

THE
BENT SPOON
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GHOST HUNTING



THE BENT SPOON

In the landscape of paranormal media, there are traditionally two unique, yet separate, brands. One geared toward the believers, and the other more skeptical in nature. The problem is that the true believers rarely, if ever, embrace a skeptical attitude or ask tough questions of their community; instead preferring to surround themselves with like-minded individuals that reinforce their own belief systems. And the skeptics, likewise, promote science and critical thinking largely to those already open to it, or who are active participants in the skeptical community. This results in an echo chamber effect, wherein the same ideas are bounced back and forth, guru-student relationships are inadvertently created, and neither side ends up learning much about the other.

Enter: The Bent Spoon.

The Bent Spoon is a skeptical magazine for the true believer. Within its pages you will find Q&A between those with opposing viewpoints, interviews with leading investigators and thinkers, as well as articles which will not only provide in-depth analysis, but also be critical of both believers and skeptics alike. Along with reviews, comic strips, and other lighter fare, The Bent Spoon hopes to foster an attitude of outreach, forming a middle ground where believers and skeptics can come together and have a conversation about the issues and questions we've all given thought to.

The Bent Spoon. Where extraordinary claims meet ordinary explanations.



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15 THINGS GHOST HUNTING GROUPS MAY DO THAT THEY SHOULDN'T



One thing that most ghost hunting groups seem to have in common is that they all claim to want to help people. I have no reason to question this; in fact I do believe that most groups do genuinely want to help people. However, the question I often ask is, are they really helping?

Before I became a skeptic I was involved with many ghost hunting teams. I have investigated many houses with the perspective of a believer and I feel that I understand why most groups investigate the way that they do. Nevertheless, I now understand why most of these techniques are wrong, some are even unethical.

I decided to put together a list of 15 things ghost hunting groups may do that they shouldn't:

Charging someone for a paranormal investigation.

This is something that most ghost hunting groups would agree is wrong. Though there are a few out there that do charge for the service of hunting ghosts. The reason why this is wrong is because if you can't prove or demonstrate that the paranormal does in fact ex-

ist, you have no right charging money for this service. Not only is this wrong, it is also unethical.

Labeling any location, person, or item haunted.

This is something I see many ghost hunting groups doing now. I have even seen locations and items (such as dolls) that are officially "certified" haunted by paranormal teams. Again, if we cannot prove or demonstrate that the paranormal does, in fact, exist, how can we certify anything haunted?

I have also seen teams that will tell a family that a specific family member may be the cause of the paranormal happenings in the home. This is very disturbing and possibly very dangerous, not to mention unethical. And depending on how superstitious the family is, the result could end up as a possible exorcism, another exercise that has never been proven to be authentic.

Classifying the style of haunting. This is something that I have been guilty of in the past and it is something I continue to see ghost hunting groups do. There are many classifications when it comes to hauntings, but the four

most common types are intelligent, residual, poltergeist, and demonic. All of which have no evidence at all that they exist.

The thing that I find so humorous about the classification system is that most ghost hunting groups will say that ghosts have not been proven, however there is a system to label which type of haunting is occurring. This is honestly just a way to make ghost hunting look like it is taken more seriously than it really is.

Claiming that EMFs can cause a person to experience haunting-like phenomena.

This is something that ghost hunting groups have started to spew to clients as an alternate explanation of what may be going on in a location, instead of a ghost. Though I admire the attempt to try and explain away the ghost phenomena, it does no good when it is replaced with more nonsense. I don't mean to sound rude, I am just being honest. Electromagnetic fields have no correlation with the feelings of being watched and/or causing any types of hallucinations.

Claiming that an individual can be EMF hypersensitive. This is similar to number 4, but it is different. Many ghost hunting groups are telling clients that they may have a disorder called electromagnetic hypersensitivity. To put this as simply as possible, there is no such disorder called electromagnetic hypersensitivity; it is not recognized at all by medical science. It is also unethical because a ghost hunter has no authority to diagnose anyone with anything.

Telling an individual they should have an electrician come to the house to have a look at what they think is high EMF. I have spoken to hundreds, maybe thousands, of ghost hunters over the years and many claim to be using EMF meters to find high EMFs so that the homeowners can notify an electrician to have it fixed. Again, a ghost hunter is not a trained electrician and they should not be making these types of assertions to a client. What if a homeowner calls an electrician and they find out that the levels are perfectly fine and still get charged with a bill? Should the ghost hunting group be responsible to pay for it? Why shouldn't they be, they are the ones who suggested that it be done.

Claiming to be discreet and showing up in matching outfits with your paranormal group name on them. One thing that most ghost hunting groups claim to make a

high priority is making sure that they keep everything a secret. I have always found it hilarious that they then show up in cars with their logos on them and in matching uniforms, sort of looking like a softball team. The team may not walk around telling people that they are at this particular location hunting for ghosts, however that doesn't matter when all members of the group are wearing their paranormal group's t-shirts.

Finding an anomalous voice on a recording and passing it off as the voice of the dead.

