

Science Notes

'Flagstaff Cloud' on Cover Of AAAS 'Science' Magazine

By WILLIAM HOYT

The "Flagstaff cloud," whatever it turns out to be, got some nationwide attention this week, its portrait gracing the cover of "Science," the official magazine of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

The picture of the strange and lovely cloud, which appeared briefly near snowmelt last Feb. 28, was taken by the Bremerton, Wash., tourist from near Camp Verde and submitted to "Science" along with a 1,000-word preliminary report by Dr. James E. McDonald of the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics, the scientist who has spent the better part of the past two months chasing down data on the phenomenon.

With his article inside the magazine, Dr. McDonald includes a photo of the cloud taken by I. E. Daniels of Springerville.

McDonald, since submission of the article, has determined that the cloud was apparently considerably higher than his original estimate, made on the basis of triangulations of photos taken in the Tucson area, of 125,000 feet.

As new data came in, he revised this upward to 149,000 feet and then, after completing a survey of Northern Arizona sites from which the cloud was photographed, down to about 140,000 feet.

The altitude, however, is still higher than any cloud is supposed to be, any way you look at it.

McDonald, in a personal communication, reveals that his Northland swing early in April turned up some additional sources of information and photographs of the weird cloud over and above those he had already contacted.

ONE OF THESE was Holbrook High student Paul H. Lewis who took nine shots of the cloud while he was working at a Holbrook service station, "several of which are very sharp and very helpful," McDonald said.

Others include photos sent from Rome by a Phunician who was in Arizona at the time the cloud appeared and heard of it through friends after leaving for Italy, and a Connecticut tourist.

Confounding McDonald's investigation are reports that the big cloud was seen almost an hour earlier hundreds of miles away to the northwest of Flagstaff, probably in the Ely, Nev. area which suggests that it was not only higher, but faster than clouds are wont to be.

McDonald also says that checks with the AEC in Nevada, with the X-15's headquarters at Edwards Air Force Base, and with Navy missilemen at Point Mugu, Calif., indicate no activity at the time that might account for the cloud. He's still waiting to hear from the Air Force's Vandenberg missile base at Santa Maria, Calif.

STATE AND COUNTY physicians and health officials this week completed the testing phase of their current research to determine the "critical altitude" at which pulmonary hypertension—a form of high blood pressure—begins to occur.

The project—sponsored by seven different outfits under Arizona Heart Association and matching federal grants—gave some 600 Flagstaff senior and junior high schoolers physical exams and electrocardiac tests in March.

This week, they ran the same cooperating 500 youngsters through the state's mobile x-ray unit.

Results of the examinations and tests will now be compiled, analyzed and compared with results of similar projects conducted earlier at 10,000-foot-plus Leadville, Colo., and at 5,000-foot-high Denver.

Then, the researchers should know whether pulmonary hypertension begins to occur above or below Flagstaff's 7,000-foot altitude, and at which of the two ranges it is most prevalent.

CHARLES MCCORMICK, Flagstaff junior high school science instructor, notes that the National Science Foundation has approved a grant of \$3,305 for the Arizona Junior Academy of Science for the coming year.

McCormick heads up the Junior Academy program here in the Flagstaff area under Junior Academy director David T. Smith of Tucson. The Junior Academy is a rapidly growing arm of the 500-member Arizona Academy of Science.

THE AMERICAN Astronomical Society, which just concluded its 1963 meetings in Tucson last weekend, will be meeting in Flagstaff in June, 1964, and up to 400 of the nation's top astronomers and physicists are expected to attend.

Attending the Tucson sessions last week from Flagstaff area observatories were Dr. Arthur A. Hong, director, Dr. Elizabeth Roemer and James Christy of the U.S. Naval Observatory here; and Dr. John Hall, director, Henry Giclas, Dr. E. C. Sipher, Dr. William Sinton and Norman Thomas of Lowell Observatory.

As an aftermath, four top scientists from the U.S. Naval Observatory's Washington office were in Flagstaff earlier this week, visiting the observatory west of the city.

Dr. Kaj Aa Strand, director of the Astronomy and Astrophysics Division, left Wednesday, while his assistant director, Dr. Stewart Sharpless will remain for a week or so to do some observing.

F. P. Scott and Ralph F. Hopt of the Washington office, also visited the Flagstaff facility briefly.

