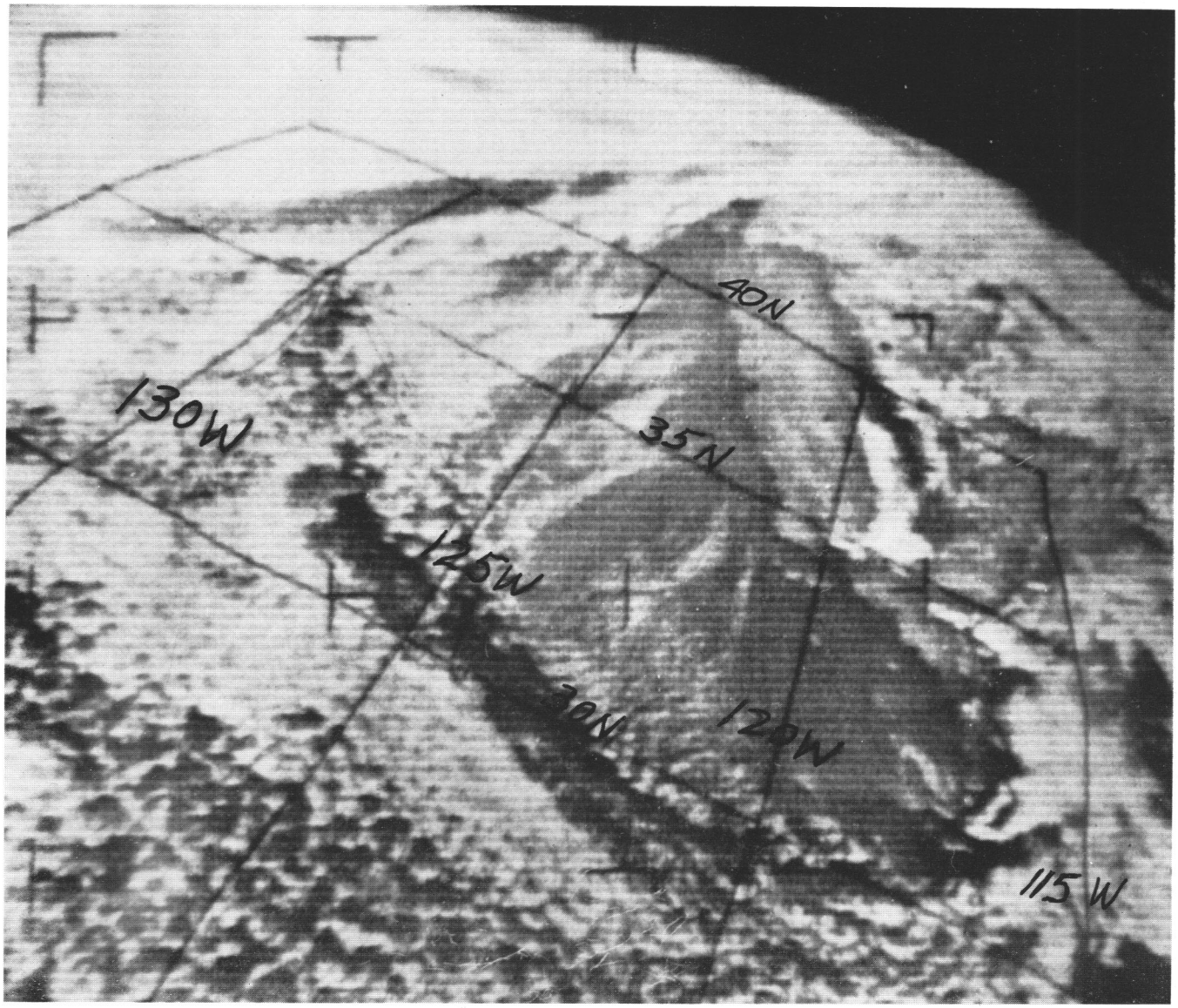
PICTURE OF THE MONTH



The overall guiding philosophy of the "Picture of the Month" series is the presentation of outstanding or unusually puzzling satellite views of meteorological phenomena and/or pictures of unusual quality. The current selection, a TIROS VIII photograph taken by the APT (Automatic Picture Transmission) camera, represents a slight deviation from that philosophy.

APT has been available only since the launching of TIROS VIII on December 21, 1963. Early photographs received by this method were of inferior quality, largely because of the scalloping and "venetian blind" effects caused by interaction between the earth's magnetic field and the camera's vidicon scanning beam. At the time of this picture (1902 GMT, February 16, 1964) the satellite attitude was such that these effects were temporarily minimized; by comparison with earlier APT pictures the improved quality is readily apparent, despite the many photo and electronic transformations necessary to reproduce this printed version. It is expected that future APT systems will be corrected to eliminate magnetic effects.

This particular photograph, showing an extensive area of stratocumulus clouds southwest of California, was taken on pass 832 (frame 2) and was received at the APT ground station at Pt. Mugu, Calif., where it was first recorded on electrolytic facsimile paper. (Similar APT installations now exist at over 40 locations in the United States and elsewhere.) Much of the California coast also is visible in the photograph. The operationally-produced latitude-longitude grid was added to the picture after it was received at the ground.

The curved line of clouds bounded by the arc of reduced cloudiness, extending westward and northwestward from near 30° N., 120° W. may have been associated with the remains of a cold front that moved through southern California the previous day.