



Photo Illustration by Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Dale Bacon, research investigator for the Lincoln Fortean Research Center, investigates sightings of intelligent forces. "I think it would be vain to be thinking we are the only beings inhabiting this planet," Bacon said.

Lincoln researchers investigate mysterious encounters

By Bryan Peterson
Staff Reporter

The staff at Lincoln's Fortean Research Center has been researching local unexplained phenomena since 1982. Founder Ray Boeche "felt a need for organized research on unexplained phenomena in the region," said Scott Colborn, current director of the center.

Colborn, a 38-year-old Lincoln native, is heavily involved in local efforts to investigate claims of unusual experiences such as UFO sightings and reports of ghosts and poltergeists.

The Fortean Research Center, P.O. Box 94627 Lincoln, Neb. 68509, publishes a quarterly journal which Colborn edits. Colborn also hosts the KZUM talk show "Exploring Unexplained Phenomena" with Dale Bacon, a former associate director of the center.

Colborn also is the current state director of the Mutual UFO Network Inc., or MUFON, which he says is the world's largest private

body of UFO investigators. The Fortean center shares research with MUFON, which has its headquarters in Seguin, Texas.

In all these efforts, Colborn sees himself and fellow researchers as "open-minded skeptics doing open-minded research."

Colborn describes the research done on a typical report of a UFO sighting: A researcher receives a report, does subsequent research and looks for alternate explanations such as the presence of weather balloons, flocks of geese, cloud formations or temperature inversions (weather conditions which create the illusion of something solid).

"We also try to evaluate the person making the report," Colborn said. "What is our impression of this person; is the person involved in a big hoax?"

Referring to a recent poltergeist case investigated by Colborn and Bacon, Colborn said, "It is my belief that much of what was reported was a result of extreme stress on that person -- a recent job termina-

tion and severe financial repercussions."

Colborn said there often is a rational explanation for what witnesses perceive to be UFOs. The majority of reports can be explained with a knowledge of flight patterns, meteorological conditions and animal behavior.

"We try to explain UFO sightings in everyday terms," he said.

But there are reports that defy explanation, Colborn said.

"Ten to 20 percent of worldwide reports cannot be explained."

Fellow researcher Bacon gave his idea of open-minded research: "I'll listen to anybody. Something may have happened to these people; what it is, I don't know."

Colborn also treats each report with objectivity.

"We try to be tolerant and not dismiss peoples' reports out of hand," Colborn said. "We dissociate ourselves from UFO-bashers or debunkers. They simply haven't taken the time to look at the material."

Fortean publishes a quarterly

journal that reports on a variety of unexplained phenomena, with topics ranging from ghosts and poltergeists to claims of religious miracles, archaeological anomalies and UFO sightings.

"Each issue of the center's journal tries to print a cross-section of received reports. My own primary interest is UFOs," Colborn said.

The journal, which usually runs 32 pages, is available locally and to members of the center. The \$15 annual membership is open to the public.

Colborn said members also have quarterly dinners and share information about related topics. The Coffee House, 1324 P St., will host the first of several planned monthly discussions Feb. 25.

People interested in unexplained phenomena also can listen to the "Exploring Unexplained Phenomena" radio show on KZUM at 10 Saturday mornings.

This Saturday's show will feature author and UFO abduction researcher Dr. Edith Fiore. Listeners are invited to call in to the

station during the hour-long talk show.

"Many people will share UFO experiences privately, but not in the paper," co-host Bacon said. He described how those who have sighted UFOs often get a negative response when they speak to others of their experience.

"After that they talk little," Bacon said. "In private circumstances, almost all are willing to talk."

MUFON's international director Walter H. Andrus Jr. said interest in UFOs is growing daily and people are reporting more sightings every day.

He added that interest in UFOs will be legitimized as reported sightings increase. Yet MUFON, like the Fortean Research Center, finds that about 90 percent of reported sightings can be explained after research.

It is the remainder, the 10 percent of the cases for which "no earthly explanation can be found," which continues to intrigue researchers and the general public alike.

