

# Strange Light May Have Been Meteor

A mysterious blue-green light that streaked over Northern California may have been a meteor no bigger than a man's fist, authorities said yesterday.

Shortly after 10 p.m. Friday, law enforcement agencies and radio stations from Garberville in Humboldt County to San Francisco began receiving reports from persons who had seen who saw strange green or blue lights traveling south.

A United Airlines jet flying over Coaldale, Nev., and a light plane 300 miles to the west in the Red Bluff area of Tehama County area around the same time each reported that a meteor "passed right in front of them," said Bob Garcia, watch supervisor for the Federal Aviation Administration's Air Traffic Control Center in Fremont.

Such diverse reports of meteor showers happen very infrequently, "once in a blue moon," Garcia said.

Kinglsey Wightman, an astronomer at the Chabot Observatory in Oakland, said he and several colleagues were gazing at Jupiter and Saturn Friday night and missed the meteor.

But Wightman and James Ferreira, president of the East Bay Astronomical Society, hypothesized

that Friday's green or blue streak may have been a bolide, a large meteor that passes through the Earth's atmosphere for two or three seconds, breaks into several pieces and leaves a long trail of light that could be visible for the better part of a minute.

Bob Lai, floor manager at the Morrison Planetarium in Golden Gate Park, also missed the meteor. "It wasn't a scheduled event," Lai said.

Lai speculated that the spectacle was caused by a "small chunk of rock, maybe the size of somebody's fist, and when it hits the Earth's atmosphere, it starts to burn up."

A spokesman for the state Office of Emergency Services said his agency had no reports of meteors, UFOs or anything else crashing to earth.

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11/5/81