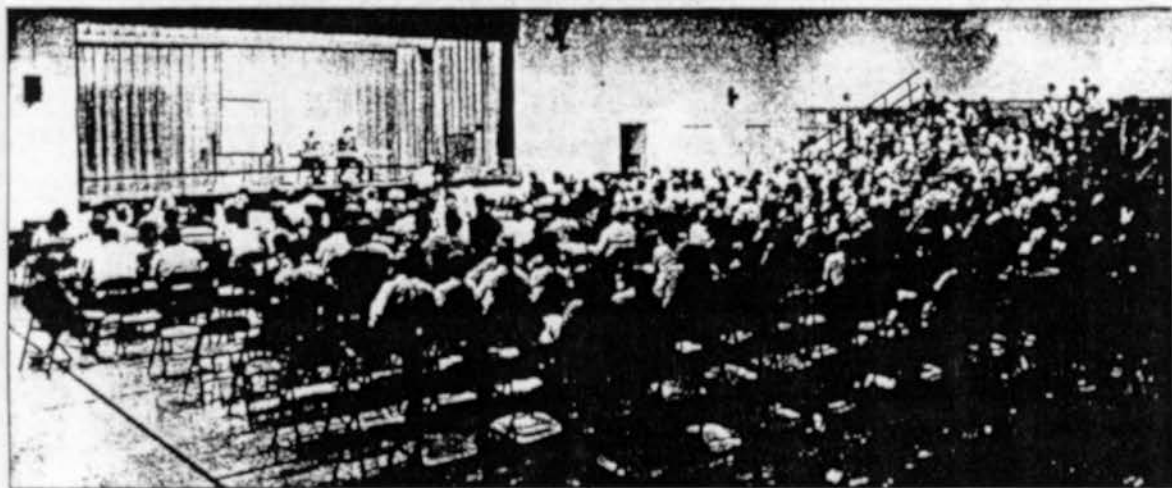


Look, up in the sky...



Belleville UFO sightings get experts' verification

By Marv Balousek
Regional reporter

BELLEVILLE — If any extra-terrestrial aliens were lurking among about 300 humans Friday night in the high school gym here, the aliens must have been satisfied that their secrets are safe.

Two investigators from the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies in Chicago said flashing, colored lights and cigar-shaped objects sighted earlier this year by Belleville residents were unidentified flying objects.

But the investigators offered few other answers to explain the phenomena.

"The Center for UFO Studies has officially classified the Belleville sightings as genuine UFO sightings," said Don Schmitt, co-director of the center.

The first sighting came the night of Jan. 15-16, when Belleville police Officer Glen Kazmar and other police officers saw three flashing lights between 8:30 p.m. and 3 a.m. The object also showed up on radar from an airplane-tracking station in Aurora, Ill.

Another sighting was reported March 6, when Harvey Funseth and several other people saw several cigar-shaped objects about 5:30 p.m.

Schmitt said he checked star patterns, airplane traffic and National Guard activity in attempts to explain the Kazmar sighting.

"We checked with Goodyear blimp," he said. "We checked with the National Weather Service. . . There's nothing we have that would be up there for eight hours without having to come down and refuel."

But Schmitt and Richard Heiden, another center investigator, said just because the Belleville sightings were UFOs doesn't mean they're from another planet.

"There's no way we can say they're from here, they're from there, they have this particular purpose in mind," Schmitt said.

Funseth, 50, who is a state highway surveyor, said he and a companion, Fred Gochbauer, were coming home from work when they saw the large cigar-shaped object in the sky with three smaller objects trailing it.

"It's very vivid in my mind," he said. "It was so close and so big. There wasn't any sound at all."

Schmitt also said he has documents that indicate the government confiscated a crashed UFO in 1947 near Roswell Air Force Base in New Mexico and found the remains of several alien life forms.

He said the documents were given anonymously to a Los Angeles television producer.

Schmitt said the documents discuss pursuit of disc-shaped craft during the late 1940s and, the documents say "it is virtually certain these craft do not originate in any country on earth."

Schmitt said he wants an explanation from the government on the validity of the documents and whether this information has been withheld from the public for 40 years.

Heiden presented a slide show on the history of UFO sightings nationally and in Wisconsin. Afterward, he tried to answer questions about UFOs.

Those attending the meeting asked whether the Belleville UFOs had friendly occupants, if they planned to install something in the area like a communications beacon and if aliens have beards.

"As a general rule, UFOs tend to stay out of cities and frequent the more rural areas," Heiden said, adding that most sightings are at night and the number of sightings peaks in July.

He said it's common for one area to have several sightings

Crowds gather to hear UFO expert Don Schmitt at Belleville High School gymnasium Friday evening. Below, Schmitt, co-director for the Center for UFO Studies, is flanked by Richard Heiden, a UFO investigator.

—State Journal photo by Scott Seid



'My opinion is it's probably some corporation or the government ... I don't believe in outer space.'

—Harvey Funseth, who reported a sighting

within a short period of time.

"If they're from another planet, I think they may want to scout around for awhile," he said.

Heiden said all encounters with aliens haven't been friendly, with some abductions and genetic experiments reported. He said 3,000 UFO sightings involved craft occupants, and the descriptions are remarkably similar — wide-set eyes, oversized heads and short, spindly bodies.

One man, who refused to give his name, said people who see UFOs are reluctant to tell anyone because people think they're crazy. The man said he watched a flying saucer for a half-hour 40 years ago in northern Wisconsin.

"For 10 years, I kept my mouth shut," he said. "And for the next 30 years, I told only a very few people."

Funseth said the UFO center did a thorough job investigating his sighting. But he said he doubts the cigar-shaped objects were of extra-terrestrial origin.

"My opinion is it's probably some corporation or the government," he said. "I don't believe in outer space."

Admission to the meeting was \$2 for adults and \$1 for students. The money goes to the UFO Center. Magazines about UFOs were sold at the entrance to the gym.