

July 12.

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University
explains:

BALL LIGHTNING

Ball lightning is "a glowing mass, without any solid constituent, stationary or moving slowly in mid-air". Sometimes a bright planet or the moon seen through the clouds is mistaken for the rather rare ball lightning. Reports of 40 cases, summarized in the British Meteorological Magazine, show ball lightning a highly variable phenomenon. Where the ball was seen close at hand the estimated diameter was between three inches and a foot. The reported duration of the balls varied from two seconds to twenty minutes, the shape was usually round, sometimes pear-shaped, the color ranged from bluish white to red, though most balls were described as reddish or yellowish. In some cases a glow was seen around the ball, perhaps indicating a discharge.

The nature of ball lightning is somewhat obscure, as few persons have observed the origin of a ball. In one case, it was reported that three successive balls followed an ordinary flash, striking a church spire. In disappearing, a few balls exploded, some vanished suddenly and silently, and some gradually faded away. All the ball lightning seen was reported harmless, but injurious effects have been reported by others.

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