

PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD

1. DATE	2. LOCATION		12. CONCLUSIONS
11 May 52	Seattle, Washington		☐ Was Balloon ☐ Probably Balloon ☐ Possibly Balloon ☐ Was Aircraft ☐ Probably Aircraft ☐ Possibly Aircraft ☒ Was Astronomical METEOR ☐ Probably Astronomical ☐ Possibly Astronomical ☐ Other _____ ☐ Insufficient Data for Evaluation ☐ Unknown
3. DATE-TIME GROUP	4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION		
Local 0120 PST	☒ Ground-Visual ☐ Ground-Radar ☒ Air Visual ☐ Air-Intercept Radar		
5. PHOTOS	6. SOURCE		
☐ Yes ☒ No	Many		
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION	8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS	9. COURSE	
	1		
10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING		11. COMMENTS	
Vivid blue. Sphere w/tail. Steep dive. Two astronomers said it was a meteorite.		See report	
		RETURN TO: Director Aerospace Studies Inst AFTR Archives Branch Maxwell AFB, Alabama	
SMAC		K243.6012-1 11-31 May 1952	

ATIC FORM 329 (REV 26 SEP 52)

point of the aerial object that flashed over Western Washington early Sunday. As the map shows, the object, apparently a meteor, traveled from south to north and burst into fragments at the point indicated on the map. Position was determined by eyewitness reports from an airliner and various ground observers. After bursting, fragments of the object traveled to the northwest into an area not covered by the map. Dotted lines and arrows indicate direction of sight of eyewitnesses who established approximate location of the burst.

—(Post-Intelligencer Map.)

came in from widely scattered parts of Western Washington, astronomers expressed the opinion that an unusually big fireball had been destroyed aloft in spectacular manner.

Col. T. Allan Bennett, commanding officer of the 25th Air Force Defense Division, McChord Air Force Base, also leaned toward the theory that the object which exploded at 1:26 a. m. was a meteor. But he said his office is making a thorough check of eyewitness reports and is anxious to receive them.

Bennett said he doubted that the object could have been an aircraft or guided missile.

None of the radar installations in the Pacific Northwest network picked up the object on their screens, he said.

ANGLE—

Asked if the speed of the object may have eluded the radar, Bennett said that the angle, rather than speed, probably was what caused it not to show as a "blip" on the radar scopes.

"If it was a meteor, it was probably coming nearly straight down. That would make it very difficult to track. The indications might be so insignificant that radar wouldn't pick it up," he said.

"If it was an aircraft or a guided missile, we would have picked it up," he continued.

REQUEST—

Bennett asked that anyone finding a "strange" piece of material report it to his organization at McChord.

Bennett said that the ground observer phase of the air defense setup is not at present on a 24-hour basis, and said no ground observers had reported seeing the flash.

The two-second blast, a tremendous blue-white flare, caused no ascertainable damage, but police, fire department and newspaper switchboards were jammed by hundreds of anxious calls from suddenly-awakened persons.

Many believed, after the blast,

Continued on Page 2 Column 4)

ourt Meteor Explodes With A Roar; On Scares Thousands In Seattle

By Associated Press

SEATTLE, May 11—A giant meteor swished across western Washington and exploded with a tremendous flash and roar over Seattle at 1:26 a.m. today.

It frightened thousands of persons as it lighted the sky and rattled doors and windows.

No pieces were found, however, and the greatest damage seemed to have been inflicted on the people's nerves.

A 30-second rumble followed the breaking apart of the celestial visitor into an estimated four to 10 large pieces.

Altitude Estimated

Witnesses found it difficult to estimate the object's altitude and speed, but triangulation fixed the explosion point somewhere over or just north of Greenlake in north central Seattle.

The Coast Guard estimated from early reports that it might have been as low as 2,000 feet when it burst. However, Capt. Bert Carlson, a Northwest Airlines pilot, said it appeared to be only a little below his altitude of 8,000 feet.

Carlson said he was flying toward Seattle when the ball of fire appeared, traveling from the southwest toward the northeast. It exploded in a brilliant flash and broke apart.

There were no estimates immediately available as to the size of the meteor.

Like Chain Lightning

Reports to the Coast Guard said the object broke into eight or 10 pieces. Police Sgt. Lee Drake, patrolling in the north end of Seattle, said the meteor broke into four to six pieces over Greenlake. Two other policemen, J. H. Davis and R. G. Carmody, witnessed the incident from the bridge across Lake Washington, five miles southeast of Greenlake.

