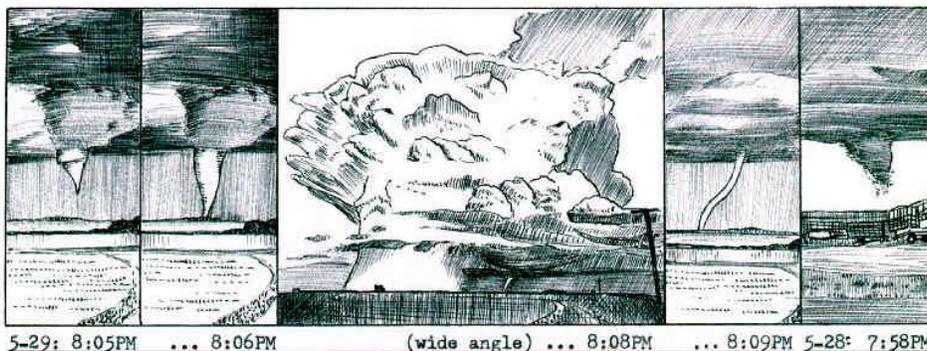


I. COMMENTARY

This issue of ST goes to press by candle light, since a locally severe storm just blew through Fairfax County, with a spate of tornado warnings, knocking out the electricity. As it were, the editor of this tome was trimming branches all afternoon and blissfully ignorant of the gathering storm having been lulled into a false sense of security by a woefully inadequate, earlier telephone recorded weather report. Lesson: One must be eternally vigilant - even when unwinding from an arduous but successful 14,000 mile tornado chase. This year, my western trek netted three tornadoes and 15 funnel clouds (a record for me). I hasten to add that two of the tornadoes were not notable - either barely visible at 15 miles in late evening twilight or lacking dramatic characteristics. The third, however, was quite clear and ranks with some of my best. This one formed about 8:05 PM CDT, 15 miles southeast of Russell, Kansas on May 29. It dropped to the ground about 10 miles east of me and lingered for about five minutes through some 20 slides - including two wide angles of the entire CB with tornado still on the ground (six tornadoes were reported from this storm). The early stages of the vortex were in sunlight, as was all of the backside of the CB. It, is among my best documented tornadic storms to date. The 15 funnels ranged from southwest Minnesota to the Texas panhandle and included both small, high level rotation from the turbulent sides of CBs and larger funnels from rotating wall clouds - as well as two predecessor funnels from the circulation core that produced the Tulia, Texas tornado on May 28. I missed the Grand Island storm but was within three hours and 40 miles of it, while driving through eastern Nebraska to be in South Dakota for expected severe weather the next day. Since Kansas City hadn't forecast anything specifically severe for Nebraska in the earlier "AC" outlooks, I didn't do a surface analysis for this day and was not looking for anything in that area. It is noteworthy that I managed -with half of my brain in gear- to drive away from the overnight stop in Huron, where three tornadoes were reported three miles southwest of the city 1 hour later.

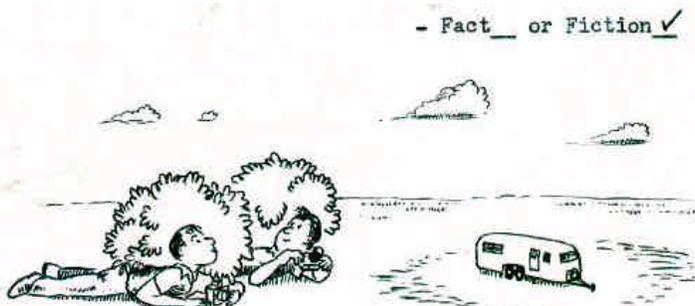


(2nd from left illustration is from memory, since 2 1/4" slides of this phase not yet developed. Funnel preceding Tulia tornado at 8:42, looking southeast, from 5 miles south of Summerfield, Texas is shown at right.)

An additional note: A Chicago Tribune reporter traveled with me this year for the first 2 1/2 days and prepared an article that was published in the June 4 edition. To date, there has, fortunately, been little additional public inquiry, and I look forward to returning to relative obscurity. I had previously written other chasers to clear this with them and received encouragement to go ahead with the interview. There is one error at the beginning of the article, for those who happen to read it. The statement that I have done "750,000 miles of chasing" is incorrect; its closer to 250,000 - 275,000 miles, otherwise, the article is good -- a generally true account of the difficulties of chasing.

