

'Will be ready this time'

Spotting UFO changes view of Elmwood man

By Tom Lawin

ELMWOOD — Can observing a UFO change a person's lifestyle?

A respected Pierce County village police officer, who has the satisfaction of knowing that many other persons saw the same flaming ball he did six months ago, confesses his life "isn't what it used to be."

First, George Wheeler hasn't felt well since that clear spring night April 6 when a "flaming ball the size of a football field" raced over a hill from the northeast and flew silently over Wheeler after he halted his squad car abruptly and dove into a nearby ditch.

"Nobody seems able to determine what my ailment is," the 70-year-old Wheeler said, even though he looks 15 years younger than he is.

Possible radiation

"I'm reluctant to say it, but I think it is possible I got a good dose of radiation from that UFO."

Second, the veteran police officer (20 years here in Pierce County and 10 years as a New York State Highway Patrol trooper) says he's a believer now that UFOs exist.

"Before (April 6) I more or less shrugged them off."

Third, Wheeler's name has been added to the mailing lists of UFO enthusiasts all over the U.S. and Canada and he has received correspondence from government agencies as well as from many organizations interested in UFOs.

Wheeler's story has appeared in the weekly tabloid *The Tattler* magazine and in about two weeks this same picture of him with today's story will appear in the *National Enquirer*, another weekly tab newspaper distributed nationwide.

And his voice will be on a record now being produced by Columbia Records which is compiling eyewitness accounts from many of the estimated 32 million Americans who claim to have observed UFOs. That recording is due for release late this year or early in 1976.

But what is past is prologue and the next time George Wheeler sees a UFO, he'll be prepared.

In his squad car now are field glasses and two types of cameras, including one specially adapted to night photography.

"I'm dying to get another chance at seeing one," he said this week.

Last April 6 while on night patrol duty just north of this small Pierce County village, Wheeler saw what appeared to be a huge airplane in distress, coming right at him from over a hill to the northeast. Wheeler halted his car, dove into a nearby ditch and prepared to brace for the expected whine of jet engines.

Instead, he heard no sound. The silent, flaming ball he estimated to be about 1,500 feet above and about the size of a football field, made no noise.

Still thinking it might be a 747 jet attempting to avoid crashing in the village, Wheeler hopped back into his squad car and drove to the southside "flats" where he hoped to get a better look. When he arrived there and stopped, he observed the flaming craft hovering motionless before it speeded up "at tremendous speeds, making 90-degree turns without slowing." It finally took off to the west.

Wheeler, father of former University of Wisconsin football player Sam Wheeler, later learned that several persons in North Carolina also observed a UFO the same night.

"What saved me," Wheeler recounted this week, "is that several other respected persons in Pierce County saw the same



Elmwood police officer George Wheeler returned this week to the scene of his reported UFO sighting last April 6. He

said the flaming craft came from over the hill behind him and he dove into a ditch.

thing." These persons include a young mother and Pierce County deputy sheriffs.

Before April 6 George Wheeler was like most Americans, doubting stories told by UFO sighters.

Changed view

"I just didn't believe in them," he said this week. "But now I do. What is so

fantastic about it is that it could turn on a dime without slowing. But what saved me is that as soon as I knew what I was seeing was not an airplane in distress, I called the sheriff department (at Ellsworth) and the dispatcher told me not to get excited, that they were seeing it too."

Wheeler said that whenever he is on

Continued on Page 4

Man has different view of UFOs

Continued from Page 3

night duty, assisting Elmwood Police Chief Gene Helmer on a part-time basis now that he has "retired," he constantly is "looking up in the sky. I'm a firm believer they are coming back, that we'll see them again."

Many persons around here were skeptical when they first heard of Wheeler spotting the flaming ball, "but when others said they saw the same thing, it stopped being a joke."

Wheeler said the craft made no sound, there was no radio interference and "my wife knew the minute I arrived home that something was wrong. I guess it was written all over my face."

No payoff

He admits many persons "are making a killing (financially) out of the UFO thing. But while I might have a couple stories written about my experience, I haven't received a dime. I realize it is difficult for someone who never has seen one of these things to get excited about it, but when it happens, it can change your whole life."

So the next time a flaming object passes over the hill country of eastern Pierce county, and a deputy sheriff named George Wheeler sees it, a UFO may become an IFO "because I'm ready now."