

A RAIN OF ROCKS

The skies aren't always friendly

There have been periods of time when terrifying strangeness ripped at the earth and those of us on it from an innocent and placid sky. For some reason, the decade between 1958 and 1968 was time of particularly heavy activity for the overhead mystery.

It was on January 18, 1958 when Australian farmer Arthur Donaldson and his family were chased from their fields. (January is, of course, the Australian summer.) Suddenly, without warning, Arthur Jr. was struck with a stone as he sat in his tractor seat. At first, he suspected one of his younger brothers of throwing it. But then he heard his father cry out in the next field. A rock as big around as his fist had come from above, landing at the senior Donaldson's feet.

Soon, like the beginning of a thunderstorm, a stone fell here and another one there. The family peered anxiously up into a cloudless sky. The stones and small rocks came from above. There was no doubt of that. But there was nothing but a slate of mid-summer blue above. No cloud, no wind. The sky was simply raining stones.

Sensibly, Mr. Donaldson took his family indoors and not knowing what else to do, he called the police in the nearby town of Pumphrey. If Mr. Donaldson had been anyone but the sober, serious man he was, his phone call would not have been taken seriously.

But, dutifully, Constable Thomas Markham drove to the Donaldson farm. He was quickly convinced of the legitimacy of the

FILE ON THE UNEXPLAINED

By Michael Lucas



farmer's complaint when a rock hit his policeman's boot as he stepped from his car.

Neither the police nor the geologists at the university in Perth were able to solve the mystery, though the latter did suggest that the debris might be fallout from an unrecorded volcano. But, if so, why had it selected the Donaldson farm and none of the surrounding property as a landing area?

The curious affair was reported on radio and in the newspapers. Naturally, the publicity drew a fascinated audience as the rocky rain continued for a second day.

Unable to farm, the Donaldsons considered selling their land to an individual who wanted to develop it as an attraction. They were to sleep on the matter overnight.

The morning of January 20 dawned as clear and cloudless as had the two previous days. Only one thing was missing. There were no soft thuds, no rustling sounds that the rocks had made as they cannonaded through the carrotwood trees. The mysterious rain of rock had stopped.

It never has returned.

There hadn't been a cloud in the autumn sky all afternoon.