

Ancient Astronauts Modern Mysteries

GLASS FROM THE SKY

A sizzling lump of matter soared out of a clear sky and crashed in a driveway in Cannifton, Ontario, back in September 1968. When Wesley Reid, the owner, went to investigate what hit his driveway, he found a brownish mass that was too hot to handle. After it cooled, Reid turned it over to Canadian scientists who analyzed it. They found it was a 12-ounce chunk of glass laced with a small quantity of pure zinc.

Whatever it was, it wasn't a fragment from a Soviet or U.S. space satellite.

How could a chunk of glass survive a plunge through the Earth's atmosphere (glass has a low melting temperature)? Scientists didn't even try to explain that, anymore than they try to explain the many huge globs of ice that crash down on us with appalling regularity, frequently damaging homes and automobiles, and even killing livestock. The usual explanation is the ice has dropped off the wings of high flying planes. But the history of ice falls goes back hundreds of years, long before those 2 bicycle mechanics succeeded at Kitty Hawk.

Recently, it was discovered that thousands of miles of Pacific Ocean bottom are strewn with literally tons of glass. It has apparently been there for thousands of years.

GIFTS FROM THE GODS

When something plummeted out of the sky in early times men regarded it as a gift from the gods—the Sky People of ancient legend who rode around in fantastic luminous machines. Perhaps if Wesley Reid's piece of glass had turned up 2,000 years ago, the finders would have polished it lovingly and given it a place of honor in some temple. We know this sort of thing happened often. Even today many of the temples of the Middle and Far East are built around odd artifacts that supposedly came from the sky or appeared mysteriously in some manner.

But modern science is dominated by the same folly that plagued the earlier magical orders. Whenever archaeologists find something that shouldn't be there dust off the old "sky fall" theo-

ry. Time and again scientists digging in ancient burial grounds in the U.S. have uncovered metal swords, pots, and metallic artifacts. But they "know" that the ancient Indians had little or no knowledge of metallurgy and couldn't have possibly made these things unless they made them out of meteorites. So our finest scientific minds strain themselves to explain that when an Indian found a piece of a meteor he painstakingly hammered it into a sword or a pot.

Now, when's the last time you found a meteorite around your home? True, there are meteoric fragments on exhibit in museums. The Smithsonian has some splendid samples. The Hayden Planetarium has several huge lumps of meteoric iron on display, mostly recovered in the Arctic regions. Only an estimated 5% of all the junk that bombards this planet survives the fiery plunge through the atmosphere. And most of that is solid iron or pure nickel.

That doesn't explain the aluminum pot, many thousands of years old, that was found in China a few years ago. Aluminum is manufactured by an electrical process and is made of rather rare raw materials. We ourselves only learned to make the stuff 100 years ago. Did some Chinese artisan find a piece of aluminum that dropped from the sky? If so, by whom?

Since the beginning of time our little planet has been continuously bombarded by great pieces of iron and metal. Probably, if all this material could have been saved intact it would now amount to a mass bigger than the Earth itself!

Where is all this debris coming from? And why is it that U.S. astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts have only reported one sighting of a meteor in space since our manned space programs began? Thousands of these things flash into the Earth's atmosphere every year. But where are they really coming from? Is there some gigantic mountain of iron in the sky?

For some odd reason, these meteorites crash into very specific areas year after year. One such area is the Nebraska-Kansas border. About 20 years ago a scientific station was established in Lincoln, Neb., in the hopes of recovering some of these objects. Year after year meteors are seen hurtling toward the region. And year after year

the scientists search for fragments. They have recovered only a handful.

So how did our early Indians manage to recover all the "meteoric iron" with which they fashioned, according to our scientists, the innumerable knives, swords, and artifacts?

Could it be that our all-knowing scientific savants don't really know what they're talking about? Science, like nature, abhors a vacuum. When something explicable happens, some scientist pacifies the public with a ludicrous explanation. Flying saucers become swamp gas. Bodies of strange unclassified animals that drift ashore in the tropics are explained as prehistoric animals from melted icebergs! That's right, the melted iceberg explanation has been used many times in recent years by scientists who obviously know nothing of icebergs, tropic waters, or prehistoric animals. No animal has ever been found frozen in an iceberg. Some have been found in frozen muck (quite a different thing) in Siberia, however.

SPACE VISITORS?

Dr. Lincoln La Paz, the first head of the I. a Paz Institute in Nebraska, found himself puzzling over meteors that didn't look or behave the way meteors should. They were glowing masses of greenish gas (?) which appeared over the Southwest in the late 1940s, often going through unnatural movements, such as right angle turns.

His studies of these oddball aerial objects stimulated scientists in other parts of the world, particularly in the Soviet Union. During the 1960s, Soviet scientists formed a number of expeditions to a remote region in Siberia which was the site of one of the strangest incidents of modern times.

Shortly after 7 a.m. on the morning of June 30, 1908, a gigantic luminous mass soared over Siberia's Tunguska Valley and settled toward the ground with a flash so brilliant it was reportedly seen thousands of miles away in Western Europe. This was the now-famous Tunguska "meteorite." It did not leave a normal meteor crater, however. Instead, it apparently exploded in mid-air with all the force of an atomic bomb, flattening trees outwards from the epicenter for miles.

