



GAZETTE ILLUSTRATION / SYNTHIA STOFER

Drawing (left) of object John Long says he spotted and (right) a Stealth bomber some theorize he may have seen.



GAZETTE PHOTO / JERRY CAMPBELL

John Long, observer of giant spacecraft.

UFO!

Sighting left him shaken, eyes burning

MIKE MAGNER
GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

Not everyone will believe John Long's story about the huge unidentified flying object he and his friend saw over Banks Lake near Lawton on the evening of Aug. 1.

So far, though, all of the dozen or so people he's told about his UFO experience have taken him seriously, Long said last week.

The believers include Long's fishing buddy, Richard Jandura, whose eyes watered and burned for days after he watched the massive UFO fly low overhead, and members of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), who are investigating the sighting.

"It's a very credible report. Very credible," said Shirley Coyne of Flushing, director of MUFON's Michigan chapter.

What Long and Jandura claim to have seen around 10:30 p.m. that clear evening was a giant spacecraft

— about the size of Wings Stadium, Long said — with a bright light in front and three red lights blinking on each side.

As the craft moved slowly from the southeast toward the northwest about 200 to 300 feet over the lake, the white light in front suddenly flashed brilliantly and went out, Long said.

Although there were several other fishermen on the lake, apparently none of them saw the UFO because it moved with absolute silence, he said. The flash of light was beamed toward the front of craft, so it did not reflect off the water, he said.

However, Long said, he and Jandura heard a young boy on the shore yelling "What is it? What is it?" as the UFO traveled slowly across the lake for about 15 minutes. Long and the MUFON investigators are still trying to locate the boy or anyone else who saw the UFO, he said.

As the craft moved off in the direction of South Ha-

ven, Long and Jandura said they noticed a wavy pattern in the air behind it, as though some type of exhaust was being emitted.

Long, who lives in Portage and has been a supervisor at Walgreen Laboratories for 10 years, said he and Jandura had been fishing for about four hours before the sighting, but had consumed no alcohol or drugs.

Shaken by their experience, Long and Jandura immediately contacted the control tower at the Kalamazoo County Airport, but were told that nothing had been seen on radar and no reports of anything unusual

had been received.

They next notified the state police post in Paw Paw. "When I called the police, the first thing I said was 'This is not a hoax,'" Long said. "The state trooper was fantastic. He calmed us down and took the information. At the end he said he believed both of us."

Sgt. James Richardson of the state police confirmed that Long and Jandura made a report and that troopers went to the Banks Lake area to investigate, but found nothing unusual and no other witnesses besides Long and Jandura.

"The officers that went down there, they were talking about it later, and they said he (Long) seemed quite sincere," Richardson said.

The troopers told Long to call the Federal Aviation Administration in Grand Rapids, and an FAA official gave him the phone number for the MUFON reporting service in Seattle, Wash., Long said. MUFON assigned Virginia Tilly of Stevensville to investigate the report.

Tilly and another MUFON field investigator, Dee Allan, interviewed Long and Jandura about their experience, but so far have been unable to locate any other witnesses, Tilly said last week.

Still, Tilly said the sighting described by the two men "right now is being classified as an excellent report. There are at least two witnesses. There is a great deal of detailed information."

Long said his eyes watered for about two days after watching the UFO, and Jandura reported the same problem for several more days.

Jandura has since moved to Chicago and could not be reached by the Kalamazoo Gazette, but Allan interviewed him four days after the sighting and reported that "the whites of his eyes were completely pink and burning. They were very mattered and puffy. The left eye was in the worst condition with swelling and discoloration beneath the eye."

Allan told Tilly that Jandura's doctor diagnosed his problem as "pink eye" and prescribed antibiotics. However, Long said he and

Jandura are convinced their eye problems were caused by the UFO.

He said they have offered to take lie-detector tests to bolster their claims.

"If we can't explain what it is, we just have to say it's an unidentified flying object," Tilly said. "We can't very well speculate. We have to investigate and make sure before saying it's a UFO."

Walter H. Andrus of Seguin, Texas, MUFON's international director, said his organization — the world's largest UFO reporting group with about 1,500 members — receives about 2,000 reports of UFO sightings every year.

About 80 to 90 percent of those reports, "after a thorough investigation, can be explained as something mundane: satellites, planets, falling objects, planes, etc.," Andrus said.

Although the UFO described by Long and Jandura might fit the description of the U.S. military's top-secret Stealth bomber — a jet fighter said to be able to avoid radar detection — Andrus said "they certainly aren't operating those in Michigan."

Long said he, too, wondered whether the craft was some type of experimental U.S. airplane, especially since the light in front was white and the lights toward the rear were red.

"The investigator said the United States does have a lot of experimental craft," he said. "But why do it in a populated area? Why not over the ocean or desert?"

"I didn't think it was any kind of craft to my knowledge. A Stealth bomber? No, I don't think so, just from what I know. With no sound, you realize what kind of energy it took to keep it up. And it moved very slowly."

"I'm not saying for sure what it is. It was a spacecraft, but was it ours? It could be. It could be from somewhere else."

"I think anyone well-educated would be foolish not to think there is other life besides us."

Long said he was hesitant at first to go public with his story, but the positive reaction he received from those he told about the UFO helped change his mind.