

Eruptions in Soviet Arctic being studied by scientists

United Press International

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Volcanic-like eruptions in the Soviet Arctic — the first ever verified — could help explain how the continents of Asia and North America drift, scientists say.

The eruptions on or near Bennett Island, an uninhabited tiny speck 1,000 miles northwest of Barrow, Alaska, were first spotted by a weather satellite.

It was the farthest north volcanic activity has ever been confirmed and the first time it has been documented in the Arctic Ocean, the scientists said.

Scientists first began watching the eruptions last year after spotting one on Feb. 18 and another on April 8 which sent up plumes towering about 3 1/2 miles. After going back over their records, they found another eruption had occurred on March 11, 1982. The latest of three eruptions occurred Sept. 10.

"In the terms of (understanding the geological structure of) the world, it will have great impact," said Juergen Kienle of the University of Alaska.

"The plate boundary that is not known is the one between Asia and America and maybe if that is a volcanic event, that would help us to locate it," he said.

Locating the plate boundaries, he said, could eventually enhance the understanding of the region's much-sought energy resources because prospecting for energy is all done within the framework of big structural models.

Although scientists at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska are tentatively identifying the eruptions as volcanic events, skepticism is high.

"I have real problems with it being a volcano but I also have real problems with it being man-made," said Glenn Shaw, a scientist at the institute known for his work in tracing Arctic pollution.

"The one thing that makes it so puzzling is there is no doubt at all that enormous amounts of energy are being released."

The February and September eruptions released about a billion kilowatts of energy over six to eight hours, scientists estimated. That is about the equivalent of 10 percent of the energy

release in the May 18, 1980, eruption of Mount St. Helens in Washington state.

"Our first suspicion was an underground nuclear explosion, but no experiments have been conducted in that area (in the past)," said Juan Roederer, director of the Geophysical Institute.

"We also looked for radioactive elements and seismic (readings) and there were none."

After eliminating a nuclear test, scientists turned to other man-caused events, such as a chemical burn. Those also were dismissed, in part because of the energy needed and because there are no signs of habitation or an airstrip on the remote island.

In addition, scientists said a Soviet-operated weather station 100 miles from Bennett Island has continued supplying weather information to worldwide data banks throughout the events.

One of the more plausible explanations, according to Kienle, is a submarine volcano going off near the island.

But the lack of volcanic activity in the area is a major puzzle, he said. While scientific references to the island are few, one expedition in the 19th century was briefly stranded there and found no evidence of recent volcanic activity.

Reports from that party indicated volcanic activity between 70 million and 400 million years ago, hardly recent enough to explain current activity, Kienle said.

"What we're interested in is something like 5 million or 1 million years old, and there is nothing that young on the island," he said.

There is only one other reference to volcanic activity in the area. The event occurred in 1957 when a Soviet group on the ice pack reported hearing the bursting of ice, explosive noises and a strong sulfur-like smell, Kienle said.

Scientists believe it may have been a submarine volcano.

Soviet scientists have said relatively little about the eruptions on or near Bennett Island.

Baby murder unsolved

United Press International

DALLAS — Police Tuesday said they are certain 2-year-old Amber Nichole Crum, who disappeared Dec. 26, is dead and that they can prosecute her mother's former boyfriend even though a body has not been found.

James B. Monroe, 22, who was charged with murder, has maintained he left Amber in his pickup truck when he stopped at a store on Dec. 26 and that the child was gone when he returned.

"The state of Texas has guidelines saying you don't have to have a body to prosecute," said one police official. "In my mind, I'm certain she is dead. The chances are remote

that the body will be found but we are continuing our search."

Monroe, a plumber, was in jail Tuesday in lieu of \$50,000 bond. He was arrested last Friday on a probable cause warrant.

Police investigator Paul Ronyak said a motion implicating Monroe in the girl's disappearance and probable death surfaced during an interview last week with Stephanie Hughes, the child's 19-year-old mother.

Ronyak said police had reasons to discount Monroe's story and to suspect the child was killed at her home and taken away Christmas night.

Hughes was quoting she believed her daughter was dead the night before her disappearance.

"When the mother checked the baby that night, there was no movement at all on the body," Ronyak said. "She just had a strong belief at that time that (the child) was dead."

Ronyak said Hughes told police she slept until about 9 a.m. the next day, when Monroe awakened her and told her Amber had disappeared.

He offered no explanation of why the mother did nothing when she thought her child was dead.

Plant stops operations

United Press International

LUBBOCK — Carbon Dioxide Technology Corp. has suspended operations at its plant southeast of Lubbock, plant operations manager Bill Wiggins III said Tuesday.

