

Magnetic Storm Upsets Communications Lines

Aurora Borealis Display Witnessed Here by Naked Eye, Mt. Wilson Scientist Says

A brilliant display of the aurora borealis, visible to the naked eye throughout the Southland early yesterday, and a severe magnetic storm which disrupted communications in the East were attributed to two large and active sun spots by Prof. Alfred H. Joy, secretary of Mt. Wilson Observatory.

"We could see brilliant streamers in the north between 2 and 3 a.m.," Prof. Joy explained. "The northern lights have been visible this far south only four or five times in the past 25 years."

SEARCHLIGHT BATTERY

He described the display as appearing like a battery of searchlights playing slowly across the horizon, first from east to west and later from west to east, ranging for 60 degrees, 30 on each side of the north compass point.

"The lights were exceptionally bright, tinged with a reddish color which gradually faded out toward the zenith point," he explained. "It looked almost as though there were a forest fire raging beyond the horizon."

He said the phenomenon probably would not be repeated for at least 25 days, when the sun spots again will be in a position to react upon the earth. If they are still active at that time, it is possible the magnetic storm will be repeated.

RADIO FADE-OUTS

Prof. Joy declared the display was unusual in that the greatest magnetic disturbances usually occur when the 11-year sun-spot cycle is at a maximum. The cycle is now approaching its minimum of activity, he added.

He pointed out that short-wave radio fade-outs are caused by eruptions near sun spots and the fade-outs follow the eruptions by a few minutes. Magnetic disturbances affect cable, telegraph and telephone transmission.