

Area residents puzzled over bright light in sky

At least three area residents — one a *Bulletin* editor — reported seeing a brilliant object streaking toward the earth Thursday night. Both were together when they saw the object, which they said fell from the sky between 10:25 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

"I have a difficult time believing it was a meteorite," said Jack Hatfield, 20525 Whitehaven Circle, who witnessed the falling object while he was standing on the front porch of his home about five miles south of town.

Hatfield, manager of Hatfield's Department Store in Bend, said, "Every meteorite I've ever seen was a dim streak of light."

He reported first seeing it directly overhead, as a "wide flash of light" colored blue-green in the center and edged with yellow. The light, which moved directly toward Bend, narrowed, then widened again and disappeared beyond the horizon to the north, he said. The entire event, Hatfield said, lasted between one and two seconds.

"In my uneducated opinion, I think that it was some kind of space junk. I've never seen anything like it before. If you were outside, you had to see it, it was that bright," he said.

Bulletin Sunday editor Bob Welch was chatting with Hatfield and

facing south when "all of a sudden I his face light up," Welch said. "He made some exclamation; so, I just turned and looked north. I saw this bright glow shooting toward the earth."

Welch said he saw the light for about a second.

"I sensed seeing just a flash of blue and white light. It was more than a falling star. It looked to me like it was heading toward Pilot Butte."

Neither reported hearing any sound connected with the streaking light, such as might occur in a plane crash.

Neither the Bend Police Department, the Deschutes County Sheriff's Department nor the Oregon State Police received reports on the incident.

Meteorites — meteoroids that fall to earth — are quite common. They have been said to originate from solar system dust, debris from comets or loose pieces of rock or metal. Their brightness is caused by the intense heat and friction generated when they travel through the earth's atmosphere.

One of the largest ever found is the 70-ton Hoba West of South Africa, but stones the size of peppercorns have been known to fall in showers.