"It was a blue-white magnesium color," they reported over the police radio. "It lit up the sky like chain lightning."

Newspaper and police switchboards were jammed by excited callers whose fear ranged from explosion of an atom bomb to an earthquake. Very few thought of a meteor.

Police and state patrolmen patrols made fruitless efforts to find pieces of the meteor.

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Cool, damp breezes—
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Official U. S. Weather Map on Page 25

SUNDAY TEMPERATURES

7 a.m. 44	7 p.m. 58	7 p.m. 58
8 a.m. 48	8 p.m. 56	8 p.m. 54
9 a.m. 48	9 p.m. 59	9 p.m. 52
10 a.m. 49	10 p.m. 57	10 p.m. 50
11 a.m. 51	11 p.m. 55	11 p.m. 48
12 noon 53	12 p.m. 58	12 mid. 47

The Detroit Free

MONDAY, MAY 12, 1952

On Guard for Over a Century

40 Pages

Was Eerie Explosion a Meteor?

SKY BLAST ROCKS

Free Press Wire Services

SEATTLE — An unidentified missile—possibly a giant meteor — “rumbled like a freight train” across the sky and exploded over Seattle early Sunday.

The Air Defense Command began an immediate investigation.

The explosion bathed this industrial city of 500,000 persons in an eerie blue-white light and knocked city dwellers from their beds.

The blast was visible from 60 miles away, and occurred

at a height estimated as low as 2,000 feet.

THOUSANDS of persons were awakened by the concussion, but there was no report of damage.

The phenomenon was at first definitely believed to be caused by a meteor exploding within the earth's atmosphere.

But astronomers said it was almost impossible for a meteor to get within 2,000 feet of the ground before disintegrating.

Some pointed out, how-

ever, that it might have been higher than reported by observers.

Dr. Fred L. Whipple, Harvard University meteor expert, said that if the Washington blast had been a little lower than reported it might have wiped out all of Seattle and its inhabitants.

Northwest Airlines Pilot Bert Carlson sighted the object as he prepared to land at Seattle-Tacoma international airport.

He said it 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.

AN ASTRONOMER 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

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Detroit Free Press

On Guard for Over a Century

40 Pages

Vol. 122—No. 7

Five Cents

METRO FINAL

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WE VISIT ADRIAN

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

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"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 Ameri-

can 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 Howick, 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.

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

HEADQUARTERS
25TH AIR DIVISION (DEFENSE)
McChord Air Force Base, Washington

ODI 519.1

UNCLASSIFIED

20 MAY 1952

SUBJECT: Unidentified Flying Object Report

TO: Chief, Air Technical Intelligence Center
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base
Dayton, Ohio

1. The inclosed report is submitted in accordance with ADGL 200-1, dated 11 April 1951.

2. If inclosure is withdrawn or not attached, the classification of this correspondence will be downgraded to "Unclassified", in accordance with paragraph 25c, AFR 205-1.

FOR THE COMMANDING OFFICER:

1 Incl
Info on Unconventional Acft,
dtd 16 May 1952 (in dup)

Mary A. Rother
MARY A. ROTHER
2nd Lt USAF
Adjutant General

Distribution:

Dir of Intell, DSC/O, HQ USAF (1cy)
CG, ADC, Attn: Dir of Intell (1cy)
CG, WADF, Attn: Dir of Intell (1cy)

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DECLASSIFIED AT 10 YEAR INTERVALS;
DDC DIR 32A.1

UNCLASSIFIED

10033339

7-3712-48

AIR INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

UNCLASSIFIED

FROM (Agency)	REPORT NO.	PAGE	OF	PAGES
Hq 25th Air Division (Def)	IR-25 ADIVODI-2-52	2	2	2

target approximately 9 seconds.

j. Other aircraft in area unknown.

2. The following is an extract from Controller's log, Combat Operations Center, 25th Air Division (Def):

0350 Radio report of explosion over Seattle was relayed by COC, this Mo.

0930 An object believed to be a meteor was sighted coming from the south and going north. The object exploded over Seattle. The object was sighted by a Northwest Airlines pilot, Seattle Police, and many others. Its general description was a red body trailing streaks but no estimate was given of its speed. The airlines pilot thought the altitude was about 7000 feet. There were no reports of damage and no radar tracks. This station was off the air at the time on minor breakdown. Reports of the concussion came from as far away as North Tacoma. Explosion time 0055 PST.