Electronic voice phenomena, or EVP, is one thing that ghost hunting groups like to hang onto as possible evidence that the dearly departed are contacting people via voice recorder. What many ghost hunters don't realize is that there are many ways a voice can be imprinted on to an audio recorder, digital or analog. Most of the times an individual isn't even hearing a voice, their brains are only making sense out of nonsense, finding a familiar pattern among the white noise. The brain is doing what it is supposed to do. However, even if it is a voice that is picked up on a recorder, at the very best we have an anomalous voice that was picked up...so what? Anomalous voice doesn't equal a ghost.

The misuse of terms, such as scientific, theory, and energy. This is probably my biggest pet

peeve in the paranormal community, the misuse of terms. The three terms that are mutilated the most among ghost hunters are scientific, theory, and energy.

Ghost hunters' definition of scientific: 1. Not using psychics. 2. The use of scientific equipment, such as EMF meters, digital recorders, thermometers, and thermal imaging cameras.

What scientific really means: relating to, using, or conforming to science or its principles.

Ghost hunters' definition of theory: Any idea I can come up with.

What theory really means: Theory contains an assortment of ideas, including concepts of observable phenomena stated as measurable properties, together with rules or scientific laws that express relationships between observations of such concepts.

Ghost hunters' definition of energy: A floating green ball of magical elements that includes spirituality, healing properties, life force, and consciousness.

What energy really means: "Measurable work capability." – Brian Dunning of Skeptoid.

The misuse of equipment during an investigation.

Most of the tools ghost hunters use these days include EMF meters, DVR systems, video cameras, digital voice recorders,

IR Thermometers, and the most coveted item, the thermal imaging camera. The only thing is, why are these items being used to try and find evidence for the existence of ghosts? This is not the purpose for which they were designed. These tools are used for very specific tasks and ghost hunting is not included in the description of any one of these items.

The use of psychics and/or the use of any type of divination tools such as: tarot cards, ouija boards, and dowsing rods on an investigation.

I have always thought that people who use psychics or any other type of divination tool during a paranormal investigation were going backwards. I guess I just don't understand how we can confirm the paranormal by using the paranormal. Again, none of the items mentioned above show any positive evidence that they work, in fact the evidence actually shows that they don't work.

Explaining why a spirit may linger on earth or a specific location.

This is sort of like the different types of hauntings, in that we don't know hauntings or ghosts exist, so how can we theorize why they linger on earth? The only answer that can be given is we can't.

Claiming to be able to cleanse a house of spirits.

If we don't know that ghosts

exist for sure, how can someone cleanse a house that has a spirit we don't know exists? Doesn't that seem kind of silly?

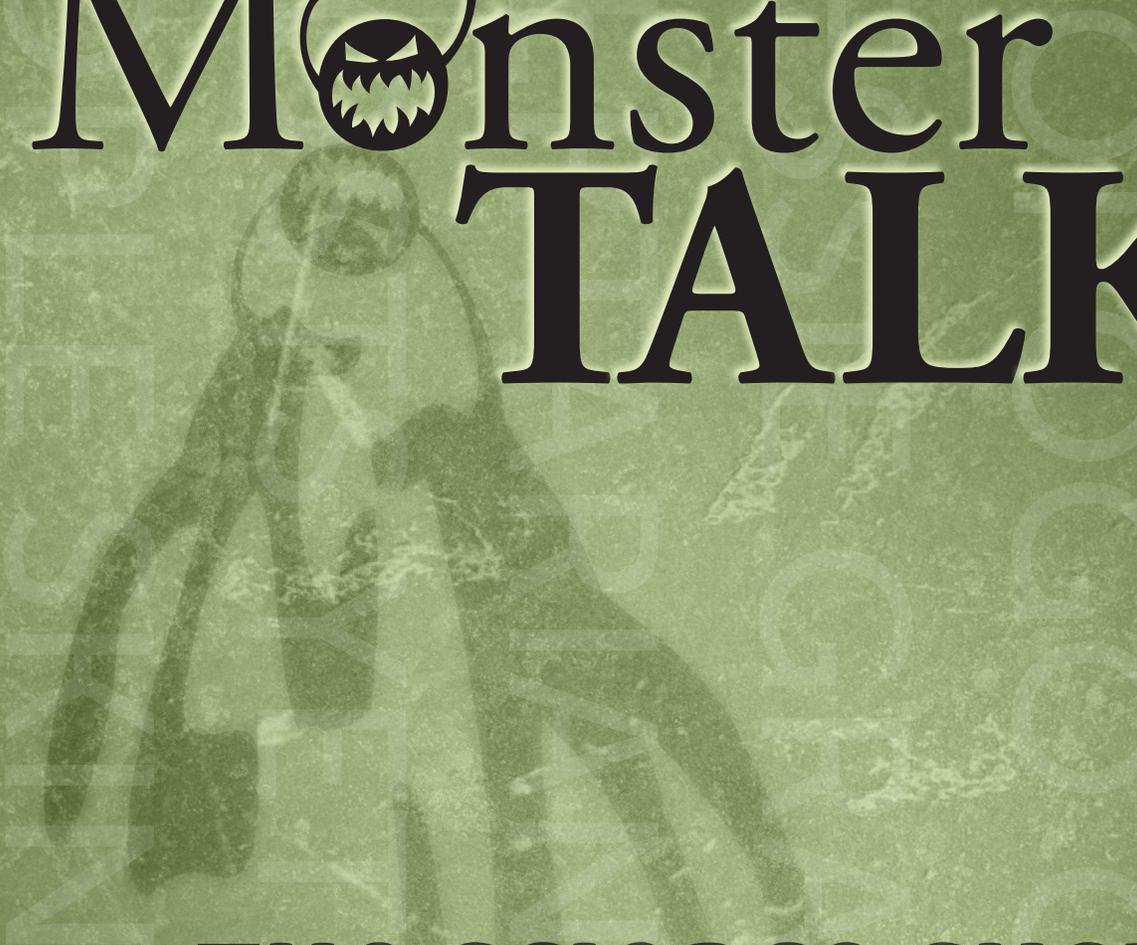
Passing off video, photographs, audio, and personal experience as sufficient evidence of the paranormal.

