

1957, May 8.

Mr. Paul Engle,
1601 Whitewing Drive,
McAllen, Texas.

Dear Paul:

First, a belated but heartfelt thanks to you and your good wife for giving up a week-end for our benefit. We greatly appreciated all that you did for us, from first securing the reservation at that elegant tourist court right on down to going with me that last morning.

I had intended to ask you about an item I saw in the papers here just before leaving, concerning a "mystery blast" in your region April 4 (see clipping enclosed). Of course the plane breaking the sound barrier is obviously the most simple explanation, but I always wonder about the possibility of a detonating meteor (especially in cloudy weather or in a region where the meteor is near the sun in the daytime and might not be seen). There was just such an occurrence in Oklahoma some months ago (totally cloudy) and I wrote up suggesting such a possibility. The papers printed my idea but I never got any evidence from any one of a fireball or meteorite fall. There appears to have been some damage in that instance and claims were filed against the government or army. Some weeks after the event an army officer called me hoping to get evidence of a fireball in order to refute the claims; he said careful investigation had been unable to establish the presence of any supersonic planes in the area at the time.

I have never heard of an established case of a fireball shock wave breaking windows; loose plaster being dislodged is the extreme. However, no doubt if one were big enough it could do it (i.e., Siberian fireball of 1908). Note attached clipping speaks of shattered window panes--but of course that doesn't prove it was true. Do airplanes sometimes actually break window glass with shock waves?

And oh, yes; the current issue of "Consumer Bulletin" says: "Information just received indicates that, with use of seat belts, whiplash injuries tend to be aggravated."--for what it's worth!

I have not yet written Mrs. Wade, but think the time is now about ripe to do so. Have you heard anything more? I have only some of my pictures of the meteorite developed, and as you would know from the poor lighting, they are of only moderate quality. The big rains down there, by the way, should actually tend to expose any other

meteorites or fragments subject to being exposed by sudden washing or erosion.

You and Juanita might be interested to know that we patronized your nursery and picked up some 6 or 8 plants which have all finally been set out up here and will doubtless thrive till next winter, when they will die--but they will be worth the small cost. That was a good place you referred me to.

Actually, we never saw the sun on that whole trip to the Valley, tho it did shine somewhat weakly in San Antonio the morning we were thru there. We got home without incident except for running thru a terrific rain in the Pleasanton region, just before getting into S.A. Not long after we got back home and got thru the Easter celebration, you are aware that the GREAT RAINS set in, and they just about stopped everything for their duration. We had over 23 inches in some two weeks at a ranch property I own just west of Waco, and I read where La Villa had six inches in a sudden fall.

The abnormally cloudy spell attending the rains just about ruined the apparition of Comet 1956 h. I tried faithfully but did not get to see it until the evening of Monday, April 22nd, when we picked it up for some 30 minutes in the twilight, 7.40-8.10, between cloud banks. A bright head and short, broadening tail were all that even binoculars revealed in the lighted sky background. Two nights later, Wednesday, April 24th, we got our best view, and that was well worth all the futile efforts to me. The comet's tail gradually lengthened as twilight deepened and I am sure it was easily 7-8 degrees, maybe 10; on the same night a member of the local astronomical group who saw it from a better location west of town, away from city lights, reports a tail length of 30 degrees, and I can well believe him. On this night, after it got dark enough, we suddenly became aware of a marked jet extending sunwards, finally seen for some 2 to 3 degrees--a most remarkable feature in my experience, tho I had read of them.

I got some photo's the 24th by simply setting up my f 2.0 Leica with Tri-X film, all trailed, 5 seconds to 2 minutes. They show the jet, and a surprisingly long tail. Thereafter there were no good chances to see the comet until Sunday, May 5 (a few persons say it in a late, hazy sky May 3 and 4), when I took 6 photos's with the Schmidt, not yet developed. Previously it had not been high enough for me to reach from the location of our Schmidt.

Did you receive the Maksutov Club circulars which I sent you, and if they have served your purpose will you please return them to me? I had you put on the list and you should get a set of such circulars as were still available from Alan McIntosh directly. Have you decided to get in on the deal, or did the high prices scare you off? I'll be interested to hear.

This is quite enough for one session, but I'll write you again soon and send the promised descriptive material on those meteorites I left with you.

Sincerely,

Mystery Blast Rocks Texas Area

McALLEN, April 5 (AP)—A mysterious explosion shattered several window panes and caused near-panic yesterday in the Rio Grande cities of Pharr, McAllen and Mission.

Police and fire officials scurried about trying to find the scene of destruction. When none could be found, they decided it was probably a jet airplane breaking through the sound barrier.

Moore Air Base officials, however, 18 miles north of Mission, said no jets were stationed there. They had no idea what the explosion could have been.

4-H Club Boys to Compete Tomorrow

The Fort Worth Clearing House Assn will present awards to 4-H Club winners in an achievement show at the Grant Run School at Clearing tomorrow.

The club boys will compete in try, rabbits, swine and beef cattle. Gene Sears, assistant agent, scheduled the morning are contests in electrical and tractor.

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