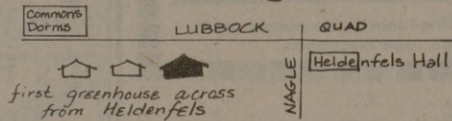
CDT, based in Houston, recovered carbon dioxide gas from the stacks of a nearby Lubbock Power & Light plant and sold the gas to oil companies for use in oil well recovery operations.

Wiggins said the plant had not been operating steadily since it started a year ago because flaws had to be worked out of a new design for the recovery of carbon dioxide gas.

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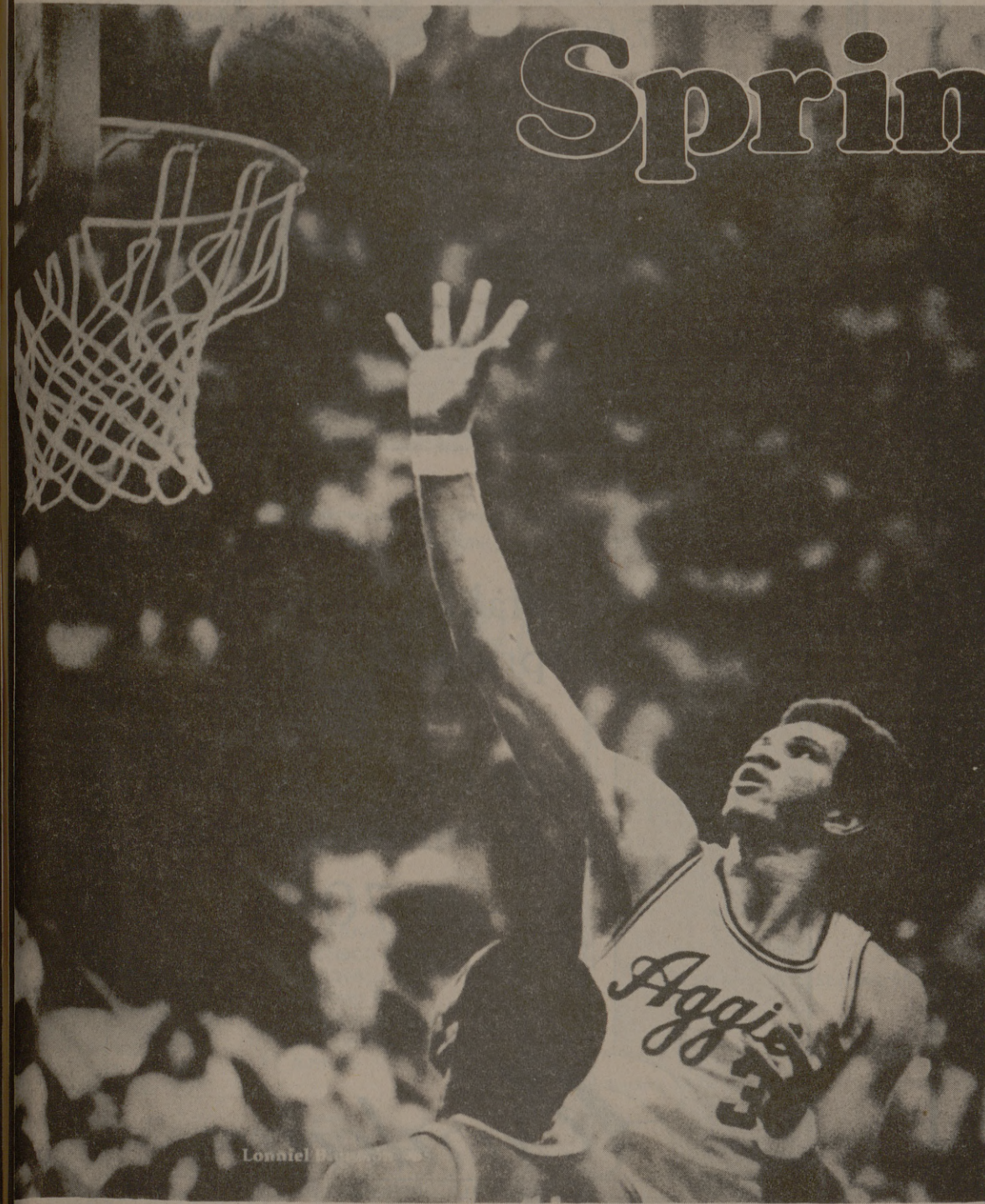
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