FUNNEL FUNNIES: An Obscure but Solemn Ritual... House Trailer

An obscure but solemn ritual, derived from the "cargo cult" of east Borneo, to tempt the tornado gods after days of fruitless searching: Place model of house trailer in clearing in middle of Kansas and await the inevitable.



--- Contributed by Paul Weingarten (Reporter, Chicago Tribune)

V. TRAVEL TIPSVI. FEATURE - Search for the First Tornado Photograph [by John T. Snow]

Photography is a major tool of the tornado investigator. In recent years, careful analyses of both still and motion pictures of tornadoes have provided the scientific community with much of the current understanding of tornadic airflows. A question of related historical interest concerns the "first" tornado photograph. I have recently undertaken a small spare time project to determine where and when, and by whom, the first, picture was taken. This is motivated by a strong suspicion that this event occurred about 100 years ago. Since photography has been such an important tool to researchers, I feel that the centenary should be duly and appropriately noted. My inquiries to date have produced four candidates:

a) August 28, 1884: Huron and Howard City. Miner County, Dakota Territory (now part of South Dakota). Apparently, at least three pictures were taken on this day. J.C. Judkin of Huron is reported to have made a "tin type" of a tornado at some distance from that town. F.N. (possibly F.W.) Robertson of Howard City took two glass plate, wet emulsion photos as a tornado approached Howard City later in the day. To my present knowledge, only retouched copies of the second of Robertson's pictures - referred to as the "large picture" by contemporary writers- are still existent today. This remarkable picture shows a very strong central vortex flanked by two smaller ones, one on each side of the central column. It has appeared in many publications (often with erroneous credits), including Flora's 1953 book and the cover of Science, 176 (4042), 30 June 1972. The Judkin "tin-type" and Robertson's "small picture" have apparently been lost.

b) April 26, 1884: near Garnett, Anderson County, Kansas. This photograph - by one A.A. Adams of Garnett shows a long, rope like funnel. Finley includes an engraving (pg. 33) made from this picture in his book of 1890. Apparently this photograph was recently reproduced in a publication by the State Historical Society of Kansas: Kansas, A Pictorial History (1961), pg. 144. However, I have not been able to obtain a copy

c) June 26, 1883: near Fort Worth, Texas. Finley also displays another engraving in his 1890 book (pg. 21), claimed to be made from a photograph. The copy of the engraving I have is of poor quality (I suspect the original was, also), but I cannot discern a tornado funnel anywhere in it.

d) May 30, 1879: vicinity of Delphos, Kansas. Faye, in his 1897 text "Nouvelle Etude sur Les Tempetes" (in French), pages 16 to 21, displays and discusses a series of engravings claimed to have been made from photographs. However, one looks remarkably like the Robertson picture of 1884; the others like sketches in Finley's report of 1881 on this severe outbreak. Finley made an exhaustive study (it runs some 200 pages) of this day, but does not mention a single photograph. These are my leading candidates. I would appreciate any comments from readers, particularly in regard to additional dates and/or locations of early (pre-1890) photos. I find several questions of particular interest:

- What equipment was used to produce the photos?
- Who retouched Robertson's "large picture?" In all existent copies I have seen, the clouds look rather artificial.
- What happened to the Judkin "tin-type" and Robertson's "small picture?"
- Did Adams take more than one picture?

I can be contacted care of Department of Geosciences, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907. My telephone number is (317) 494-8171, Ext. 58.

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Green Flash Phenomenon --- Aylmer H. Thompson (Prof.)

Is there any interest in the Green Flash phenomenon among ST readers? I have observed it quite a number of times this winter, including by far the brightest and longest example I have seen in a dozen years of looking for the effect I am planning to try for a photographic setup and will be willing to share my experience if others are interested.

I can be contacted care of Department of Meteorology, Texas A&M University, College of Sciences, College Station, Texas 77843.

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Next issue will feature an interesting account of a south Pacific waterspout, observed and photographed by Lt. Jan Curtis, U.S.N. Do you have an interesting storm chase to recount from this summer? Write Storm Track and pass it along.