

the finger alphabet. The sign language gesture for "girl," for instance, is widely made by indicating a bonnet string—a relic of days when girls wore sun-bonnets.

But, in general, Dr. Hall declares,

## PUBLIC HEALTH

## Highest Heat Death Rates In Arizona and Nevada

Because of Sparse Population, Total Numbers Do Not Bulk so Large; South Atlantic Relatively Fortunate

THE death tolls that the heat has taken in recent days in Michigan and elsewhere in the high temperature area are unusual when the records of past years are viewed.

At the request of Science Service, statisticians of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company reviewed the latest available complete U. S. statistics and found that much the highest death rates from excessive heat are recorded in Arizona and Nevada.

Because of relatively sparse populations, the total number of deaths do not bulk as impressively from these states as they did during the Michigan heat wave. Aside from these two mountain division states, highest death rates occur in three states in the north central region, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. South Atlantic and east south central states, as a whole, record death rates from excessive heat only two-thirds of the average for the whole country, and about one-third as high as the states in the east north central and west north central divisions.

Relatively low death rates from heat which prevail in the south Atlantic, east south central, and west south central divisions are the more remarkable because of concentration in these areas of four-fifths of the Negro population of the United States, and because of the fact that Negroes show death rates from excessive heat from two to over six times as high as corresponding rates for whites in same areas.

Except Pennsylvania and California, where the death rate from heat and sunstroke closely approximates the average for the United States, every state in New England, Middle Atlantic and Pacific Coast regions falls far below the average for the United States.

The ages most seriously struck are babies under one and persons past fifty.

good sign language is natural and universal, and the pantomime artist who masters use of his hands and body can make himself understood wherever he goes.

*Science News Letter, July 25, 1936*

Infants should be carefully protected from exposure during hot weather. Their diet and clothing should be carefully regulated. Older persons should avoid unnecessary exposure to high temperatures, overcrowding and over-activity.

Cities, as a general rule, have higher mortality rates from heat and sunstroke than rural districts, particularly in years when above-average number of deaths occur from heat throughout the United States.

There are wide fluctuations in number of deaths due to excessive heat from year to year. In some years, as this year, when the summer season has frequent and successive days of high temperature, number of deaths is strikingly large.

States abutting on one another frequently show wide differences in death rates from heat and sunstroke. For example, although Arizona and Nevada have highest mortality rates in the United States from excessive heat, some of the states adjoining them register the very lowest rates in the entire country.

Striking examples are Arizona, where average death rate for three year period, 1931 to 1933, was 9.7 per 100,000 population, whereas three adjoining states, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado recorded rates of only 0.1, 0.6, and 0.1 respectively. Similarly, Nevada recorded 8.6, whereas the figure for California was 1.3, for Oregon 0.1, and for Idaho, 0.3.

*Science News Letter, July 25, 1936*

It is believed that the early Chinese, like the Greeks, painted their statues.

Cutworms eat at night, and therefore farmers who lure them with poison bait make it fresher and more attractive by applying it in the evening.

## METEOROLOGY

## Ball Lightning Observed By Nebraska Family

A DOUBLE display of ball lightning, a very rare phenomenon, was witnessed recently by Mrs. P. H. Moore of Lincoln, Nebraska. She was watching a rainstorm through a window of her home, when she saw three red globes of fire rolling and bouncing along the street. They struck an iron post and disappeared.

Mrs. Moore called her husband to the window, but he did not arrive in time to see the first display. The Moores, however, together witnessed a second discharge of three or four balls about a quarter of a minute later. This second set was also seen by two boys, Don and Dale Darnell.

Prof. J. C. Jensen of Nebraska Wesleyan University has interviewed both the Moores and the Darnell boys, and is convinced of the essential accuracy of their observations.

*Science News Letter, July 25, 1936*

## BOTANY

## Flower Photo a "Fooler" To Trap Unwary Botanists

See Front Cover

WHAT is wrong with the flower picture on the cover of this issue of the SCIENCE NEWS LETTER?

Take another look before you give an answer. (Only ambitious young botanists will be held responsible.)

Correct: the lotus flower and the arrowleaf foliage do not belong to each other. It is an Esau-and-Jacob picture—the flower is the flower of *Nelumbo*, but the leaves are the leaves of *Sagittaria*.

Another point on which local worthies sometimes fool the innocent—and in all innocence on their own part, too—is the claim you will often hear, in many places where the American lotus grows, that "This plant is found only here and in Egypt."

Actually, this declaration gives America too little credit, and Egypt too much. The American lotus has a wide distribution in the central part of this country; and the famed lotus of the Nile was not a lotus at all but a white water-lily. The Old-World lotus, a close cousin of the American species, is native to southern Asia. Buddha is quite properly associated with the lotus blossom, but not Osiris.

*Science News Letter, July 25, 1936*