

Morning View Kentucky
6 November 1957

Hello Mr, McCarthy,

Shortly before noon last Saturday, while the sun smiled benignly upon the tree patch though heavy clouds were building up in the southwest, air currents put on a fascinating and unusual little show. There was no breeze, neither leaves remaining on the trees nor those crisply covering the ground showing the slightest activity.

Ambling aimlessly about with the dogs, I quickly discovered that through the warm, motionless air lay bands and streaks of much colder air -- the temperature variance being at least ten degrees. I explored the cooler air, finding some ribbons of it nearly fifty feet wide, while one little splinter was so narrow that when I stood in it with my arms extended, my hands were in the warmer air on each side. I followed one invisible channel of coolness completely across the tree patch to the road where a passing car churned it beyond recovery.

What I could not understand was the immobility. It was contrary to all laws of atmospheric temperature and pressure for hot and cold air to lie in motionless serenity across a ridge top, the unseen lines of demarcation between the two temperatures as sharply defined as between the black and white keys of a piano. Cigarette smoke hovered quietly until it dissipated in the warm air, did the same in the cool air, and was only slightly more animated when puffed where the two converged.

I remembered a veteran pilot's telling me long ago that if we could see air currents the spectacle would be so frightening that no one would be brave enough to fly. Nevertheless, I heartily wished that, for the moment, the air in the treepatch were visible so I could see why it wasn't moving.

Suddenly it all changed. A brisk wind blew from everywhere at once and rushed upwards as it reached us. Leaves from the ground fluttered skyward as though going up a chimney. Strong puffs of air stood my hair erect and tugged at my collar. Leaves remaining on the trees, even the great thick ones of the black oaks, tore loose and swirled upward. Within seconds, a vast column of leaves, several hundred feet across, towered so high above the trees that I could no longer see the topmost leaves.