1125 The pilot of the Northwest airliner was [REDACTED] - Logon 6459. He reports sighting the object 3 minutes before passing Hobart Tan Marker at 0051 or 0052 PST. He reports that the object was left of his A/C (DC-3) and appeared to be a rocket-type, vivid blue, with sparks or streamers coming from it. The object exploded slightly below his A/C level (7000 feet) with a lingering flash which lighted the sky but not the ground. He did not hear or feel explosion. The A/C was landed at Sea-Tac. The Sea-Tac controller, [REDACTED] also saw the object and believed it exploded in the Renton area. Washington State Patrol, Seattle Patrol, Sandpoint Naval Tower were amongst people sighting the object. First report received was from a person on the north end of Mercer Island who reported the explosion northwest of the island. He saw the flash and several seconds later felt the blast. Apparently no one kept any record of names of people sighting the object because of the volume of calls. [REDACTED] (Base Operator) reported seeing the object. Mr. Summit, also reported sighting the object. WADF advised.

2055 8The University of Washington professor mentioned in the reports of explosion over Seattle is [REDACTED], Phone [REDACTED] in Seattle. He now says he believes the explosion to be a meteor and is compiling all data for a report. For whom he did not say.

3. From evidence available it is the opinion of the undersigned, the unidentified object was a meteor.

UNCLASSIFIED

Neil A. Voseburgh

NEIL A. VOSEBURGH
Major USAF
Director of Intelligence

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DOD DIR 5200.10

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NOTE: THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECTING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE ESPIONAGE ACT, 50 U. S. C. - 31 AND 32, AS AMENDED. ITS TRANSMISSION OR THE REVELATION OF ITS CONTENTS IN ANY MANNER TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON IS PROHIBITED BY LAW. IT MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN WHOLE OR IN PART, BY OTHER THAN UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AGENCIES, EXCEPT BY PERMISSION OF THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, USAF.

UNCLASSIFIED

COUNTRY USA		REPORT NO. IR-25ADIVODI-2-53	(LEAVE BLANK)
AIR INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT			
SUBJECT Meteor			
AREA REPORTED ON Seattle, Washington		FROM (Agency) Hq 25th Air Division (Def)	
DATE OF REPORT 16 May 52	DATE OF INFORMATION 11 May 52	EVALUATION C-1	
PREPARED BY (Officer) NEIL A VOSEBURGH, Maj, USAF, Dir of Intell		SOURCE Seattle Post Intelligencer Extract from COC, Controller's Log, Hq 25th ADIV	
REFERENCES (Control number, directive, previous report, etc., as applicable) TAX Mss. 25ADIVODI 5904 to ADC Ent AFB Colo and CG WADD, Hamilton AFB, Calif			
SUMMARY: (Enter concise summary of report. Give significance in final one-sentence paragraph. List inclosures at lower left. Begin text of report on AF Form 112—Part II.)			

1. The following report is submitted in accordance with Air Defense Command Letter 200-1, dated 11 April 51, Subject: Unidentified Objects Report.

a. A meteor type object traveling approximately 1500 to 2000 MPH, believed coming from outer space nearly straight, down from south due north direction, vivid blue in color, with flaming sparks or streamers being emitted exploded in a brilliant flash lighting up the sky and disappeared. No sound was heard except upon explosion a tremor or shock wave was experienced by some of the eye-witnesses of approximately 9 seconds duration.

b. Time of sighting: approximately 0114 to 0132 Pacific Standard Time, 11 May 1952. Period of duration: approximately 4 seconds.

c. Visual observation only. Not picked up on radar.

d. Northwest Airlines pilot [redacted] sighted object at 3000 feet 2 minutes before passing Hobart Fan Marker at 0131 or 0132 Pacific Standard Time. Object was to left of his aircraft while coming in for a landing at Seattle-Tacoma Air port at 7000 feet on course due west. Approximate position of explosion 42°21'N and 122°12'W. Mr. [redacted], Seattle engineer, [redacted] Seattle, Wash. noticed the object at approximately 30 miles distance at about 21 degrees above horizon and 13 degrees east of north.