This is something that actually makes a lot of ghost hunters mad. Saying that their evidence isn't evidence seems to get under their skin. I understand why, however it is true. First of all, stop and seriously think; if EVP, video, photographs, or anecdotal stories are strong evidence for the existence of ghosts or paranormal phenomena, it would be accepted by science. The truth is, in order for it to be considered scientific evidence, it needs to be empirical and in accordance with the scientific method.

Invoking the paranormal as an explanation when a group claims something can't be explained. Some groups seem to think that if something is unexplained that it must be paranormal. No, this is 100% wrong. First of all, if you say something is unexplained, then proceed to give it a title, you have just explained it. Second, unexplained doesn't automatically equal paranormal, this is actually a logical fallacy called "the argument from ignorance." Saying I don't know, therefore, it is this, doesn't work logically. Also, just because a paranormal team can't explain something doesn't mean a logical answer isn't out there, even

if the team claims to have exhausted all of the rational explanations. Jason Korbus said it best, "If you think you went through all of the logical explanations, learn more."

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**GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
PATRICK H. T. DOYLE**

There's a new phobia in the world today. It's sufferers are a growing bunch and they have no idea they have the condition.

Their fear is of the world, which has been compromised by paranormal reality television. They have lost the ability to perceive the world around them as is actually is. This phobia can be cured, but only if you understand the root of the cause.

Peoples interpretation of the sights and sounds are being influenced and conditioned by teams of manipulative geniuses.

These conjurers of fantasy work in the shadows of alluring worlds. These are not demons, devils, or goblins. They are producers, directors and editors who create exciting and emotional entertainment for your viewing pleasure. And if you're not aware of their powers your defenses will be down when they enter your home and program you with prograding.

I understand the power these people have because I consciously allow for myself to be swept away from time to time. I enjoy being transported into a new world—be it a complete fantasy land or simply into the world of someone living and working in a place I've never been. I welcome the wave of emotions brought on while watching certain shows. Make me

laugh. Make me feel. But the moment the show takes a break, I come back to the real world. For me the real world is one of telling stories and working as a creative in the advertising business. I understand how TV works, because my job allows me a peek behind the curtain. In short, television exports entertainment and imports money. The beloved shows entertain. The commercials make the cash. It in turn pays for everything from the dramatic lighting on the haunted location, down to the sprinkles on the cupcakes in the craft service tent. If a show isn't entertaining, it's not profitable. If it fails to pull the numbers the producers are wanting the show is yanked off the air and replaced with another.

So to ensure a show remains on the air, the ratings must be kept up and sometimes to do this certain parts of a show need to be "sweetened." This could be done by introducing scripted lines, setting up situations that lead to a scare or disagreement, or changing up the cast (usually to more attractive and attention-hungry individuals). The people in charge of the shows do this because it works. They know what you expect to see every week and they are not going to stray from a proven formula. If you are tuning into a paranormal

show you're probably doing so to be shown evidence of ghosts. That evidence doesn't even need to be a video or audio recording. It could just be the exaggerated reactions of the cast to a bang or bug. Or maybe all you need is a blip or bleep from one of the devices in the investigator's arsenal. Whatever it is you're expecting to see is exactly what you're going to be shown by the men and women named in the credits at the end of the show.

