

OCEANOGRAPHY

Air Force on Ice Island

Soviet feat of 1937 may be outmatched by airmen on ice island expected to drift out of the Arctic Ocean and down Greenland's coast.

► AN ICE island occupied by an Air Force crew 108 nautical miles from the North Pole has a "very definite chance" of drifting out of the Arctic Ocean and down the east coast of Greenland.

This is the opinion of Lt. Col. Joseph O. Fletcher, who discovered the island, drifting in the Arctic Ocean several years ago. He was on the island, along with scientists and a weather observation crew from March 19 until June 23.

If the island, about nine miles long, does drift down into the Atlantic, it will duplicate, and might well outdo, the feat of a Soviet Russian crew in 1937. The Russians landed on an ice floe at the North Pole and stayed on it until it broke up almost two-thirds of the way down the Greenland coast.

The island, known as T-3 or Fletcher's Island, is a lot bigger and many times thicker than an ice floe and would not break up as quickly as would a floe.

T-3 is one of three such islands discovered by members of the Air Weather Service on flights over the Arctic Ocean to the Pole from Alaska. It is believed that they broke off from a huge ice shelf on the coast of Ellesmere Island off the northern coast of

Greenland. Extensive search over a 400,000 square mile area revealed no more such islands.

A weather observation station has been operating on the island since April 1, sending surface and upper air observations to the United States to be coordinated with other observations from all over the world. Since the Arctic is known as the "home" of the weather, these observations add considerably to the weathermen's predictions.

Two scientists from the Air Force Research Center at Cambridge, Mass., are also on the island. They make soundings of the ocean's depth, take samples of marine life—mostly shrimp—examine the structure of the ocean floor, test the ocean water for its salt content and get temperature data from a bathythermograph which they lower to about 2,000 feet.

The most significant thing about the camp on the ice island, according to Col. Fletcher, is that we have proved that we can maintain men there with a minimum of logistic support. With the airplane, we can come and go at will over the face of the Arctic Ocean, he said, pointing out that now this is a "fairly hospitable area."

Science News Letter, July 26, 1952

PUBLIC HEALTH

Alert on Insecticides

► THE NATION'S doctors are being alerted, through the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (July 19), to the danger of accidental poisoning from one of the new insecticides, toxaphene.

Deaths of three children, poisoning with recovery of a fourth, and group poisonings involving seven persons are reported by Drs. Lemuel C. McGee and Howard L. Reed of Wilmington, Del., and Dr. James P. Fleming of Hearne, Tex.

The children, all four years or younger, are believed to have been poisoned by drinking a solution of the insecticide or by chewing the amber-colored, wax-like material while playing. The seven other persons were members of two families who ate collards and chard that had been sprayed with the insecticide.

Because toxaphene does not dissolve in water, washing the greens, which was done, will not remove the chemical, the doctors point out.

A convulsion is the "cardinal symptom" of poisoning by this chemical, the doctors warn. The poisoning starts abruptly, without pain, involuntary vomiting or diarrhea.

Barbiturates are the antidote to use. The quicker acting ones are considered more effective, a report from the AMA Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry states. These sleep-inducing drugs act by countering the acute central nervous system stimulation of toxaphene.

With proper precautions toxaphene can be used safely, as shown by "the complete absence of poisoning" in workers who manufacture it and those exposed to it in compounding pesticides and using it in agriculture.

Science News Letter, July 26, 1952

ENTOMOLOGY

Chiggers Do Not Burrow But Attack as Ticks Do

► CONTRARY TO popular belief, chiggers do not burrow into the skin and stay there. They attack as ticks do, usually in skin depressions at the base of hair.

They usually attack the legs and accumulate in regions where bands, such as belts and girdles, bar their movement. After

they have fed, they back off and drop off. The poison they secrete, which is what causes the intense itching and irritation, stays for some time. Besides the itching, there is danger of infection from scratching.

People have used everything from kerosene to chloroform to stop the itching of chigger bites. Authorities do not advise either kerosene or chloroform, however. Neither is safe unless very carefully used. Washing with soap and water or with plain water or salt water are advised. This should be done as soon as possible after getting into a chigger infested area. Just brushing with a cloth or towel will get the chiggers off.

You might ask your doctor about some of the new itch remedies for use on chigger itches and mosquito bites. Some of the antihistamines are prescribed to be taken internally to relieve hives. Some are being made into ointments or lotions to put on the skin for relief of intense itching. If your doctor does not want you to use one of these, he will prescribe some other soothing lotion or cream.

Science News Letter, July 26, 1952

Do You Know?


Dental decay probably is the most widespread of all *diseases*.

Americans hold the record as coffee-drinkers; they consume more *coffee* than all other people in the world.


Irrigation studies show that a half inch of water applied every six days gives best results with vegetable crops.

In Germany, food *yeast* has been produced commercially from waste carbohydrate substances.

Despite its abundance of raw materials, the United States has to depend largely on imports for its *mica* supply, because of high labor costs.



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