

original J. Homer Skies -

June 26, 1959
4115 Park Avenue
Coconut Grove
Miami, Florida

C O P Y

Dr. Bernard Vonnegut
Arthur D. Little, Inc.
15 Acorn Park
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Dr. Vonnegut:

I am writing in response to your request in the Miami Herald for observations on our recent tornado. Perhaps my information will not be of very much interest since the tornado passed a block away from our home. However, my husband and I saw it clearly and are in agreement as to how it appeared to us.

The day of the storm was overcast, very hot, and muggy -- but not unusual for this time of year. About seven o'clock that evening a thunderstorm formed to the south of us. We live in the southern suburban section of Miami, about a mile from the spot where the tornado first touched down. The storm seemed to be quite severe as the lightning and thunder were constant. Heavy rains came intermittently in gusty squalls.

Shortly after 9:30 we commented that we were having an unusual storm, for two reasons -- first, because it was continuing for so long and then because it hadn't moved for over two and one half hours. Our summer thunderstorms are often severe, but they are usually short and they move from one location to another. We were watching TV and there had been no interference from the storm. Suddenly we heard a loud roar, to the south, which sounded at first like a jet airplane coming toward us at very low altitude. In a matter of seconds we realized that it was not an airplane and we rushed to a front window. The tornado was perhaps about six blocks directly south of us and it looked as if we were in a direct path. It was clearly visible as it was luminous, glowing with a bluish green light. Our lights flickered several times and went out just as the tornado became brilliantly blue-white momentarily. Then the luminous glow returned. Because of many houses and trees we could not see the bottom of the funnel. To us it looked like a column about a block wide, moving intact, in a direct course toward us. The roar was becoming very loud and the house was vibrating. Our young son had been aroused and we took shelter in the bath room on the north side of our house, expecting the tornado to hit us any moment. The

roar was very loud as the tornado passed us, and the vibration was frightening. We experienced no wind and there was no damage of any kind to our property. The period immediately after the storm passed was one of dead calm.

The tornado damage in our neighborhood was not severe in comparison to the sections hit as the storm moved northward.

Many roads were blocked by fallen trees; yards, trees, and foliage took a beating; houses were damaged, but not demolished in this section of town. The storm hit us at 9:50 p.m. as that is when our clocks stopped.

Our son went to bed at 9:30 in an air conditioned bed room, so he did not hear the tornado approaching. Shortly before the power failed, he was alarmed by the behavior of his pet cat in the room with him. The cat jumped on the boy's head, arched his back, and as he faced the south wall of the room, the animal spit and yowled. Our son, age eleven, turned on his flash light to see what was the matter. He couldn't detect anything. The cat became frantic, and about that time the power failed and the air conditioner went off. Our son came out of the room to see what was the matter -- and we rushed him into the bath room. Our dog, in the room with my husband and me, was not noticeably agitated.

I do hope that you will have a good response to your request for information. There must be many people who could give you valuable observations.

Yours truly,

Patricia Aiken
(Mrs. Benedict D. Aiken)

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