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## **Famous Typhoons: The Hurrican Hunters**

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# Book Reviews

## FAMOUS TYPHOONS

THE HURRICANE HUNTERS. By Ivan Ray Tannehill.  
New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1956. Pp. xii-271.

Before the first Pan American Clippers were flying between Manila and San Francisco, Reverend Bernard F. Doucette, S.J., the Weather Forecaster for the Philippine Weather Bureau used to send his monthly report about the course of all typhoons to Dr. Ivan Ray Tannehill. Dr. Tannehill was then in an important post of the United States Weather Bureau. For many years previously he had been studying typhoons and hurricanes. Now after long years of association with the U.S. Weather Bureau in various capacities—as chief of the marine division, chief of all forecasting and reporting and assistant chief in charge of the technical operations of the Bureau—he has given us an extremely readable story of tropical storms: typhoons in the North Pacific Ocean and hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean. The title of the book gives the nature of its story, for the hurricane hunters are the weather observers who get the clues and the experts who put them together” (p. 6). Towards the end of the book (p. 250) he corrects his use of the title but the reader will have no quarrel either with the original use or with its modification.

To lack respect for the havoc-wreaking powers of atomic and hydrogen bombs is extremely foolhardy and no one who has heard even distant reports of these bombs wants their explosive violence within thousands of miles. But in the Philippines there has grown familiar by repetition a fearsome thing more expansive, more destructive, more powerful than many nuclear bombs at once. Typhoons and hurricanes, too, are just that. And the

author has written this admirably substantiated book which will convince any doubting reader. Not with charts of winds and tables of barometric readings nor with precise formulas of physical laws but in a full flowing story of actual encounters with typhoons and hurricanes he lets the participants tell their part. We go along with the storm hunters, the men who fly the weather, into the turbulent walls of rain. We appreciate the remark of the plane pilot (pp. 2 and 213) who said that being in the hurricane was "like going over Niagara Falls in a telephone booth," or the other who said the airship crew was "shuddering and shaking in the aircraft like an ice-cube in a cocktail shaker" (p. 792).

Dr. Tannehill has not written in the fashion of one modern brand of popular science which is seldom science and is scarcely popular with scientists. Writing about a field in which he is singularly competent he has presented genuine science in a human way to interest scientist and non-scientist alike. Neither can reasonably complain of being wearied with technical details heaped one upon another in some esoteric meteorological jargon. Technical phrases are singularly few. Yet, withal, if anyone would find fault with this book because of a lack of technical accuracy, that critic, out of tune with others, should be reminded that "no two hurricanes or typhoons are alike" (p. 253). Besides, technical differences — these would be only in the realm of opinion—would properly be propounded in a review of another of the author's book: *Hurricanes: Their Nature and History* which is now in its *eighth* edition. That more formally scientific work is familiar to the trained weather man. The present book is not only instructive even for the professional meteorologist but is entirely intelligible to the uninitiated in the science of weather. Clearly written episodes of the weather scouts are pleasingly and at times excitingly presented.

The introductory chapters of the book are a report on the monster tropical storms of the past few centuries which were particularly memorable for the terrible destruction they caused. How countless lives were lost and houses and property destroyed is portrayed clearly, simply, vividly, and sympathetically. The reader learns about the hurricane which sank a rich fleet in the time of Columbus (p. 15); he follows the rise of the waters of a typhoon which destroyed 20,000 lives in India in 1789 (p. 17); and he regrets the lack of a warning signal when thousands died

on the coast of China in 1881 (p. 17). After the battle of Leyte in 1944 the American Third Fleet, "said to be the most powerful sea force ever assembled" (p. 10), was caught without due warning, for the Philippine Weather Bureau (taken away from the Jesuits by the Japanese Army in 1943) was hampered in its free communication of typhoon signals during the latter war years. What was the result in this case? "More men had died and more damage had been done than in many engagements with the Japanese Navy" (p. 12). In 1935 that navy, the Imperial Japanese Fleet, suffered very heavy losses when caught in the center of a typhoon. Because of the destruction in this case the reports on the typhoon were not made known to world meteorologists until 1952, seventeen years after.

Of special interest to Philippine readers is the tribute paid to the Philippine Weather Bureau. "Among the best [storm hunters] were the Jesuits in the West Indies and in the Far East" (p. 60). The typhoon of 20 October 1882 "with its center passing directly over the fully equipped weather observatory in Manila" (p. 79) for years provoked widespread curiosity among weather men. For more than fifty years the careful scientific information gathered by the Jesuit scientists at Manila during this typhoon was discussed in an effort to get at the nature of typhoons.

In a chapter called "Trailing the Terrible Typhoon," attention is given to the storms of the Far East so familiar throughout the archipelago. Dr. Tannehill lauds "Father Charles Deppermann, S.J., formerly of the Philippine Weather Bureau, who did as much as any man to help people prepare for these catastrophes" (p. 168). The research papers of Father Deppermann about Philippine Typhoons are well known to students of world weather.

With the coming of World War II advances made in aircraft brought on the first flights into the eye of a hurricane. "The first flight into the eye of a hurricane, unscheduled and unauthorized, came in 1943" (p. 91). The record is an alarming account of pioneering adventure into the jaws of an unknown monster. After the first successful trip into the eye or center of the hurricane a fleet of skilled men was gradually trained to drive through the whirling vortex into the center of a hurricane. Their flights were and are quite as dangerous as the first trip. Every trip has new and different adventures, for each typhoon

or hurricane is unlike any other. Dr. Tannehill supplies us with the first hand accounts of these brave men who risk their lives that warning may be given in time to save many other lives. Fortunately, due to the painstaking preparation, few of these investigating parties have been lost.

There are many questions answered in this book: why typhoons are called by girls' names; how lives and property have been saved from the destroyer; why much remains yet to be learned about tropical storms. But the answers take second place to the story of the men who have explored the secrets of the world's most devastating winds and rains. We can agree with the conclusion (p. 271) of Dr. Tannehill:

"In the last few years men have had the courage to fly into these monsters.... Here people can see how it happened, how it was done, and feel admiration for the men who did it—the hurricane hunters."

JAMES J. HENNESSEY

## FILIPINO POET ABROAD

THE WOUNDED STAG; FIFTY POEMS. By Bienvenido N. Santos. Introduction by Manuel A. Viray. Manila: Capitol Publishing House. 1956. Pp. xvi, 71.

Mr. Santos was in the United States at the outbreak of war in 1941 and the result of his prolonged exile abroad are two little volumes published recently: one is a charming little volume of short stories which we hope to review soon; the other is this collection of fifty poems.

These are little pieces competently written in the modern key. Mr. Santos does not try to achieve meretricious effects by juggling words inanely. He has generally something to say, something presumably worth saying, though it is not always lucidly clear just what it is.

What he does say however (such of it as we have understood) is not always new. It has been said before and more compellingly by other poets. Several figures are recognizably Eliot's: the