The phobia is created by this expectation. Because you've allowed yourself to enter their world of ghosts and haunted houses, the cast of characters have become friends, and you trust your friends. You respect what they have to say, and there's no way in the world they would lie to you. Without knowing it, you've allowed for yourself to be programmed. Your perception of the world around you has been altered. Now when you hear an unfamiliar noise or catch a glimpse of a light or shadow you can't explain, your brain races to the only conclusion it has on file—"My house is haunted." The programs have constructed barriers around the command centers of logic and rational thinking. With these voices silenced, fear and confusion are allowed to take over

these phobia-stricken individuals. Their only source to turn to for answers is their trusted investigation team, which makes a house call once a week. This is great news for the people behind the lens of the camera. They've earned their paycheck. Should they put on a science-based program that provides an alternative answer to what you could be seeing and hearing? Is it entertaining? Will it effect people's perception of the world? Will it pack convention halls with admirers and have people assembling teams of like-minded believers who will go out a hunt in the dark like their idols? Probably not. I've gain some knowledge and picked up bits of useful information from cable programming, but diehard fans of paranormal programming have only learned two things: How to spot ghosts everywhere and how to label every shadow, unexplainable sound, and odd light paranormal. "Ghost" has rapidly become the go-to explanation for all anomalies. Amateur teams, born from ghost hunting programs, have based their paranormal education on the shows they respect. This has created a major issue, which needs to be addressed. A person can be taught to be a fire fighter because there are fires to be fought. A crime scene detective can be taught because there are criminals in our world. But you cannot learn how to hunt for something that has not yet been proven to exist. You can read the opinions of people who have written "How-to-ghost-hunt" books. You can even purchase a very official looking certification from an

online scam—I mean program. But you can't learn to hunt for ghosts because there are no facts to study, no definitive answers to memorize, no tools to master, and no experts to consult with. So why listen to me—a guy with another opinion? What do I know about the shows and personalities you love and admire? Well, I have a web series called Haunted Hoax, which is somewhat popular. Its popularity gained the attention of four different production companies in just as many years. Each producer saw Haunted Hoax as a money making machine that would be picked up by any one of the major cable networks—But not as is. My show on the web has a fresh concept and a host people could identify with (yours truly), but elements had to be added to the television version of the show to ensure high viewership and a weekly following. First on the list: spice up the cast. Rarely do you see a reality show with an on-camera cast of one. I can think of Bear Grylls in Man versus wild, but even he has started to have guest adventurers on with him. The industry standard is 3-5 cast members on a show. So the question with Haunted Hoax became, how do we staff up quickly? The producer had seen a picture of me with my brother and sister and asked if they would be interested. With a phone call and a simple yes to my query, my brother and sister became seasoned paranormal investigators with years of personal experiences and vast knowledge of all the

equipment. The truth was they had never been on a ghost hunt or even picked up a K2 until the night we shot the pilot. But what they knew about ghost hunting and the paranormal wasn't an issue. The only thing required of Kevin and Alison was to be attractive to our target audience—be with looks or outgoing personality. With them in place producers began work on our back stories. Sure, Haunted Hoax was a fresh concept, and it might have succeeded on its own, but the story line needed to be sweetened a bit. My role was pretty much set since I had the web series, but Haunted Hoax had to become something bigger. What it became was a company, which I ran 24/7. It was how I made a living and keeping the business out of the red was going to be my week-by-week struggle. Kevin was going through some bad times and I brought him on to help him out financially, and to also help him find the answers to the questions he had about his own personal encounters with the paranormal. Alison rounded out the team as the office manager and she was unlucky in love. She was looking for Mr. Right, but the only thing scarier than ghosts were her two older brothers when she brought a date to the office. Of course all of this was bull. They were just glittery elements added in at the beginning with the sole purpose of hooking the most viewers. Over time, once the show settled into it third or fourth season, these additions probably would have been toned down, and the focus turned on the haunted locations and amazing

evidence we found.

Which brings us to the third and final piece we needed to ensure success: The story for the episode. The producers have this process down to a science. They can keep an audience engaged and excited for an entire hour and not show a single ghost.

“Don’t concern yourself with catching an actual ghost while we’re getting the shots. We’ll handle all that later.” This is what I was told the week before filming. All the cast needs to do is react to every sound and shadow as if you just stood toe-to-toe with your dead uncle. The footage then goes to the sound designers and editors who create the haunt-

ing. Producers are out to create a great product and have all the tricks and tools they need to succeed. My show could have been filmed and edited to be a program about leprechaun hunters. And after a few episode we would probably have a fan base believing everything

we were showing them and creating their own leprechaun investigation teams.

That’s all it takes to create a successful show. Personalities that look good on camera and evoke an emotion response from the viewers. Sadly, the only thing real about reality shows is the money. They aren’t going to go away until the ratings drop.

If you’re dead set on seeing them vanish from the air waves, all you can do is stop watching. Or you can do what I do and just accept that they are just made for entertainment and know that you will never change the beliefs of a true fan.

Patrick H.T. Doyle is the author of the “Edgar Font’s Hunt for a House to Haunt” series and “Next Rest Stop: Earth.” His long awaited Haunted Hoax book entitled “Pub Paranormal” is due out early 2012 and is sure to stir up controversy—as all his projects do. You can learn all you need to know about Patrick and what he’s up to at haunted-hoax.net.



