

# UFO POTPOURRI

no. 332

TX 6/6 89  
RX 12/6 89

NOT A UFO!  
Two eyewitnesses are:  
John Schuessler, Decatur, IL.  
and Joe Gurney (and family)  
of St. Louis, Mo.

## Space junk lights up night sky

By **NORMA MARTIN**  
Houston Chronicle

David Czarnek and his 11-year-old daughter were only prepared to see the moon and the stars when they looked up at the sky Friday night, but what caught their attention was a very bright, falling light.

The object, seen by Czarnek and countless others across the central United States, was a Soviet rocket body re-entering the earth's atmosphere, said Army Maj. Alex Mondragon, a spokesman for the U.S. Space Command near Colorado Springs, Colo.

"We were out in the front yard to take pictures of the moon when my daughter, Laurie, asked me, 'What's that thing over there?' At first I thought it was a plane, but it kept getting lighter and lighter," said Czarnek, who lives near Jones Road and FM 1960 in northwest Harris County.

"It was real bright, a little yellowish, with a small tail," Czarnek said. "The tail was shimmering, and then it went behind the trees and we couldn't see anything."

But Katheryn Berger of Spring saw more.

While walking with her dogs near her barn around 8 p.m., Berger said she looked up and "it was just an orange explosion in the sky. I thought, 'Oh my, an airplane crash,' but it was going too fast."

"Oh my gosh, it was traveling at a great rate of speed. It was leaving a

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Houston Chronicle  
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## Lights

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trail, a bright orange trail as it was falling," she said.

"It was the most horrible thing I ever saw, and it scared the heck out of me. I kept worrying, and I called the airport, and they told me it was a satellite," Berger said.

"I said, 'Thank God it wasn't an airplane.' I calmed down and poured myself a cup of coffee," she said.

Maj. Mondragon said a rocket body is used to put satellites into orbit. After a couple of revolutions around the earth, the bodies re-enter the atmosphere.

Such a re-entry occurs about once a day somewhere in the world, mostly over water, Mondragon said.

Mondragon said the space command has received no reports that the rocket body survived the re-entry.

"They travel at about 300 miles per second" and usually burn up from the heat and friction upon hitting the atmosphere, he said.

Mondragon said the Space Surveillance Center determined it was a Soviet rocket body because it keeps track of all launches, and the re-entering rocket body correlated with their tracking schedule.

People from Indiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Texas reported seeing the bright, falling light.

News organizations and government agencies in Houston said they were besieged with calls from people who saw the light and wanted to know what it was.

The Federal Aviation Administration, National Weather Service and military bureaus and bases across the Midwest and Southwest were swamped with calls from the curious, officials said.

The object traveled across the sky from southwest to northeast.

4E / The Houston Post / Wed., December 2, 1987

## Bright lights in sky puzzle residents of East Coast

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mysterious lights brightened the sky from New York to Virginia early Tuesday, but officials and witnesses pondering the source of the brilliant blaze disagreed on just what it looked like.

Police and emergency operators and Coast Guard spokesmen variously described the display as blue lights, a fireball and a meteor shower.

"What really shocked me was how bright it got," said Maryland State Trooper Paul Keplinger in Easton. "It looked like daylight out here for about five seconds."

Keplinger said he saw a bright yellow light traveling across the sky, trailing a reddish flare. After it disappeared, he said he heard what sounded like thunder.

"It looked to me just like a meteor or something," said Keplinger, who added that he had never seen a meteor shower.

In Cape May, N.J., Coast Guard Petty Officer Carlos Johnson said he received a radio report from a ship in the Delaware Bay at 12:38 a.m.

"We figure it's a meteor shower. We just assumed that due to the fact we had so many calls, from Virginia to New York," Johnson said.

BY JOHN F. SCHUESSLER

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# Light

From page one

Earth's atmosphere, said John Feldt, lead forecaster for the National Weather Service in St. Louis.

The "useless piece of space junk," as Kyro called it, moved from the southwest to the northeast in the sky and burned for about a minute.

The object was identified by the North American Air Defense Command post in Colorado Springs as part of a Soviet rocket launched last month, Feldt said.

No reports were received that any parts of the object had reached the ground or caused any injuries, Feldt said.

