

1947 Texas Ave
SA 78228

Feb 12, 1969

Dear Oscar,

I am wondering if you have written any letters on the fireball of Feb 8, early morning hours?

The AP dispatch from the Chihuahua City newspaper "Heraldo" reported that the residents of Santa Barbara, El Oro and Allende, (apparently not the town Allende SE of Monterrey) "were screaming in the streets". There were also radio reports of broken windows somewhere, I got in on the tail end of several news casts and missed details. The town of Santa Barbara is a hundred or so miles south of Chihuahua City.

I get the impression that it started somewhere over New Mexico and ended in the Santa Barbara area.

I am sending you my clipping, please return it if you have clippings from your paper.

Sincerely

Eugene R Cornelius

Blinding Fireball Crashes Into Earth

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CHIHUAHUA, Mexico (UPI) — A blinding blue-white fireball, believed to be a meteor, turned night into day across Mexico and the Southwestern United States early Saturday then pounded to earth like a bomb.

"The light was so brilliant we could see an ant walking on the floor," said Guillermo Asunsolo, a Chihuahua newspaper editor. "It was so bright we had to hide our eyes."

THE LIGHT FROM the fireball was sighted for at least 1,000 miles along a line stretching from Central Arizona deep into the superstition-ridden outlands of Northern Mexico.

"The people, especially the people in the small villages, are very alarmed," Asunsolo said. "They say this is an announcement that the world will soon end."

Asunsolo and other witnesses in the two countries indicated the suspected meteor thrustered to earth in the almost impassable terrain of the Sierra Madre Mountains south of Chihuahua and north of Durango, Mexico.

"It was the brightest light since Halley's Comet in 1908," said Asunsolo, editor of the newspaper *El Herald*. He said he felt the impact when the fireball struck ground and was "quite scared."

"We ran up to the roof and saw a very big round ball moving from south to north," he said before the object crashed. "It was not red, but an intense blue-white."

Reports from such mountain towns as Parral, Santa Barbara de Oro and Valle Allende said the Mexican residents saw the fireball and felt it pound to earth. Asunsolo said the impact created "a tremendous tremor" that shook the ground for hun-

dreds of miles so far that "some windows broke."

BUT DR. RONALD SCHORS, an astronomer with the Jet Propulsion Lab at Pasadena, Calif., who was visiting the McDonald Observatory at Fort Davis, Texas, said the fireball might have broken up and never landed. He said the tremors felt by residents might have been caused by a sonic boom created by the fireball streaking through the night sky.

"It was extremely bright," Schors said. "We had high clouds in the area but it burned right through. It was much brighter than Halley's Comet."

Schors said it was "several times brighter than a full moon."

A spokesman for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory at Cambridge, Mass., said the fireball "most probably" was a meteor but "could possibly" have been a "polar orbiting satellite."

Dr. Charles Olivier of the American Meteorological Society said in Philadelphia the fireball had characteristics of both a meteor and a satellite. He said both a meteor and a burning satellite entering the earth's atmosphere have light brighter than the moon and can be seen over areas of 500 to 1,000 miles.

THE MEXICO CITY seismological station said its instruments did not register any tremor during the early morning hours, despite reports of sharp earth shocks from residents.

Reports from Parral, in the northern state of Chihuahua, said residents tumbled from their beds, thinking it was an earthquake.

Asunsolo said the area where the fireball apparently fell is barren, without roads and reachable only by helicopter.

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Wide Areas of Mexico, U.S. Startled by Fireball

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CHIHUAHUA CITY, Mexico (AP) — A huge fireball, believed to have been a meteor or a polar orbiting satellite, was sighted early Saturday over a large section of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico.

Witnesses said the blazing light, streaming a tail of fire like a streaking comet, lighted the early morning hours "like day."

Newspaper switchboards in this Northern Mexico city and in

El Paso, 200 miles to the north, were jammed by calls from excited citizens.

The newspaper "Heraldo" here received calls from as far away as Durango and Torreon, Delicias, Camargo and Jimenez. Residents at Santa Barbara, El Oro and Allende ran screaming into the streets.

The El Paso Times said the fireball was first seen as a small light and became larger and larger as it moved from north to south. Its terrifying

roar increased as it grew larger.

The Times received calls from as far away as Sierra Blanca, Tex., and St. John, Ariz., about 200 miles or more apart.

Dr. Ronald Schorn, an astronomer with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Pasadena, Calif., who is visiting McDonald Observatory at Fort Davis, Tex., said the fireball "was much brighter than Halley's Comet." Schorn personally saw the fireball.

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Feb 9, 1969