e. Mr. [redacted] evaluation C-1. Mr. [redacted] evaluation C-1.

f. Weather Seattle area: 6/10 overcast 5 to 6 thousand feet with 10/10 overcast at 10,000 feet. Intermittent light rain in area. Winds light and variable bearing SW aloft at 20 to 30 knots at 25,000 feet.

g. Mr. [redacted], Professor at the University of Washington, reported the explosion to be a meteor.

h. No physical evidence available.

i. Target was not intercepted nor picked up by radar. Duration of

1 INCL.
Clipping from Seattle Post Intelligencer
dtd 12 May 1952

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DISTRIBUTION BY ORIGINATOR

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CG ADC Attn: Dir of Intell 1 cy
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(CLASSIFICATION)

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1950—O-218331

ROUTING

JOINT MESSAGEFORM

COMMUNICATIONS CENTER NO.

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FROM: (Originator) SPACE ABOVE FOR COMMUNICATIONS CENTER ONLY

DATE-TIME GROUP

161330Z May 52

PRECEDENCE
FOR:

ACTION

INFORMATION

Routine

☐ BOOK MESSAGE☐ ORIGINAL MESSAGE☐ MULTIPLE ADDRESS

CRYPTOPRECAUTION

☐ YES☒ NO

REFERS TO MESSAGE:

IDENTIFICATION

CLASSIFICATION

CO. ATIC

TO: CO MC GEORGE AFB TACOMA WASH

TELETYPE

INFO:

FROM: APOIN-ATIAA-5-7E FOR BASE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

Reference is made to meteor explosion over Seattle on 11 May 1952. Request that college or university astronomers in Seattle area be contacted to verify fact object was a meteor. Also request info as to whether or not search for fragments is anticipated. Include names of astronomers contacted.

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DRAFTER'S NAME (and signature, when required)

LT E. J. RUPPELT

SYMBOL

ATIAA-20

TELEPHONE

54-61

RELEASING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE

OFFICIAL TITLE

ROBERT E. KENNEDY, Major, USAF
Air Adjutant General

PAGE 1 OF 1 PAGES

DD FORM 173
1 OCT 49REPLACES NME FORM 173, 1 MAY 49,
WHICH MAY BE USED.

16-58923-3 ☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

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FM CG 25TH AIR DIV MCCHORD AFB WASH

TO CHIEF AIR TECH INTELL CENTER WRIGHT PATTERSON AFB OHIO

/ [REDACTED] 25ADIVODI 6236 PD REF YOUR MSG AFOIN-ATIAA-5-7E PD
FOL ASTRONOMERS CONTACTED CLN DR [REDACTED] AND DR [REDACTED] FR UNIV
OF WASH CMA THEY STATE OBJECT WAS A METEOR PD A SEARCH FOR FRAGMENTS
IS BEING CONDUCTED PD IF ANY ARE FOUND YOUR HQS WILL BE NOTIFIED PD

26/1652Z MAY JWPDM

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APPENDIX IV

Seattle, Washington - 11 May 1952I. DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

At approximately 0124 to 0132 PST, on 11 May 1952 many individuals reported sighting a vivid blue object with flaming sparks or streamers coming nearly straight down over Seattle, Washington. The object exploded in a brilliant flash, lighting up the sky and then disappeared. After the explosion, some of the witnesses experienced a tremor or shock wave of approximately nine seconds duration.

II. STATUS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Two local astronomers were contacted and they stated that the object was a meteor. At the present time the astronomers are searching for fragments to confirm their statement.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Object was probably a meteor but file will not be closed until confirming evidence is found.

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Air Force Checks Data On Presumed Meteor

(Continued from Page 1.)

an earthquake had rocked the Pacific Northwest.

After hearing descriptions of the object, trained observers agreed the visitor was a meteor, drawn by earth's gravity from deep space, to blow itself to pieces as friction from the atmosphere heated it to extreme temperatures.

More susceptible viewers guessed the object to be a "Russian bomb," a guided missile, or a "flying saucer."

At least four competent observers had grandstand views of the "fireball." They were the pilot and co-pilot of an airliner, coming in for a landing at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, a United States Weather Bureau observer there and a control tower operator.

PILOTS SAW IT—

Capt. B. C. Carlson and Co-Pilot Earl Perry, flying a Spokane-Seattle shuttle for Northwest Airlines, said the meteor first flared at 1:32 a. m. by his watch and burst into flaming fragments at about 8,000 feet.

