

Conference explores unexplained phenomena

Center's director insists UFO believers have evidence, sanity

By Sam Kepfield
Staff Reporter

Physicist Enrico Fermi once asked, "If there are other intelligent extraterrestrial life forms out there, where are they?"

Some people believe the answer to Fermi's question is that they are already here, and have been for nearly 50 years — and that the U.S. government knows about it.

The Lincoln-based Fortean Research Center sponsored "Exploring Unexplained Phenomena V" this weekend at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education. Founded in 1982, the Fortean Center, named for paranormal researcher Charles Fort, has sponsored five conferences over the past 10 years, on various paranormal topics.

The focus of this year's conference was Unidentified Flying Objects. Scientific data was presented by world-renowned researchers from such diverse fields as nuclear physics to theology, on topics from crop circles to abductions.

Scott Colborn, director of the center, said it was "high time that we forget about what others think of this. It's time for people to come forward with what they know, be it research or personal experiences."

The UFO field has too often been painted as the province of the "True Believers," who "want to be beamed up now," Colborn said.

Two presentations centered on the crash of a spacecraft near Roswell, N.M., in July 1947. Kevin Randle, a former Air Force intelligence officer, set out initially to disprove the entire story in 1988. But as he and his partner, Don Schmitt, dug deeper, they found credible, first-hand evidence that the crash had indeed occurred, and that the U.S. government had covered it up. Their first book on the incident appeared in 1991; a second book, presenting even more evidence, is due out at the end of 1993.

Stanton Friedman, a nuclear physicist, has researched the same event for the last 15 years. Friedman said he had uncovered evidence pointing to a crash near Roswell, as well as indications of another one nearby at the same time.

Although he and Randle disagree on some of the details, the two are in accord on most of the basics.

Friedman said the theory that UFOs are the staple of uneducated fools is inaccurate. He said Gallup polls showed that the majority of people believe in UFOs and that the more educated a person is, the more likely he is to believe in UFOs.

"If you're a believer, you're the cream of the crop, not the bottom of the barrel. Come out of the closet!" Friedman said, adding that most scientists and engineers are believers as well.

The three-day conference also included a panel of five people, four of them from Nebraska — two from Lincoln — who claimed to have multiple abduction experiences. One of the speakers was Dr. John Slater, a professor of Indian Studies at the University of North Dakota. Slater said he had been abducted several times, most recently in 1988.

Theologian Ray Boeche, co-founder of the Fortean Center, spoke on the similarities between ancient tales of demons and fairies and



Robin Trimarchi/DN

Carol Singer of Fort Collins, Colo., browses among the alien dolls made by J.P. Moore of Lincoln, on display at the "Exploring Unexplained Phenomena" conference at the Nebraska Center on Friday.

— "If you're a believer, you're the cream of the crop, not the bottom of the barrel. Come out of the closet!" — Friedman

modern tales of "Men in Black" who often threaten and harass UFO witnesses and abductees.

Boeche said he was doubtful that these sightings were actually extraterrestrial. He said he believed some may come from inside the Earth and abductions may be conducted in tandem with the government.

"The danger of belief," Boeche cautioned,

"is that widespread, uncritical belief could lead to overt rule by god-like beings, much like Mount Olympus." The subject must be approached with a great deal of caution, he said.

Colborn agreed. "The center comes at this from an open-minded, skeptical point of view. We try to be open-minded, but not so much so that our brains fall out."

Abduction survivor shares experiences about meeting aliens

By Sam Kepfield
Staff Reporter

"The first time you meet someone who's had a bizarre experience like this, you feel like you're no longer alone in this world."

For Vicki Stadler, that sentiment is particularly important, in light of her "bizarre experiences."

Stadler, 41, a lifelong Lincolnite, said she has been abducted by aliens nearly one hundred times since age seven.

She told her story Friday night at a conference sponsored by the Fortean Research Center, at the Center for Continuing Education, 33rd and Holdrege streets.

Stadler said her first experience occurred at age 7, while playing in her back yard. She saw a "tiny man" — very old with large eyes and dressed in a snug-fitting uniform — motion to her from a garage in the back yard. She followed him inside, and walked into "an enormously bright light." She awoke three hours later in a closet — unusual, considering she had claustrophobia.