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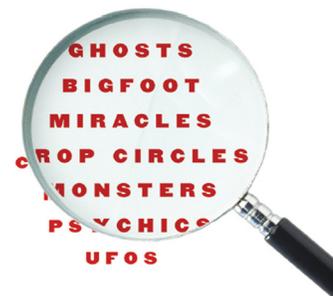
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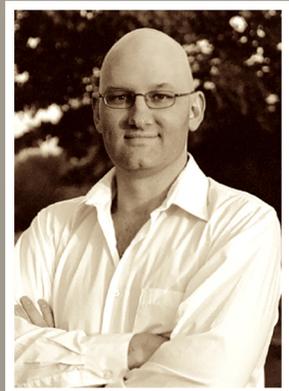
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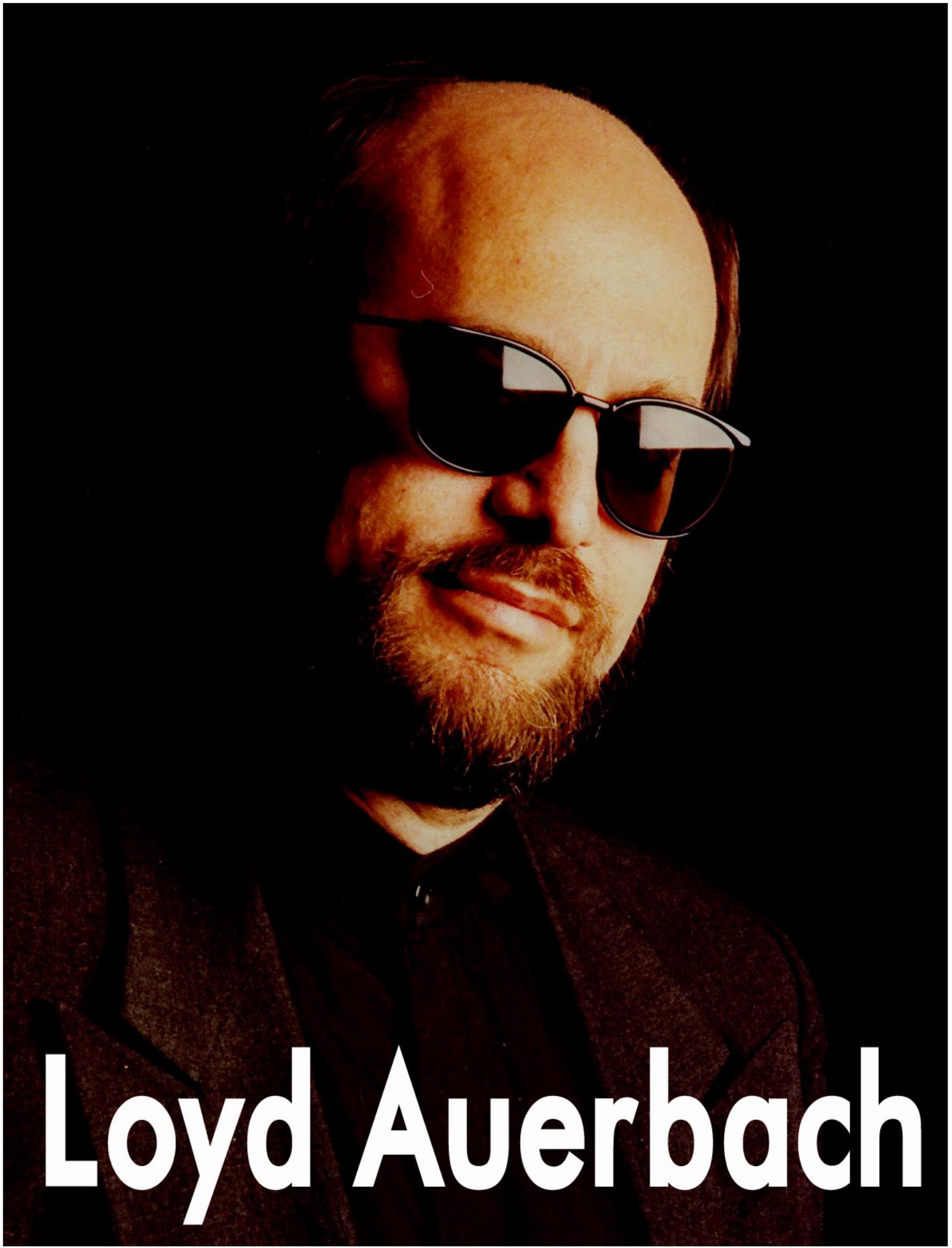
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Loyd Auerbach

What exactly is parapsychology and how does it differ from ghost hunting?