The light show was seen as far north as Iowa and as far south as Texas, Feldt said. And it touched off a phenomenal number of telephone calls to police, airport officials, weather experts and newspaper and television offices. Many callers initially thought a jetliner was on fire.

All told, experts say the rocket was sighted in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Mississippi and Iowa.

Locally, Feldt said, "people were stopping their cars on the highway and about a dozen came into our of-

fice because it is so spectacular."

Gene Murray, 60, an advertising executive from Ballwin, was driving home from a restaurant and heading west on Manchester Road when he caught the show.

"I thought it was a gigantic sky-rocket," said Murray. "First it was one, then two, then five, and then six, then eight" streams of white light bright enough to illuminate the road.

Clark Willett had just left his office at Dorsett Road and Interstate 270 and saw it in the sky.

"At first it looked like jets, and something was wrong with their exhaust," Willett said. "But there was no sound. It was much brighter and slower moving than a falling star."

Objects speeding through Earth's atmosphere rub against air molecules producing enough heat to vaporize the objects, Kyro said. The glow is given off by the burning metal of the booster and the gases in the atmosphere, she said.

Unlike meteors, which often appear as quick, single streaks of light, space junk moves more slowly and burns longer, she said.

St. Charles County Police dispatcher Denise Cordry said the department had received about 20 telephone calls from persons suggesting that the flash was a meteor shower, an airplane with its engines ablaze, or a UFO.

## Light In Sky Was Soviets' 'Space Junk'

By Christine Bertelson  
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Laura Kyro stopped her car dead in the middle of Clayton Road, jumped out and gawked.

"It was the most spectacular thing I have ever seen in the sky," said Kyro, an astronomer at the St. Louis Science Center. "Even better than a shuttle landing."

What Kyro saw — along with thousands of other Midwesterners — was a spectacular blaze of white light that split into multiple glowing streamers that moved across the sky about 8:10 p.m. Friday.

It was a Soviet rocket booster burning up as it re-entered the

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## Disintegrating Soviet Rocket Lights Up Sky

From Associated Press

People from Montana to Mississippi reported vivid streaks of light in the night sky when a disintegrating rocket used to launch a Soviet satellite burned up in the atmosphere, putting on a fireworks show with "spectacular, beautiful colors," observers said Sunday.

Scores of startled people called police, the news media and air traffic controllers to report the phenomenon late Saturday.

The light show was caused by the re-entry of a Soviet rocket body that had been used to launch the Raduga 21 communications satellite on Thursday, said Maj. Alex Mondragon of the U.S. Space Command in Colorado Springs, Colo.

"Something re-entering like that can be mistaken for a missile coming in" but the space command knew it wasn't because it had tracked the object since launching, Mondragon said. The agency uses a network of radar, telescopes and sensors to track about 7,000 man-made objects in orbit, he said.

Trackers spotted the falling rocket over the coast of western Canada and followed its southeastward course across the United States past the Florida Gulf Coast.

Mondragon said nobody had found any debris.

"I've never seen anything like it. It was spectacular, beautiful colors," said Paul Kellenbarger of Pea Ridge, Ark. "It looked like a helicopter, with red and green lights."

Sam Burrage, executive producer and anchorman at WPSD-TV in Paducah, Ky., said the station received 25 to 35 calls about blue and reddish-orange lights from viewers in western Kentucky, southeastern Missouri and northern Tennessee.

## Soviet rocket lights up sky during re-entry

McClatchy News Service

SACRAMENTO — Bright lights in the sky that stunned Northern Californians early Sunday morning, were caused by a Soviet rocket disintegrating upon re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere, an Air Force spokesman said.

"It was nothing like the average meteor or shooting star," said Mark Coulombe, a free-lance photographer. "It was large and moved slowly. It broke apart with multi-colored streaks and flashes of light popping off of it."

Coulombe was trying to get a good picture of a police chase when he looked up and saw the sight.

Tim Hayes of Orangevale was returning from a bachelor's party at 2:40 a.m. when he spotted the Soviet rocket re-entry.

"It was much slower than a shooting star," he said. "It looked like it was breaking up. It moved like a cluster across the sky from horizon to horizon."

Maj. Bob Perry at the North American Aerospace Command Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., which tracks objects in space from launch time, said he was aware of the rocket body and its trail of debris and burning particles as the rocket fell.

"In the process of re-entering, it created a brilliant light," Perry said.

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