

Everett, WA
Herald
(Cir. D. 46,813)

AUG 26, 1982

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Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

UFO was really an asteroid?

New York Times News Service

NEW YORK — Astronomers said Wednesday that a brilliant fireball seen Tuesday night from Massachusetts to Maryland was probably a disintegrating asteroid that came from behind earth's orbital path and plunged into the atmosphere.

Detailed reports from several observers in New York and New Jersey led the scientists to believe that the asteroid was probably no larger than a basketball.

The object, which moved across the sky for several seconds, leaving a long tail and spewing off what looked like sparks, set off scores of telephone calls to law-enforcement agencies.

Some callers reported "a greenish glow," some thought it was a decaying satellite and most said they had never seen anything like it.

Several astronomers in the New York area said the object was most likely an asteroid — a tiny planet, that intersected the earth's orbit from behind and slightly to the side. As it attempted to race past, they said, the earth's gravity pulled it into the atmosphere, where friction caused its fiery disintegration.