

Area UFO Sightings Is Topic Of Friday Meeting

by Michael Burke

Considering how unworldly, or just plain unbelievable, many people in this area found this spring's spate of UFO sighting reports, they may find the message of this Friday evening's program in Belleville surprising.

One of the major points of the June 5 press conference/public program by the Center for UFO Studies, organization co-director Don Schmitt said last week, will be: legitimate UFO sightings simply are not as unusual as most people think.

"We'd like to discard the notion that it's something unusual, that Belleville was part of a rare situation," Schmitt said in an interview.

This Friday evening, the Center will hold a press conference from 7 to 7:30 p.m. at the Belleville High School gymnasium, followed by a public program on UFOs. Because of a costly gym rental fee, Schmitt said the Center will be forced to charge admission of \$2 per adult and \$1 per student.

The conference/program will include the Center's conclusion regarding the almost two dozen reported sightings in the Belleville/New Glarus/Monticello area earlier this spring, Schmitt explained. The report will be the result of six visits by Schmitt and five by the Center's investigative team.

The Center for UFO Studies is a private, non-profit organization, founded by Dr. Hynek, a consultant to the Air Force in a UFO investigative project. It publishes a bimonthly magazine, "The International UFO Reporter," which is "always rated number-one" among UFO publications, Schmitt said. The White House directs all UFO reports to the Center for UFO Studies, he added.

The radar tracking of the first publicized sighting, by Belleville police officer Glen Kazmar, "makes it a good sighting," Schmitt said. "If it weren't for that, we probably wouldn't have paid much attention to it except as another report."

Schmitt continued, "We get a lot of nocturnal light reports. . . Lights at night can be a lot of things."

However, the radar tracking and the number of good sightings convinced the UFO center that this spring's UFO activity here was more than mass delusion. In fact, the Center investigated yet another, possibly unpublished, UFO report by a police department near the end of the sighting report streak.

That case closely resembled that of Kazmar and his ride-along companion, Schmitt said. It occurred at night about the third week of March and was seen by two Verona police officers.

One of them tried to pursue the object after it descended behind a hill and hovered above a field. However, the object, which appeared as red, blue and white lights, outdistanced the officer and disappeared, according to the report. Neither officer was able to discern a shape or hear a sound.

Friday's program will include a history of UFO activity in Wisconsin and elsewhere, using charts, drawings and maps, Schmitt said. The group will also provide a chronological list of the cluster of area sightings.

"We feel we owe it to the people — it was a hot topic of conversation — to give them our final analysis," Schmitt said.

Another aspect of the program which should be of interest will be the Center's conclusions about last November's reported UFO encounter by a large Japanese airliner over Alaska. The Center's conclusions differ radically from those of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) following its investigation.

Schmitt said the FAA and other government agencies, "They play on the naivete of the media and the public." Referring to the FAA conclusion that the sighting was merely radar echoes, he said, "The radar systems filter out the echoes. . . It was tracked by three independent radar systems, and according to the FAA they all had the same echoes!"

The roots of the U.S. government's policy which denies the existence of UFOs, Schmitt stated, go back to 1953, "when the CIA made its recommendation to the Pentagon that the subject be debunked." He said the government fears the public panic that could result if it admitted its intense efforts to explain UFO sightings with "no real answers."

"Through the years, the documents all point to one thing: they drew the conclusion in 1947 that the phenomenon does exist," Schmitt stated. Much of the U.S. government's own investigation has been performed by Air Force personnel, "which have always had the means to closely monitor the skies."

"But it's a world-wide cover-up," he adds.

Despite the tight lid on UFO information which Schmitt says the U.S. government has maintained, he thinks the information will be divulged eventually. "There have been rumors and leaks from the Pentagon of film and an announcement (to come), and it's just a matter of time," he said.

Referring to an upcoming international conference on UFOs in Washington, D.C., and increasing attention to UFO reports by the mass media, Schmitt said, "It will be a big year (for UFO information), and not because of the number of sightings, because those have been down this year. Belleville and the Japanese airliner have been exceptions."

To the question of why the cluster of UFO sightings in this area, Schmitt replied, "When we plot on a Wisconsin map the legitimate sightings in the last 90 years — there have been reports of sightings back to 1897 — for some reason the entire area around Madison . . . has had a very high UFO activity

rate." High UFO activity periods included the latter parts of 1985 and 1986, he added.

Three types of phenomena seem to attract UFO activity, Schmitt said: bodies of water, power lines and substations, and military installations. The Madison area seems to fit one or two of those criteria, but Schmitt said UFOs still create much mystery regarding their habits.

Friday's program will also delve into UFO abduction reports, in Wisconsin and elsewhere, within about the last 10 years.

One more reason for the Center for UFO Studies to offer this press conference/program emerged from the discussion. As in past public programs the Center has held, Schmitt said, "You always get a few people that approach you after the program with a statement that starts out: 'I never told anyone this before, but. . .'"