In 1984 Stadler's experiences began again, when she began to have a recurring dream that she was in her car taking a trip to Branched Oak Lake. At the lake she was met by a large ship and was drawn up into a light. Once inside, the aliens examined her physically and questioned her. She was returned two days later.

In 1989, she began seeing a psychologist to help her remember the events. With the aid of hypnosis, the memories came back in a "landslide."

Since then, Stadler's visitations have resulted in two mysteriously-terminated pregnancies. One five months along, which physicians termed a "miscarriage."

She was followed several times by "men in black," after beginning work on an article, with her husband and her psychologist, about a secret underground installation in New Mexico which houses human and hybrid human-alien children.

Stadler said that everything that has occurred has left her with symptoms akin to post-traumatic stress syndrome, or rape trauma syndrome. Socially, she said she was hesitant at first to come forth with her story, "because someone you know will find out and think you're a lunatic." This is only the second time she has made her experiences public; the first was a year and a half ago at a similar conference in Lincoln.

She is not fazed, though, by those who might cry hoax. More professionals are coming to recognize the problem, and it is gaining acceptance from the general public, with support groups forming everywhere, including Lincoln.

"Most people don't know the magnitude of it. I'm not real educated, but I'm real knowledgeable on this topic," she said. "I try to live my life, with a husband and our children, and odd things occur in life from which there is no reference point to deal with them."

Summer movies — big names, budgets aim for success

The Coneheads, Hot Shots sequel among the list of upcoming flicks

By Gerry Beltz
Staff Reporter

The summer season for movies is almost upon us. It's the time of year that the movie companies look forward to, mainly because they make a lot of money.

It's not going to be a sequel-filled summer like it was in '92 — with movies like "Batman Returns," "Alien 3," and "Lethal Weapon 3" — but one with movies with megabudgets and big-name stars, all hoping for suc-

cess.

Obviously, there are too many summer films to list all of them here, but these are some of the more highly anticipated flicks of this summer.

All release dates are tentative, and some movies will make it to the bigger cities before they get here:

Cliffhanger: Sylvester Stallone is a park ranger trying to complete a rescue mission amid mountains and glaciers while being chased by a helicopter. Memorial Day release.

The Coneheads: Based on the Saturday Night Live skit. The original cast of Dan Akroyd, Lorraine Newman and Jane Curtin is back. July 23 release.

Dragon: Biography of Bruce Lee, a legend in both life and cinema. Cov-

ers his training, as well as his movie and TV careers. May 7 release. The following week, the Starship 9 will open. "Enter The Dragon," perhaps Lee's most well-known film.

The Firm: Features an all-star cast, including Tom Cruise, Oscar-winner Gene Hackman and Joanne Whalley-Kilmer. Based on the best-seller about lawyers and mobsters, by John Grisham. Directed by Sydney Pollack. July 2 release.

The Fugitive: Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones. Ford plays a doctor wrongly accused of killing his wife. Based on the popular '60s series, the story is about the doctor's dodging the authorities while searching for the infamous one-armed man who really committed the crime. Look for a late-July/early-August release.

Guilty As Sin: Looks like a gender-reversed "Body of Evidence" without the kink. Don Johnson is accused of killing his wife, and Rebecca DeMornay is his attorney.

Hot Shots! Part Deux: The Zucker brothers are back with the second installment of "Hot Shots!" movies. Stars Charlie Sheen, and looks to be a takeoff on "Rambo 2." Look for Charlie's dad (Martin Sheen) doing his "Apocalypse Now" thing. May 21 release.

Jurassic Park: A rumored \$80 million blockbuster about dinosaurs in 1992. Directed by Steven Spielberg, and based on the book by Michael Crichton. Stars Jeff Goldblum, Sam Neill and Laura Dern. A hopeful June 11 release.

The Last Action Hero: Another supposed \$80 million budget, this one has Schwarzenegger doing his thing. June 18 release.

Much Ado About Nothing: Kenneth Branagh, who brought "Henry V" to the screen, does another Shakespeare flick. An all-star cast, including Michael Keaton, Denzel Washington, and Emma Thompson (Mrs. Kenneth Branagh). Already in limited release, wider release in late May.

Sliver: Stars Sharon Stone and Billy Baldwin. The sex scenes between the two were redone to avoid the dreaded NC-17 rating. May 21 release.

Super Mario Brothers: Based on the ever-popular Nintendo game. Stars Bob Hoskins and Dennis Hopper. Memorial Day release, from Walt Disney.