



(Sun photo by James Mann)

Clark County Sheriff Gary Lawson rode in an airplane early Wednesday morning covering a 40-square-mile area surrounding the Flanagan Station Road searching for evidence of an explosion to help explain the loud boom residents heard Tuesday evening. Searchers didn't find anything to account for the boom or reports of flashes of light in the sky.

## Light, 'boom' may have been firework

BY LISA FROST  
Sun staff writer

Although authorities don't have any answers yet, an anonymous caller to the Winchester Police Department Wednesday may provide some clues to the cause of a bright flashing light and house-shaking boom many county residents reported Tuesday night.

Clark County Sheriff Gary Lawson, whose department is investigating the incident, said the caller said "that he did shoot off a Class B fireworks left over from the Fourth of July... It was a rocket-type firework that could go one to two miles in the air and then explode."

Lawson said the caller said he had the explosive in his home and was afraid to keep it there any longer and that he "didn't mean

to alarm anybody."

Several residents along the Flanagan Station Road said that between 9 and 10 p.m. Tuesday they heard a boom, like an explosion. Some saw a bright flashing light and others reported smelling strong odors, much like gunpowder.

Rumors began Wednesday that a meteor had fallen in the area, that an airplane had crashed or that a B-52 aircraft had caused the strange light and sound. It was reported that a meteorite or perhaps a piece of a Japanese satellite had been tracked by radar down the eastern coastline and into Clark County. People jokingly suggested that UFOs had landed or that the Russians were invading.

Lawson and other members of his department searched the area in the southeastern Clark County on foot and covered a 40-square mile area by air, but could find nothing.

"We were flying about 2,000 feet up and had a pretty good view, but we couldn't see anything unusual," he said.

This morning the incident remained a mystery.

Lawson questioned the reliability of the anonymous caller, but said he would bring people in to try to figure out his identity.

(See CALLER, p-16, c-4)

## Caller said blast was old firework

(Continued from page 1)

He said the caller's story was logical, because the light people saw lasted a long time and many smelled gunpowder or something burning. He also said the type of firework the caller described would not leave a large mark on the ground.

He said the mortar-like bombs give off a round ball of fire with a gaseous tail, which matches what an amateur astronomer said he saw Tuesday night.

Lawson said if the caller is found, he could face criminal charges, because shooting off one of the rockets without proper authority is a misdemeanor under state law.

Although an exploding-rocket could explain the mysterious light and explosion in Clark County, there still are numerous unanswered questions about a glowing, illuminated object many people in Clark County, Lexington and throughout the eastern United States reported seeing Tuesday night.

Some Clark Countians said they thought the strange light was the moon reflecting off a cloud.

Robert Gribble of the National UFO Reporting Center said the cloud may have been caused by a barium-filled rocket that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration exploded from its Wallups Island, Va., base. He said NASA often explodes such

rockets to study the electromagnetic field.

There was some speculation that the cause of Tuesday's boom may have been a meteor since that night was the peak of the annual Perseid meteor shower, however Dr. Thomas Boone, director of the Rauch Memorial Planetarium at the University of Louisville, said an exploding meteor would have caused a brief fireball lasting no more than 10 or 15 seconds. The cloud and the light seen by county residents was seen for a much longer time, according to reports.

The National Weather Service in Lexington and officials at the Federal Aviation Administration offices in Louisville, Lexington and Atlanta said Wednesday there had been no unusual meteor activity in the area Tuesday night.

As for the Japanese satellite, an official at Japan's Tanegashima Space Center, the site for Tuesday's launch, said nothing was wrong with the rocket or satellite.

Lawson said he is continuing to look for evidence and planned today to continue a foot search along the Flanagan Station Road at the places where the most vibrations were felt.

(Information for this story also was gathered by The Associated Press.)

Winchester (KY) Sun 8-14-86 (Thurs.)