

right: SEATTLE POST-INTELL-
GENCER / WASH. / AUGUST 25

below: (cont.)

burning of methane gas in swamps has been mistaken as unidentified flying objects.

Bootes constellation, moved almost directly overhead in a southeasterly direction and ended at the constellation Scorpius.

Mr. Janicke reported to the International Astronomical Union in Cambridge, Mass., that the fireball appeared to be very green with pieces of orange objects breaking off of it. Daniel W.E. Green, of the Astronomical Union, which alerts scientists to discoveries of comets and other celestial objects, said the asteroid's disintegration could have been mistaken for a meteor shower, which is a number of asteroids plunging into the atmosphere together. When an object such as an asteroid plunges into the earth's atmosphere it is called a meteor.

"From the reports we've heard, it was probably catching up with the earth from behind," said Kenneth Franklin, an astronomer at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. "Since the earth is doing 66,000 miles per hour, it might have been going 75,000 miles an hour or so."

"It was definitely not a man-made ob-

Fiery sky shower is Halley comet debris

United Press International

A fiery meteor shower caused by the Earth's annual passage through a belt of debris left by Halley's Comet prompted a flurry of calls to police and aviation officials between Washington D.C. and New York City last night.

In Maryland, authorities said people from Baltimore in the east to Williamsport in the western part of the state reported seeing fiery objects that lit up the sky with red and pink glows at 8:35 p.m. Eastern time.

One witness in Fairview, N.J., said the flames — which he said were blue, red, orange and green — appeared to be 50 to 100 feet long.

A New York City Police spokesman said the department was swamped with calls, "and if it was a landing from outer space we're all in big trouble, including police."

At Washington's National Airport,

operation manager Paul Skinner said tower controllers saw the lights and the airport had received several calls from nearby residents.

Dr. Allen Barwick, an adjunct professor of astronomy at the American University in Washington, D.C., said the cosmic light show was caused by the Earth's annual passage through a belt of debris left by Halley's Comet.

"They wouldn't all be seeing the same meteor but they would be seeing different parts of the same comet," he said. "When (the comet) came in close to the sun, the particles were spread out from it and left behind. They stay in orbit around the sun and when our planet comes through the orbit, these particles come into our atmosphere and burn up."

He said Halley's Comet, last seen from Earth on May 8, 1910, will next be visible sometime between November 1985 and April 1986.