Well, parapsychology is the study of psychic phenomena, which would include, of course, apparitions and hauntings and such but it's the study of phenomena and experiences of the human mind, of consciousness, and how it relates to the world around it. The simple explanation is that we deal with consciousness related phenomena that seem to transcend or go beyond what we consider the normal senses and perceptions; whether it be bringing information in through non-normal channels, affecting matter and energy without direct intervention of the body, or survival of consciousness beyond the death of the body. It differs from ghost hunting in many different ways. First of all, it does scientific research in a laboratory, controlled research. The field research that has been taken over, or seemingly supplanted, by ghost hunting is done in a very measured way with controlled conditions as much as possible but also with putting the controls and processes of methods of science there as much as possible. The biggest difference between parapsychology and ghost hunting is that ghost hunting seems to be focused specifically on certain...not even experiences, certain phenomena, often leaving out human experience, which is at the root of all of this phenomena. They often

ignore the history of research and how it relates. I think the biggest divide is that ghost hunters tend not to even know that there is a field of parapsychology, or think that there is anything that parapsychology has to say about these phenomena, when we've been studying them for 130 years.

Terms like paranormal and supernatural, by definition, exist outside the realms of science. Do you feel that science will ever come to validate what people call ghosts, ESP, or psychic phenomena?

Well, first, paranormal is a term that was coined and probably used more often in early psychological research than anywhere else. It means, "on the side of normal." That's different than supernatural, which means, "above natural." Supernatural is typically related to magic, the things that could not be understood by science; whereas paranormal would be considered, like parapsychology, to be things that at some point should be brought easily into science, once we actually understand what the processes are. I can say that, personally, I believe in ghosts and such, but from a scientific perspective and from a parapsychological perspective, what we can say is that we're looking at a variety of different ways that people might experience ghosts. We're trying to understand what that thing called a ghost actually is, whether it is survival of con-

sciousness or something completely different, which may or may not be explained by current known scientific processes.

There are a lot of different techniques that ghost hunters use and you have spoken and written about going "lights out" during ghost hunts. Can you talk about why you feel that that inhibits investigations?

Well, first, from the get go, there are two major problems with the lights out process. Number one, there are numerous psychological and other studies that show that human beings are awful observers in the dark. We can't tell where sound often comes from, there are a lot of things we just can't perceive properly. If you want to bring a bunch of blind people in and turn the lights out, that would probably make more sense because they, at least, are more used to working without sight. But we, as sighted people, for the most part, are really not used to that and the studies all show that. As a performing psychic entertainer, I've done séances in the dark too. It's really easy to give suggestions to people that something is going on that not really happening. So that's number one. Number two, it doesn't fit the pattern. The dark thing does not fit the pattern of most cases. Most people report apparitions, hauntings, those sorts of things, when the lights are on or during the daytime. Even at night, it's

only when the lights are on, it's before they've gone to sleep. It's a very, very rare case where the ghost or some phenomena wakes someone up at 3:00 in the morning. You have to go with the patterns, otherwise you just simply...it's like going into a field and looking for deer at a time when the deer are absolutely not going to be there or where nobody has ever seen a deer. Then of course, you can conclude that there are no deer there because nothing is happening.

One thing that ghost hunters like to talk about as a possible cause for people who are experiencing a haunting is something called EMF hypersensitivity. However, there is no scientific evidence that supports this hypothesis. I was wondering what your opinion is on this topic?

Well, sadly, many ghost hunters don't know why their using EMF detectors to begin with. The reason why EMF was even brought in, and of course there were various environmental sensors of lower tech used for decades, was because, as Michael Persinger's initial work in Canada at Laurentian University indicated, there was a relationship between the earth's magnetic field, and possibly other magnetic fields, and certain types of psychic experiences. Certain lows and highs of the geomagnetic field on the local level seemed to be correlated to more telepathy or more clairvoy-

ance or more ghostly experiences. The reason several of us started using the EMF detectors was to see if there were other non-geomagnetic electromagnetic connections. Correlations, not cause and effect. And I think it's really important to know that these are not necessarily causal but may be happening at the same time, there may be some relationship to them. In the haunting cases, with this whole EMF sensitivity thing, people are sensitive to EMF. There are people around the world who even are allergic to electromagnetic fields but they typically break out in hives, they don't typically see ghosts. We do know, again, that certain fields will cause people to see things, to experience things, that's the work of Persinger and a few others. However, what is more likely for someone to pursue is if hauntings typically do have correlations to high magnetic fields with no other apparent cause. I think that last statement is really important because I have found more bad wiring in a home with an EMF detector than anything anomalous. That's number one. Number two, does the haunting relate to history? That's a really important factor there, too, because in the laboratory when they use EMF fields, geomagnetic fields, to cause hallucinations, they are not necessarily veridical. In other words, they don't carry with them any historical information so there's something else going on here, which, frankly, may have nothing to

do with psychic phenomena at all, it may be about the brain altogether and the environment. That's something we're trying to pursue as well. I just think that they use EMF because it's easy, because they're cheap, because people see them on TV, because the EMF meter producers often say that there is this connection or causal thing, people will give a lot more weight to those than actually looking at other correlations that could actually happen.

These next two questions go together so I will read both. First, as a parapsychologist and an avid promoter of education in parapsychology, you clearly believe that psychic phenomena does exist, however, skeptics and the majority of scientists seem to disagree. What are they missing? Second, I know that you are a big supporter of Dean Radin's work and I know that Dean Radin feels that we are beyond the point of proving psychic phenomena. Do you believe this to be true, and if so, why?