Carlson said:

"We were approaching Ho-

bart on a due west course at 7,000 feet. The flash progressed from south to north across our course, apparently between us and the airport."

Perry and Carlson said no shock wave was felt in the plane.

But, from the observation roof at the airport, Weather Observer Sid Howick traced the course of the ragged banners of flame and felt a "definite shock wave" about 2 to 2½ minutes after the first burst of light.

From the airport control tower, Airway Operations Specialist Robert Wiley laconically noted in the Civil Aeronautics Administration logbook:

"Observed very brilliant blue light at 1:32 a. m. (PDT). Appeared light all of airport and originate from northeast direction. Land tremor (explosion) followed about 2 minutes afterward."

OVER WIDE AREA—

The flare was seen and the blast was felt in all sectors of Seattle and surrounding communities. The State Patrol reported the blast was felt in Everett, Tacoma and Bremerton.

Typical of hundreds of Seattle residents jarred out of sound sleep were Mrs. G. V. Rooney, 519 N. 67th St., who said "The windows rattled and we thought the house was coming down."

J. T. Skelly, 7125-44th Ave. S. W., who described the rumble that followed the flash as a "five-shock wave that shook my house."

SAW FLASH—

From the window of his Mercer Island home, Guy L. Bettinger, 7424 W. Mercer Way, saw what he described as a "tremendous flash in the sky." He said:

"The light seemed to go straight up, like a huge electric arc—something like when a transformer explodes. The apex of the light seemed to be about as high as Mount Rainier.

"I thought right away there had been a terrific explosion. I braced for a shock. It seemed like 1½ to 2 minutes before the shock wave hit."

Engineer Reports On Meteor

No one got a better "fix" on Sunday's meteor than Don E. Lyman, Seattle engineer.

Lyman was standing at a window in his home, 16838-19th Ave. S. W., when the flash blinded him momentarily.

Reacting quickly, he went to work with watch and compass. These were his observations:

The flash came at 1:24 a. m. by his watch. It was of 9 seconds' duration. The normal brightness of the flash was maintained for 4 seconds. In color it was a mercury or magnesium blue, with no trace of a greenish hue.

The flash was followed by a deep, shaking tremor which lasted 12 seconds. The tremor started 2½ minutes after the flash. This would put the explosion 30 or 31 miles away. The flash was 21 degrees above the horizon and 18 degrees east of north.

"The tremor had a deep, deep sound like somebody down in the furnace," Lyman said.

Air Force Checking Presumed Meteor That Shook Seattle

Not Seen On Radar

Astronomers throughout the nation, and the United States Air Force, guardian of the skies, displayed keen interest Sunday in the fiery object that flashed across the Seattle area in the blackness of the early morning, then exploded violently.

Scientists who make a study of phenomena of outer space concluded the fiery object was a large meteor that streaked through the earth's blanket of air and disintegrated into flaming streamers.

However, the Air Force has become interested in all sky visitors since it is charged with the job of keeping a radar watch of all things, natural and man-made, that pass overhead.

CHECKING DATA—

As eyewitness accounts of the strange light and following blast came in from widely scattered parts of Western Washington, astronomers expressed the opinion that an unusually big fireball had been destroyed aloft in spectacular manner.

Col. T. Allan Bennett, commanding officer of the 25th Air Force Defense Division, McChord Air Force Base, also leaned toward the theory that the object which exploded at 1:26 a. m. was a meteor. But he said his office is making a thorough check of eyewitness reports and is anxious to receive them.

Bennett said he doubted that the object could have been an aircraft or guided missile.

None of the radar installations in the Pacific Northwest network picked up the object on their screens, he said.

ANGLE—

Asked if the speed of the object may have eluded the radar, Bennett said that the angle, rather than speed, probably was what caused it not to show as a "blip" on the radar scopes.

"If it was a meteor, it was probably coming nearly straight down. That would make it very difficult to track. The indications might be so insignificant that radar wouldn't pick it up," he said.

