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Weathermen use ancient facts

More than 1,000 years ago ancient weathermen reported ice covered the Nile River. When scientists today know something like this has happened, it puts a great perspective on similar climatic changes occurring in the world.

"History puts everything in the right context," says state climatologist John Griffiths, a meteorology professor at Texas A&M University.

"We are getting information about weather changes from far back as 8,000 years ago. Sometimes it's not much, but it's better than we had before, which was nothing."

Griffiths said it was not until the age of instruments, about 200 years ago, that the study of weather became a scientific process.

"You have to have numbers to report your observations," he explains. "It wasn't until we had the instruments that we could take on the day-to-day sort of readings re-

quired. Word descriptions are not sufficient over any span of time. I might say it's cold outside, while you say it's only cool. With numbers there is no guessing."

All through the ages people have been interested in the weather and man's effect on it. In 61 A.D. a Roman playwright called Seneca complained of the air pollution in Rome. Before that in 1066 B.C., the Chou Dynasty in China began to keep the first known weather records. Following their early lead, thousands of observations and inventions by men of science continue to aid in the present understanding of the weather.

"I don't think most people are sufficiently introduced to the historical

aspects of climatology," says Griffiths. "It's a shame. From a look at the past, meteorologists today are finding a new perspective."

When we look at the history of the meteorology it makes us aware that so much of the development has come from different countries, he said. The world has had a hand in developing meteorological sciences.

"We are finding that many of the philosophies expressed 100 years ago concerning man's effect on the environment are exactly what we are coming up with today. Basically, we are rediscovering what we have lived to forget," he notes.

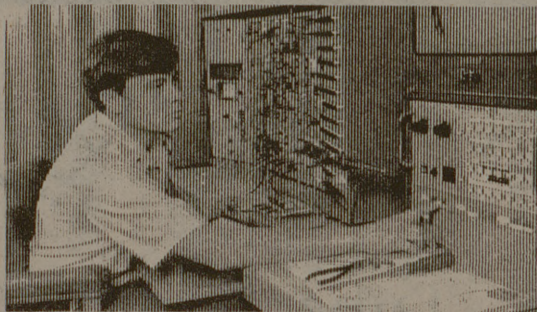
Griffiths says more than 2,100 years ago the definition of climate was based on day length. For the

next 900 years, there was no upward step taken in the Western World to improve that definition. Griffiths contends it was a case "we've always done it this way, use anything else."

Even trees aid in understanding weather conditions hundreds of years ago, Griffiths explains. Studying the tree rings to determine growth period is an example. If ring is narrow, then there was stress on the tree that year. A ring means a good growth year.

You have to take into account growth factors, he says, but whole scientists can get some idea what the weather was during spring and summer months hundreds of years ago.

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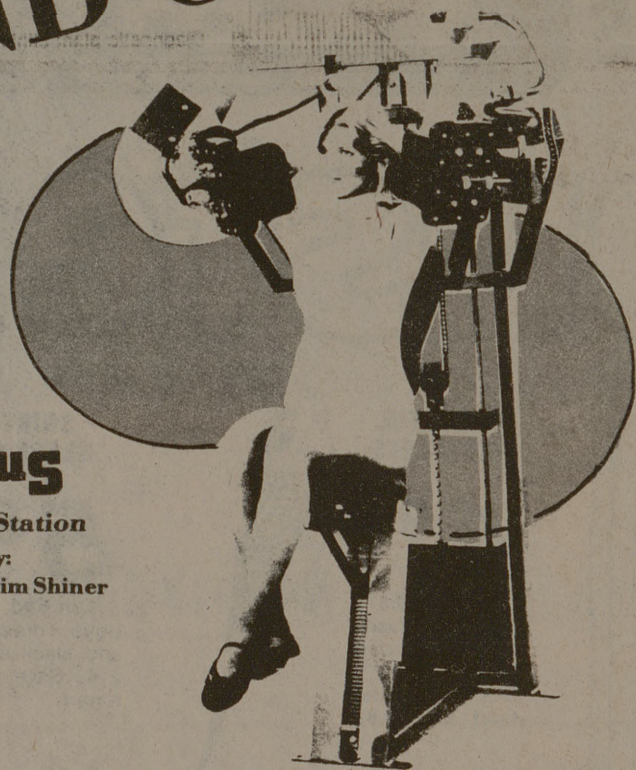
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CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Thursday
Town Hall Contest, "Best Campus" 12:45 p.m., MSC Forum
Texas A&M Marine Fellows, proposals of proposed modification to the campus Christi ship channel, 2 p.m., Rudder
Water Ski Club, 7 p.m., MSC
Texas A&M Sport Parachute Club, Confederate Air Force, 7:30 p.m., Rudder
Aggie Players, "Carnival," 8 p.m., Rudder Theater
Wildlife Lecture, "Alaskan Observations," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum
Aggie Cinema, "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," 8 and 10 p.m., Rudder Auditorium

Friday
Aggie Cinema, "Silver Streak," Rudder Auditorium and "Cabaret," night, Rudder Theater
Aggie Players, "Carnival," 8 p.m., Rudder Theater

Saturday
Musical Talent Show, 7:30 p.m., MSC 201
Aggie Players, "Carnival," 8 p.m., Rudder Theater
Aggie Cinema, "Silver Streak," Rudder Theater

Sunday
Aggie Cinema, "Auntie Mame," Rudder Theater
Weightlifting Club, Texas State Powerlifting championship, 9 a.m., TAMU Motorcyle Club, East
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Tuesday
Society of Automotive Engineers, 8 p.m., 342 Zachery

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