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A week for pursuing the unexplainable

By Joyce Gemperlein
Inquirer Staff Writer

Tomorrow is the first day of National UFO Information Week. If you see anything strange, or have ever seen anything strange, Stanley Gordon in Greensburg, Pa., wants you to let him know.

Gordon is the founder and director of the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained (PASU). That means unidentified flying objects, lights in the sky, unusually large hairy beings and similar things.

According to Gordon, Pennsylvania is among the top five states — California is right up there, too — when it comes to sightings of such things. This year, he notes, Bigfoot sightings are running high in the Keystone State, especially in Western Pennsylvania.

PASU, an all-volunteer and nonprofit group founded in 1981, is dedicated to being a scientific clearinghouse "conducting open-minded investigations of unexplained phenomena," said Gordon, an electronics technician. It is made up of about 90 people who range in profession from scientists and doctors to engineers, physicists and pilots.

"We consider ourselves open-minded skeptics," he said.

Gordon said he and experts interview people who report sightings and go to the sites in an attempt to find a logical and scientific explanation before classifying anything as being a UFO or the like.

The most recent report — occurring two weeks ago — that PASU is checking out is one involving a woman and her son in Clairton, near Pittsburgh. The pair reported that they heard strange sounds and, when they went outside to investigate, were met by a large circular object with two rows of windows in it and a bright red band of light and a searchlight hovering nearby.

Gordon, who began being interested in the unexplained at age 10, said he had never witnessed an unexplained phenomenon, but "I have interviewed thousands of people and have gone to sites within a short time after and have seen the reactions of the witnesses and, especially, animals, to the event."

Gordon said animals, even ones that generally attack intruders, have become paralyzed right around the time that Bigfoot sightings are made. Cattle, horses and other animals have been known to respond the same way at times of UFO sightings.

"That has convinced me that they do exist," he said.

A Gallup poll taken in March indicated that 50 percent of Americans surveyed believe that beings somewhat like themselves live on other planets. Thirty-four percent are skeptical and 16 percent are unsure. The believers are more numerous among the college-educated, the poll showed.

But still, Gordon said, research into UFOs is difficult, in large part because people who believe they have seen a spaceship or strange lights are often ridiculed so much that they keep quiet about it.

"On a yearly basis, we investigate hundreds of unusual occurrences, mostly of alleged UFOs and Bigfoot," Gordon said. "Pennsylvania averages 25 reports a month."

He added that part of the reason Pennsylvania receives so many sightings is that it has an active and well-organized hotline to receive reports.

Gordon, who is interested in hearing about *anything* unusual, said the public should not be reluctant to report sightings. The PASU is at 6 Oakhill Ave., Greensburg, Pa. 15601. The phone number is 412-838-7768.

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(GREENSBURG) -- THIS IS NATIONAL U-F-O INFORMATION WEEK, AND THAT COULDNT PLEASE STAN GORDON OF GREENSBURG MORE. GORDON HEADS THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE UNEXPLAINED. THE VOLUNTEER SCIENTIFIC CLEARINGHOUSE INVESTIGATES HUNDREDS OF REPORTED U-F-O SIGHTINGS AND OTHER PHENOMENA.

GORDON IS A 37-YEAR-OLD ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN. GORDON SAYS 90 PERCENT OF ALL SIGHTINGS CAN BE EXPLAINED... BUT HE HAS NEVER SEEN A U-F-O.

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