The expeditions of the 1960s tracked down and interviewed elderly remaining eyewitnesses in the remote, thinly populated area. Scientists were told how some witnesses close to the explosion later developed peculiar and fatal maladies, the symptoms of which sounded uncomfortably like radiation poisoning.

Carefully sifting the dirt at the 50-year-old site, investigators found tiny pieces of metal and glass. It is estimated that the blast released 10^{21} ergs of energy. That is, it was many times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb; perhaps as great as the volcanic explosion which destroyed the island of Krakatoa in 1883.

What manner of meteorite was this? If it had passed over Paris or New York it would have completely destroyed those cities. And why did it leave tiny globules of glass in its wake?

When the world's first atomic bomb was set off in New Mexico in 1945, the desert sand at the center of the blast was melted and fused together in crystals of glass (glass is made by heating sand). These man-made pellets of glass are very similar to what are called tektites. Mounds of these tektites have been found at the site of the ancient city of Baalbek. A Soviet scientist, Dr. M. Agrest, created quite a stir back in the 1950s when he published a paper speculating that Baalbek may have once served as the launching site for atomic powered rockets. The Tunguska "meteorite," he theorized, could have been an atomic powered spaceship from some other world that developed mechanical trouble.

A year after the Tunguska explosion there was a worldwide wave of UFO sightings. Huge cylindrical aerial machines were sighted repeatedly over Europe and New Zealand. In the fall of 1909 they were seen by thousands in the New England states. The newspapers were filled with eyewitness accounts during that period.

Were these mysterious objects searching for some trace of the thing that blew up over Siberia the year before? Many of the sightings (such as those in Sweden) were geographically in line with the Tunguska Valley.

FUNNY MOON ROCKS

We spent billions of dollars to bring back a few rocks from the moon, and

geologists were excited to find the lunar rocks were permeated with tiny flecks of glass. The same kind of glass we have been discussing here: melted silica. To the scientists this was an indication that the moon may have once had active volcanoes which heated the surface. The discovery also bolstered the seemingly silly theory that pieces of the moon have somehow been showering Earth in a veritable rain of glass.

Maybe no glass has rained on your house lately, but about 700,000 years ago, according to the experts, some huge object, or series of objects, flashed into our atmosphere and spread billions of tektites over an area 6,000 by 4,000 miles, covering thousands of square miles of the Pacific Ocean bottom.

The late Harold C. Urey, recognized as one of the world's greatest astronomers, suggested that tektites were melted terrestrial substances such as sandstone. If so, what could have heated such a wide area? However, if you look at any standard text on mineralogy you will find tektites dismissed as being "meteoric in origin." Seems that everyone believes this *except the astronomers*.

TOWERS OF GLASS

The presence of tektites proves at least that at one time the Earth was subjected to tremendous waves of heat. But there is other evidence.

Around the world there are scores of mysterious structures, mostly round stone towers, which have been vitrified—turned into glass. These vitrified towers are most numerous in Scotland and France. Nobody seems to know exactly who built them, when, or why.

Here again our learned archaeologists and anthropologists come to the rescue. When you ask them to explain the huge, enigmatic stone circles of Great Britain and Scandinavia (there are *hundreds* of "Stonehenges"), or the equally mysterious structures of North and South America, they tell you with a straight face that the ancient peoples erected these things as astronomical observatories and even as crude stone calendars.

Despite the fact that the people of those times must have had to devote all their energies to eking out a living in rugged terrain and hostile climates, the archaeologists like to think these same

people could afford the luxury of devoting enormous labor to hauling rocks.

In any case, the stone circles and towers *did* get built.

And then some enormous heat melted some, turning their sides to glass.

Some ufologists, such as the late Morris K. Jessup, have suggested that flying saucers focused heat rays on the towers in some long-forgotten War of the Worlds. Dr. M. Agrest might view the towers as the remains of some ancient atomic war. He was the one who suggested that Sodom and Gomorrah were actually destroyed by an atomic bomb. A bomb unleashed by the not-so-kindly space people.

Indian scholars have unearthed ancient texts which describe, in graphic detail, the use of atomic weapons in India thousands of years ago. And the legends of many scattered and isolated tribes all over the world are concerned with similar stories, just as the vast lore of lost Atlantis tells us how a great civilization destroyed itself . . . or was destroyed by something.

Perhaps that something was from outside the Earth. Perhaps it was some ancient civilization which existed alongside early man.

The most far-out theory advanced to date for the vitrified towers is that they were deliberately constructed over magnetic faults or anomalies to take advantage of the energies from such anomalies. Thus "Earth currents" heated the stones and smelted them to glass.

It is well known that many ancient temples were deliberately constructed in spots with unusual magnetic properties. No one has quite figured out how the early builders knew how to locate these places. It does seem like a very sophisticated concept. Some have suggested they were guided to these spots by entities from another world. It's as good an explanation as any.

Science is slowly finding its way to the bigger mysteries of our planet. More and more scientists are beginning to reconsider all these strange things. The in-depth study of the tektite puzzle began very recently. Glass is still falling from the sky; and some scientists are still straining for absurd explanations.

But the real explanation . . . when they find it . . . may be the most absurd of all. ★ THE END