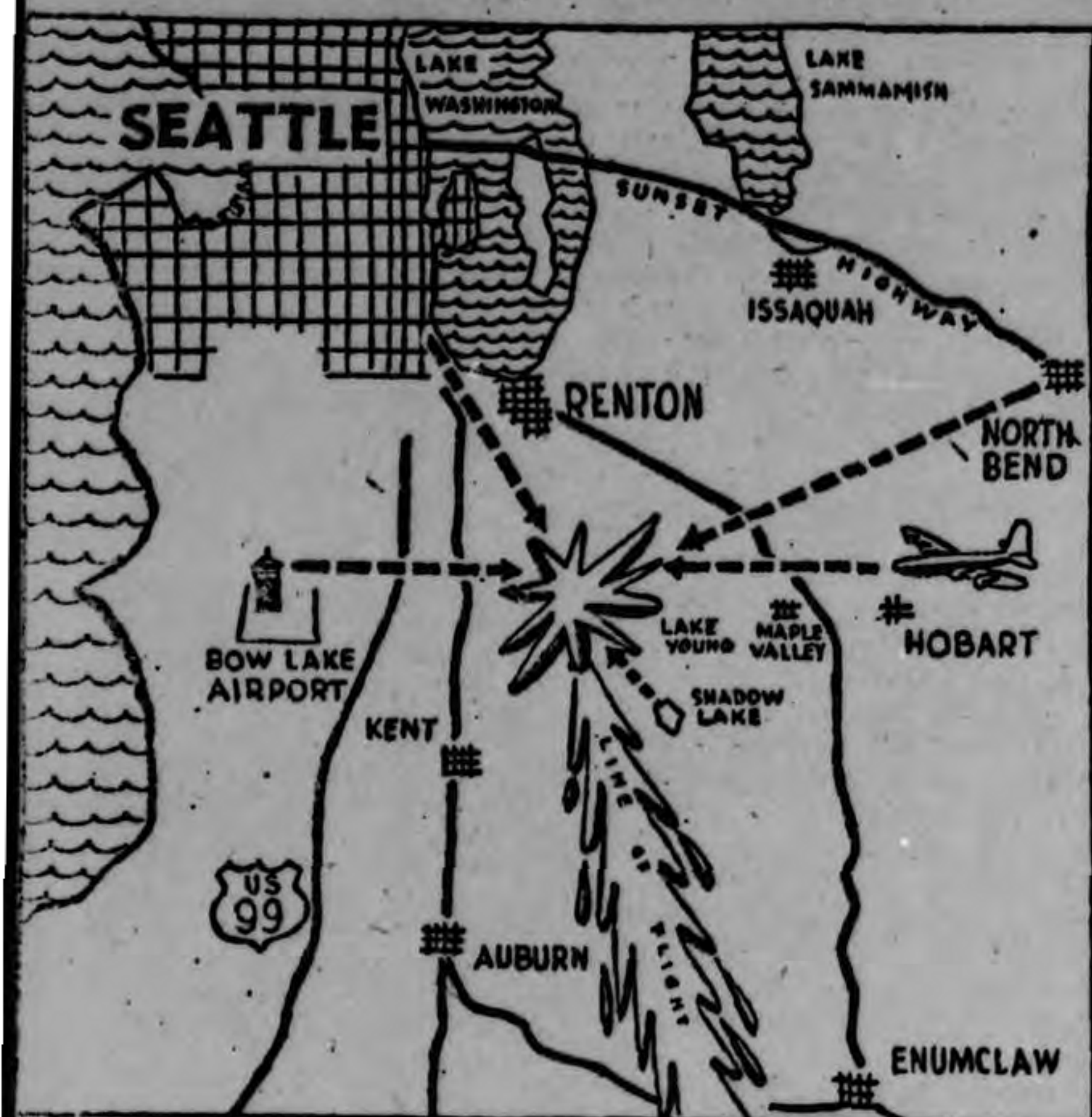
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REQUEST—

Bennett asked that anyone finding a "strange" piece of material report it to his organization at McChord.

Bennett said that the ground observer phase of the air defense setup is not at present on a 24-hour basis, and said no ground observers had reported seeing the flash.

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LINE OF FLIGHT—Shown on this map is the path and the bursting point of the aerial object that flashed over Western Washington early Sunday. As the map shows, the object, apparently a meteor, traveled from south to north and burst into fragments at the point indicated on the map. Position was determined by eyewitness reports from an airliner and various ground observers. After bursting, fragments of the object traveled to the northwest into an area not covered by the map. Dotted lines and arrows indicate direction of sight of eyewitnesses who established approximate location of the burst.

—(Post-Intelligencer Map.)