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METRO FINAL

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WE VISIT ADRIAN
Reporter Louis Cook Tells About Bustling City, with Pictures by Doug Kennedy

...losion a Meteor?

...ST ROCKS SEATTLE

...it might have ... than reported ...

...L. Whipple, ...iversity meteor ...that if the Wash- ...had been a little, ...reported it might ...out toll of Seattle ...bitants.

... Airlines Pilot ...sighted the ob- ...pared to land at ...oma international ...

...t was at about 7,000 feet when it suddenly shattered into eight pieces which looked like chain lightning. What appeared to be fireballs trailed to the earth, he said.

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AN ASTROMONER at the Yerkes Observatory, Lake Geneva, Wis., said the Seattle phenomenon apparently was a "fireball" -- a big meteor heavy enough to penetrate into the earth's lower atmosphere.

But the Yerkes expert, Prof. Gerard Kuiper, said he was inclined to doubt that the object exploded even as low as 7,000 feet.

"Fireballs usually explode 10 to 15 miles up," he said.

"However, anything can happen, and the reported force of the explosion suggests that it was somewhat lower than the usual height.

* * *

"METEORS' surfaces burn off rapidly from friction with the air and they often explode from the tremendous heat."

Fragments are seldom found, Kuiper said, either because they burn up before reaching ground or because they are too small to be noticed.

The chances of a meteor or a large fragment from one striking the earth are "extremely rare," Kuiper said.

The famed crater in Arizona is very old, he said, and recent sites discovered in Canada appear to date from before the Ice Age.

J. Hugh Pruett, Pacific regional director of the American Meteor Society, said:

"Unless it was an infernal machine of some kind, it could have been a huge meteor."

* * *

THREE SEATTLE police prowl cars reported the object exploded over Green Lake in North Seattle at about 2,000 feet.

Sidney Howock, weather observer at the Seattle-Tacoma airport weather bureau, said: "It was sort of a lights-on, lights-off thing. It lasted two seconds at most.

"Everything turned blue. As soon as it went out there were fireballs or something falling straight down like fireworks. That came in another couple of seconds. Two or three minutes later I heard the rumble."

Most observers agreed the object was travelling from southwest to northeast when it blew up.

Two hours after the explosion, there were no reports of damage or recovered fragments.

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