

MIRROR

PUBLISHED WEEKLY
IN THE HEART OF
EASTERN NORTH
CAROLINA

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10 Front St.
New Bern, NC 28560

VOLUME 10

NEW BERN, N. C., FRIDAY, MAY 12, 1967

NUMBER

Through
THE
Looking
Glass

Tornado warnings for New Bern and the rest of the coastal area during recent days had a lot of folks gazing at the sky and crossing their fingers. Those who remember the brief but violent blow that ripped along the Trent not too many moons ago aren't inclined to take wind of this type lightly.

Unlike our more familiar hurricanes, tornadoes are something that meteorologists know very little about. They still haven't figured out how they form, or where all the energy which produces those funnels of swirling 500 mile per hour wind comes from.

Until they can establish this basic information, weather scientists will never be able to predict when and where a tornado will occur. They do recognize conditions that make sudden storms of this kind a possibility, and these conditions existed here early this week.

Experts admit that the best the weather bureau can come up with, as of now, are predictions of the possibility of a tornado over a general area, and this much can be done with 80 percent accuracy. We gather from this that some of the critters can swoop down with no advance warning whatsoever.

Fortunately, our section of North Carolina doesn't seem to be as likely a target as various other parts of the nation, for example the midwest. Incidentally, don't get the mistaken idea that your house is sturdy enough to be tornado proof. Those in a position to speak with authority say it is impossible to design buildings, unless they are underground, that are safe from destruction. In a single tornado at Oak Lawn, Ill., three weeks ago, 500 homes were destroyed or damaged.

Research aimed at establishing the pattern of these big blows is moving at a discouraging pace. It may surprise you, in this age of remarkable mechanism, that obtaining accurate measurements of the speed of the winds in the funnels is presently impossible for the simple reason that no equipment up to this point has been fashioned to withstand such force.

Hurricanes can be penetrated by aircraft, although it is no picnic for the pilot, but penetrating a tornado is something else. Even the establishment of numerous testing stations would be largely ineffective, since the possibility of a tornado striking in a given location is extremely remote.

If it seems to you that the midwest is having more and worse tornadoes than it used to, there's an explanation. Land that was open prairie and lightly populated is now subdivided into residential sections. Blows that once would have done little damage now destroy buildings and take a grim toll of lives.

Money to carry on extensive research is not part of the problem say the tornado specialists. One of them frankly admits that if he and other experts had one billion dollars to devote to the cause they wouldn't know how to spend it wisely.

Currently, the few experiments that are conducted are on a small scale. A half dozen scientists are creating tiny,

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FAMOUS VISITOR—Rocky Marciano, retired undefeated heavyweight boxing champion, squints into the sunlight as he poses with friends at New Bern's Holiday Inn. Second from the right, he still looks capable of pulverizing the likes of Cassius Clay, the Ali shuffle notwithstanding. Rocky stopped over in our town last weekend, enroute to Morehead City where he was honored with a special day. The hard punching native of Brockton, Mass., became the world's

best in one sport because he failed miserably in another. Well does this editor remember, as Coastal Plain League statistician, the extent of Rocky's heartbreak when he couldn't make the grade as a catcher for Fayetteville's team in the Class D circuit. Strange isn't it, that Marciano's darkest moment opened the golden door to fame and fortune, and altered the course of ring history for all time to come.—Photo by John R. Baxter.