

GEOPHYSICS

Auroras in Arctic and Antarctic at Same Time

➤ AURORAS, the dancing color patterns that sometimes light up the night sky, occur in the Arctic and Antarctic simultaneously.

This discovery, one of the first to be made during the International Geophysical Year, or IGY, was reported by Prof. A. C. B. Lovell of the University of Manchester, England.

Scientists had suspected auroras in both hemispheres formed simultaneously, but did not previously have sufficient observations from the Southern Hemisphere to confirm the theory.

The simultaneous production of the shimmering rays of auroral light in the northern and southern skies shows the streams of charged particles follow the earth's magnetic field.

The IGY program, which made this discovery possible, compresses more than a score or more years of normal research into 18 months ending Dec. 31, 1958.

Science News Letter, September 28, 1957

PSYCHIATRY

Childbirth Insanity Same as Other Kinds

➤ INSANITY following childbirth is not, as has been thought, a special kind of mental illness caused by the birth of a child.

The so-called postpartum mental disorders are no different from other recognized ones, they just happen to have occurred after childbirth, a study by scientists at the New York Hospital, Westchester Division, has shown. The study by Dr. Mary A. White, Dr. Curtis T. Prout, Carl Fixsen and Marvin Foundeur is reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Sept. 14).

The authors also discounted the idea that the insanity occurs primarily after a mother's first pregnancy. They found that almost half of the 100 cases studied occurred after a second or later child.

Postpartum mental illness hits from one out of 300 to one out of 750 mothers. Although childbirth does not cause the insanity, it can be considered the "last straw" in an already poorly adjusted person.

Other situations that helped bring on the disorder included unstable marriages, immaturity of the mother, financial troubles, or the baby not being wanted by either the wife or her husband.

Earlier studies had indicated that Jewish mothers suffered from the mental illness more than those of other backgrounds, but this was not found to be true in the present study.

No specific treatment is yet known for postpartum mental disorders, just as none is known for other kinds of mental illness. However, three out of four mothers made a reasonably good recovery and three out of five made a complete one. The average time spent in a mental hospital was seven months.

Science News Letter, September 28, 1957

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