

XERO COPY XERO COPY XERO COPY

HARVARD COLLEGE OBSERVATORY

CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

July 28, 1964

Mr. Edward A. Stewart, Jr.
152 Mount Holly Avenue
Mount Holly, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Stewart:

The object you saw was a bright meteor, sometimes called a "fireball" or a "bolide". Almost all very bright meteors are small bodies moving in orbits rather like the orbits of asteroids, and probably are fragments of asteroids. The direction of motion of your meteor is consistent with that sort of orbit. A good many bright meteors strike the earth each day, but most go unnoticed. We have received another report of the same meteor from Wilmington, Delaware.

I am sending your observation to the Moonwatch Division of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory here in Cambridge, which has a continuing program for analysis of visual observations of bright meteors. Since it is very rarely possible for the professional astronomer to observe these meteors, most of what is known about them depends on this sort of lucky chance.

Sincerely yours,

Richard B. Southworth

Richard B. Southworth

RBS:lrw

MASS

62-83894-470

~~62-83894-469~~

ENCLOSURE