

THE WITNESSED FALL AND RECOVERY OF METEORITES

By Cyril Kovac, F.G.A.A.

Kovac's Gems & Minerals,
120-122 Commercial Rd., Prahran 3181 Melbourne, Australia

It was a bright sunny morning at Ruffy, just a few miles west of Murchison, Victoria, Australia where it all happened. No one within hearing could know that the peace and quiet of that Sunday morning, the 28th of September, 1969 would suddenly be disturbed by an event unique in Australian history.

Just before 11 a.m. a shattering sound, like thunder but sharper and more intense, roared and echoed through the valleys and around the hills. When the roar had died away all began to wonder where it came from, and to conjure up all sorts of ideas as to what might have happened.

The local residents of the small town of Murchison and the farmers and stock raisers in the area were the only witnesses of an event that is unique anywhere in the world—the fall of a swarm of meteorites, but they hardly realized this at the time.

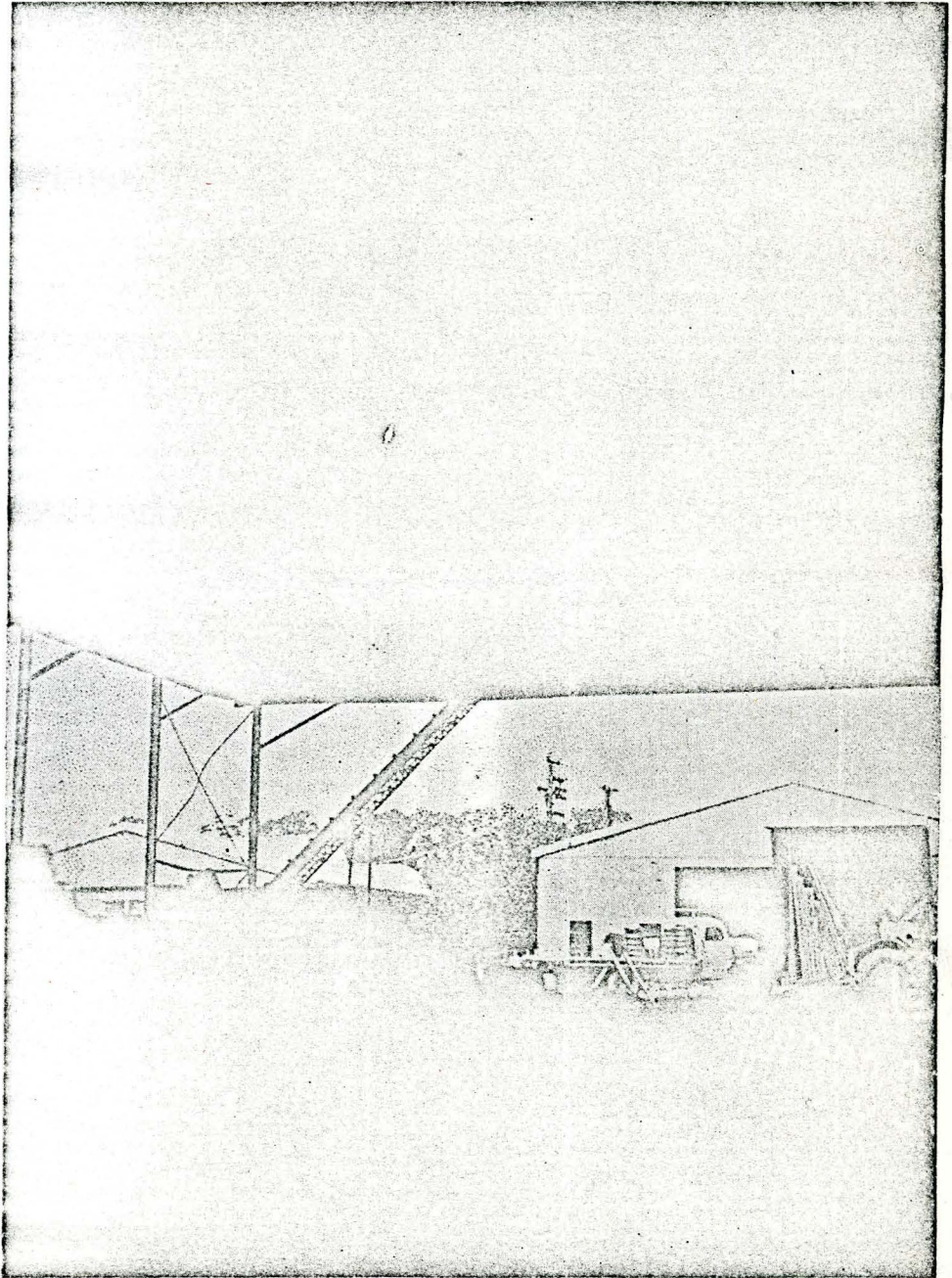
It was Sunday so no one would be blasting. There was no gas storage tank in the vicinity that could have exploded. Little did the viewers realize at the time the significance of what they had heard.

The next day in Melbourne, while at work in our rock shop, we heard the first stories of the "something" that had exploded in the sky. The papers published details of the finding of pieces of a strange black meteoric material in a cowyard at Murchison, and the stories began to pour in. The black substance soon was identified as of meteoric origin, and so the stories we heard of smoke and flame in the sky began to gain credibility.

We listened to stories of bright lights in the distance that turned to smoke, trailing balls of fire which disappeared into nothing with a final glorious blaze. Some people claimed to have seen as many as five "somethings," but an eye witness at Murchison described how three objects, making a considerable noise, attracted her attention, and one appeared to explode almost overhead. One Murchison farmer, about to have a quiet Sunday glass of beer, was so startled by the noise of the meteorite that he dropped bottle and glass in fright.

Most certainly the small township of Murchison was the main target of this celestial bombing. Situated in a rich pastoral area 90 miles north of Melbourne, capital city in the state of Victoria, this quiet countryside with its lush green pastures and high crops of grain was about to gain unexpected popularity.

By Wednesday 1st October, 1969 the "something" had been definitely identified



PHOTOS BY GENE VERSTRAETEN

The pierced roof of a hayshed at Murchison, Australia, hit by a meteorite.

and publicized as being "exciting as moon dust," by Professor Lovering, head of Melbourne University's Department of Geology. (Professor Lovering is one of three Australian scientists to receive moon rock samples from the Apollo 11 flight.) The Murchison countryside was invaded by geologists, university students (in