Well, I can tell you that if you can just look at the supposed scientific reaction to Darryl Bem's publication in the psychology journal earlier this year, and if you read the comments in the New York Times and other places, of these supposed academics, and I say supposed because they acting from an incredibly unscientific perspective, the thing that is missing and the reason why skeptics and scientists refuse and

simply will not acknowledge the possibility of this is because they won't look at the evidence. Frankly, it's already been established, well established, that the majority of the skeptical population does not read journals, does not read our journals or anybody else's journals that have anything to do with this. Academic journals refuse to even entertain, generally, any sort of studies that might have a positive outcome. In fact, if the Bem precognition study had a negative outcome, most likely there would have been no human cry against it. But, the fact that it had a significantly positive result caused people to start yelling at the journal, "how dare they even publish this research?" That kind of emotional reaction is akin to faith based arguments on creationism and evolution. It's really the same kind of emotional situation. We have enough evidence to indicate that there is definitely something you might call a communications anomaly. We have a process of pulling information in, whether you want to call it ESP or not, we do have a process of communication that is beyond the normal sensory processes. I think even that has been expanded because researchers are finding more and more that we have more than just the five senses and that's from a biological perspective, too. So there is this anomaly, this communications anomaly, and it really does happen, the evidence is there. People can look at it but they don't want to.

They can tear it apart without reading it and that's what typically happens in science, while on the surface most academics will say that this doesn't happen. I can tell you from personal experience and from every one of my colleagues, Dean Radin included, we've all talked about meeting really impressive scientists who were very interested in this but if they were to even admit their interest, it would be academic suicide. That's what they said to us. So there's a problem in academia, the idea that people are having these experiences and that no one is interested in studying them. When are you going to conclude that it is psychic or not when there is the idea that you can't even study these things without causing yourself to have a problem with your career in academia? It is about the most unscientific thing as possible.

When it comes to ghost hunting, in my opinion, it seems that there is a stalemate. What I mean, is that it seems that ghost hunters haven't made any advancements and are still using recycled techniques that have never produced positive results. In your opinion, how can this be changed or do you even agree with that statement?

Well, I think that we're at an impasse. One of my colleagues actually has said that parapsychology may be at an impasse where the technology is not ad-

vanced enough to even do anything. We're not even talking about just our technology, we're talking about all technology, our scientific processes. Recently, there were archaeologists that uncovered some artifacts that had been buried, re-buried, for 50 years because they didn't have enough knowledge to even decide what they were. He concludes that it may be the same thing. I don't necessarily agree with that. I think what needs to happen, really, is well, there's several things. One, the technology itself is kind of a dead end unless you can really bring in an enormous array of environmental sensors. Just using one or two things to try to determine what's going on makes it very, very difficult. We really need funding for good, controlled studies of the environment in relation to people's experiences. I think that that's the key that needs to happen next. That, and data sharing. There is absolutely no data sharing going on with the ghost hunters. They give a lot of lip service to wanting to share their data, some of them do talk to each other, but I see from the outside. I kind of think I am on the outside to some extent. I see people arguing about cases and arguing from their positions more than they are actually interested in sharing their data.

Quantum mechanics often comes up when discussing psi phenomena. Do you feel that there is sufficient evidence to

believe that quantum mechanics explains aspects of psi? Is there any link supported by a consensus of physicists?

Well, you know, unfortunately a lot of people misuse quantum mechanics, quantum physics. There's a lot in quantum physics that's not proven, it's theoretical. I guess you could say there is a lot of push within quantum physics and a lot of an angle to relate to consciousness, that there's a place for consciousness in quantum physics and quantum mechanics. The biggest question is how the information will have to go from the quantum level, which is really, really tiny, to the macro level, to our level. There are researchers looking at that. They're looking at that for everything from how the sense of smell might relate to quantum mechanics, because there is a piece of the sense of smell that we don't quite understand, to also energy production, how does photosynthesis actually work in plants and how to we get energy out of it, create the same kind of process. There is a quantum process that they think is involved there, too. So there's a lot going on there. I don't think that you can prove it because quantum mechanics itself is not completely proven, but I think quantum mechanics is leading the way, in looking at the place of consciousness in physics, in the way we relate to the world. Also in looking at the whole observer effect issue, which is at the quantum

level and not necessarily at the macro level. But it is a really important angle and thankfully the group of scientists who are most open to psi research are quantum physicists because they're already looking into the consciousness question too, and so are we.

Psychic detectives claim to aid police in solving murder and missing children cases but the FBI and the Center for Missing and Exploited Children claim that no psychic has ever given them information which has led to a case being solved. What do you feel is going on here?

