MAKE AIRWAYS SAFE

The storms have conquered. While on his ninth free-balloon flight to study storm paths and causes, Dr. C. L. Meisinger of the U. S. Weather Bureau, and his pilot Lieut. J. T. Neeley of the Army Air Service, were dashed to earth and killed as a result of the destruction of their balloon about midnight of June 2 over central Illinois. They had left Scott Field, near East St. Louis, about seven hours earlier.

The cause of the disaster will always be a mystery. The balloon was burned in the air, but the cause of the fire may have been either a bolt of lightning or a spark from static electricity. According to Weather Bureau records, thunderstorms occurred at scattered points over central Illinois during the fatal night, and a generally electrified condition of the atmosphere was prevalent.

The balloon, one of 80,000 cubic feet capacity, and the largest yet used in the series of flights, was filled with inflammable hydrogen gas, as were all the other balloons used. Officers of the Army Air Service, which furnished the balloon and pilot, when asked why the non-inflammable helium gas, such as is used in the Shenandoah, was not used, said the reason was the prohibitive cost. Helium now costs about \$90 a thousand cubic feet, so that the expense of having filled the big balloon with it would have been about \$7,200 as against about one-tenth of that amount when hydrogen is used. The gas used in free-balloons is a total loss, all of it escaping when the descent is made, while the helium used in dirigibles is conserved as much as possible.

Speaking to a Science Service reporter shortly before leaving Washington to begin the series of flights, Dr. Meisinger said that lightning was one of the two things he feared while in the air, and that he would take no chances with thunderstorms. The other peril was that of landing in water. Aside from these two dangers he considered free ballooning as a safe method of investigating the secrets of the air, and as something of a recreation besides. His service was entirely voluntary, the flights having been taken at his own suggestion which was approved after much consideration by the Weather Bureau authorities. While in the signal Service during the war, Dr. Meisinger had made a number of flights in balloons and airplanes.

The purpose of the whole investigation was to make the air safer for aviation and to learn more about the ways of storms. On each flight a set of instruments for making a study of atmospheric conditions was taken up and frequent observations made at different levels. None of these results had been reported to the Weather Bureau at the time of Dr. Meisinger's death, as he had been operating from Scott Field, and was on the ground only a few days between flights.

Of all the flights, the first was the longest. It began on the afternoon of April 1 at Scott Field, and ended more than 23 hours later when a landing was made at Walterboro, S.C., about 40 miles from the ocean, the total distance traversed having been about 650 miles. Another long flight ended at Palmyra, Ontario, the near approach of the lake forcing a descent. On another flight the intrepid scientist was carried out over Lake Michigan in a snowstorm, but managed to strike a landward current and make a safe descent in Wisconsin. A thunderstorm caused another premature landing.

In reporting his next to the last flight, Dr. Meisinger told Science Service that he expected important results from this last flight, as he intended by using the large balloon to be able to stay in the air 48 hours. He declared he

expected it to be "a specially interesting story"

It will be an unwritten one. Mourned by his many friends and associates, and, although only 29 years old, respected throughout the scientific world for his achievements and scholarship, Dr. C. Leroy Meisinger's name, with that of his Army pilot, Lieut. James T. Neeley, will go down on that long roll of scientists who died martyrs to human progress.

READING REFERENCE - Talman, C.F. Meteorology, the Science of the Atmosphere. New York, P. F. Collier Sons' Co., 1922.

EPIDEMIC OF ACCIDENTS REPLACES THOSE OF DISEASE

Accidental injuries from mechanical devices are rapidly assuming the importance as menaces to life that formerly was taken by epidemic diseases, according to Dr. J. Howard Beard of Health Service headquarters of the University of Illinois in an address before the American Medical Association, Dr. Beard said:

"An epidemic of injury has succeeded the epidemics of infection. The suicide rate is about that of the whooping cough death rate, About as many people were killed in automobiles at railroad crossings last year as died of scarlet fever in 1920. Fatalities resulting from auto accidents in 1923 are about the same as those from diphtheria and scarlet fever combined. Accidental deaths in industry are approximately equal to the sum of the deaths due to measles, whooping cough and diphtheria. There are 700,000 persons injured yearly in their occupations, whose disability causes a loss from work of not less than four weeks. Industrial poisoning produces its great quota of disease and death, and in some of the more sanitary cities, the exhaust gas from automobiles causes more deaths than the typhoid bacillus.

"Intelligent public sentiment, fostered among employers, employees, and chauffeurs, as well as in institutions of higher learning, is the only way of coping with the accident disease."

READING REFERENCE - Fisher, Boyd. Mental Causes of Accidents. Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922

LOS ANGELES ANCIENT MAN YOUNGER THAN GLACIAL TIMES

By Watson Davis

Columbus discovered America. But thousands of years before he arrived, red men approaching this continent from the west rather than the east, emigrated here and made this land their home.

Were these very early Indians who crossed Bering Strait the first human