ASTRONOMY

Moon Fragments Sought In Western Iowa

➤ CITIZENS OF WESTERN Iowa have been asked by scientists to search for stones that may be moon fragments.

The search, which could aid in a manned lunar landing and in a better understanding of the origins of the solar system, is being conducted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Residents, especially farmers and school children in Monona, Harrison, Shelby, Crawford, Woodbury and Pottawattamie counties have been asked to keep their eyes open for stones during the spring plowing.

Any unusual rocks are to be turned over to the local county agent or soil conservation office. The stones will be examined by scientists at Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md., and eventually turned over to the U.S. National Museum.

Meteors hitting the moon's surface must splash off large pieces of rock, some of which would fall to the earth, explained Dr. John A. O'Keefe, a Goddard astronomer. Due to the moon's lack of atmosphere and low gravitational field, a one-pound meteor would release three or more pounds of lunar material.

Tektites, glassy rocks of extraterrestrial origin, may have originated this way. Dr. O'Keefe believes there must be much more moon material than is accounted for by tektites.

Such material may fall toward the earth and orbit around it temporarily. It would then enter the earth's atmosphere at a much lower velocity than other meteorites. Lower velocity means a lower entry temperature. Therefore such material would retain more of its original composition, giving a clearer picture of what the moon is made.

Dr. O'Keefe believes that such stones may look slaggy. One suspect is brick-red with a grayish coat in some places. They could be of any size, but probably light in weight.

The stones collected will be tested for radioactive isotopes caused by cosmic ray bombardment in space. They would be perfectly harmless, but the presence of such isotopes would establish their extraterrestrial origin.

Western Iowa is covered by a deep fine, windblown soil. Any stones that turn up are a curiosity, making stones not brought in by streams or machines automatically suspect in origin.

• Science News Letter, 85:196 March 28 1964

TECHNOLOGY

New Device Prevents Engine Overheating

➤ LIQUID- and air-cooled engines will not overheat with a new temperature-sensitive device, developed by Honeywell, Minneapolis, that fits over a headbolt of the motor. A fuse device is connected to each spark plug. If the engine begins to overheat, the control fuse melts and grounds the engine.

• Science News Letter, 85:196 March 28 1964

Questions

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GEOPHYSICS—How may a lunar magnetic effect result? p. 195.

SPACE—What is the ozone layer in space? p. 194.

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