



Illustration by William Hays

Above is an illustration based on a description Japan Air Lines pilot Kenju Terauchi provided to Anchorage illustrator William Hays of the larger craft he saw — which he estimated to be twice the size of an aircraft carrier and 2 to 3 miles away.



Anchorage Daily News/John Lavigne

Capt. Kenju Terauchi: "It was like a dream. Unbelievable."

A night flight to remember

Veteran JAL pilot who never believed in UFOs does now

By HAL BERNTON
Daily News business reporter

A full moon shone in the arctic sky as Capt. Kenju Terauchi took off from Iceland Nov. 17 in a Japan Air Lines cargo jet loaded with French Beaujolais wine. He was bound for Anchorage on a route across Greenland to Eismere Island, Canada, over the Beaufort Sea, then into Alaska air space above Fort Yukon.

For the first two and a half hours, the flight — crewed by Terauchi, co-pilot Takanori Tamefuji and engineer Yoshio Tsukuda — was uneventful. The sky was clear and the winds — except for some light gusts over Greenland — calm. Then Terauchi's jet cruised into Alaska, and he first saw the two belts of light.

They were an estimated three miles ahead of the plane, slightly to the left of the pilot's cockpit seat, and 2,000 feet lower than the plane. They emitted a steady amber glow. They hovered almost stationary, shifted from side to side, then pulsed across the sky in abrupt bursts of speed.

The objects, Terauchi believes, "were not made by human kind. They were of a very high technology and intelligence."

The events recounted by Terauchi in the 50 minutes after that first sighting of lights are some of the most bizarre in Alaska aviation history. Since first becoming public in late December, the reports have transformed this soft-spoken, 47-year-old, Anchorage-based pilot into an international celebrity, interviewed by People magazine, Tokyo television and more than a dozen other national and international publications.

Terauchi has lived quietly in a comfortable house in Anchorage, his base for the last three years. He spends several weeks a month flying polar routes between Europe and Alaska. During his time off, he enjoys fishing for red and silver salmon.

This week, Terauchi is home again. His phone rings often with reporters eager to hear about his strange November flight.

Terauchi has an impressive list of professional credentials

continued on page 111