Well, considering there have been a couple of psychics who have actually lectured at Quantico, and that's verifiable you know, and I have talked to police, maybe with the FBI that may be the case, maybe they don't get involved with those kinds of cases. But I've talked to police and I have actually seen a letter from a judge for my late colleague, Annette Martin, who worked on a number of police cases and worked with homicide detectives, that she provided information. Well let me back up here, with solving a case, people think of a psychic going in and saying, "here's who the culprit is," and they solve the case. The problem with that is that the police and the FBI have already done research, they've got a lot of information, the psychic may provide a piece of the

puzzle that may in fact lead to the arrest of that individual or to the finding of that missing person but does that mean that the case has been solved by the psychic? You know, this is a team effort and Annette and other psychics I know have always talked about that. The idea that they have solved the case like a TV detective, it just doesn't work that way. Nor can they build the case to make sure that person stays in jail, they're not finding the evidence they're finding the culprit, they're pointing in the right direction. On occasion, they are finding the body, because that has happened, but that doesn't necessarily make it solving the case. Unfortunately, unlike these TV detectives, if you have outside consultants who are solving the cases, people start talking about, "why do we need the cops?" This is pretty much an issue of perception by the public of the police, the FBI, and so on. They need to solve the case, regardless of whether a psychic is involved or not. It needs to be a team effort at that point. I think that you can pretty much say that psychics typically don't solve cases but they are involved in the solving of cases.

Finally, can you please tell us about your parapsychology course that you offer online and how interested parties can sign up?

Sure, I actually offer two different things. Through Atlantic University, which is on the

east coast in Virginia Beach, we offer a course called Principals of Parapsychology. It's just basically a parapsychology overview, it's offered for graduate credit or for continuing education, or people can just take it for the hell of it if they want to, and that's offered every semester. We offer it three times a year through Atlantic, and that is an online course. You can find information about the course and the university at www.atlanticuniv.edu. Also, we're in the process of developing a consciousness studies program which will have other related courses down the road. Then my courses, that I have been offering personally for the last five years, are through HCH Institute which is a hypnotherapy institute in northern California. They are not online, there are distance courses as well as local courses but they're a little more personal than online in that they are mp3 based. They are courses that give you a deep overview of different areas of parapsychology, they can be taken one at a time, you can just take a single course or you can take all seven of them. They're fairly short courses, again, they're really deep overviews, they're mp3 based for distance learners. They also get a lot of text materials and they get time on the phone, one on one, with me. I actually make sure that the students talk to me about their learning process. I want to know whether they've actually gotten down the information or

not. I do give them individual attention, which is a lot harder to do online. It is a lot easier to do on the phone. They can find out about those courses the easiest way by going through the HCH Institute. If they just Google HCH Institute and parapsychology, or go to www.hypnotherapytraining.com and then there's a link for parapsychology studies.

Interview conducted by Bobby Nelson and transcribed by Stephanie Bohn



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**GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
KENNETH BIDDLE**

I recently had what we will call... a “debate”...with a gentleman by the name of Mark. The debate was over a photograph taken during a ghost investigation of a Court House by a local newspaper photographer. It showed an image that was billed as a “Residual Gavel” – a bleached-out, out of focus, ribbon-like anomaly that doubled back on itself – the ghost hunters were all in a mystified buzz. I saw a camera strap.

A lengthy debate raged on, between myself, a few knowledgeable people (also arguing my point) and a host of angry ghost hunters...absolutely pissed off that I would challenge the word of their fellow ghost hunter. After shrugging off some childish name-calling by those who were getting extremely annoyed at my detailed explanations, I was hit with the classic comment/insult - “You’re a fool...you can’t get any clues from a photograph. You don’t know anything.”

This was an interesting statement (from an idiot, yes...but still interesting) that made me stop and ponder. Can we obtain clues just from looking at a photograph?

Yes...yes, we can. With experience, critical thinking and attention to detail...one can find subtle clues throughout an image that can turn a “ghost” into a simple mistake (or fake). However, there’s a common (and sorry) pattern among the paranormal community especially among ghost hunting groups – and that is taking each other’s “evidence” at face-value. They see a photograph (or hear an EVP) and if the owner or presenter

says it’s a ghost...then that seems to be good enough for them. It becomes an Instant Ghost.

I am not so gullible. There are a lot of clues you can pull from an image as to what’s causing an anomaly...clues that will contradict what the witness/photographer tells you they did or say happened. This is not a general accusation that ghost hunters are lying (though some definitely are), but that they simply do not have the photography experience and knowledge to spot the flaws in their story...which are usually the result of them simply not paying attention at the time – but swearing later that they were. We’re gonna look at a few here and hopefully broaden the understanding of ghost hunters and lessen the amount of bad “evidence” that makes it onto their websites.

Ok, so let’s take a look at a few...

Direction of Shadows – Lens flare is always an issue when taking photos in the daytime...and at night, when

flood lights, porch lights and even street lights can be an issue. Lens flare, which happens when light enters the lens at an angle or brightness to produce internal reflections and scattering of the light, causes “orbs” that can be blue, yellow, red and orange and white. When lens flare is the cause, there are usually (but not always) more than one “orb” on the image...making a straight line towards the light source. The light source does NOT have to be in the frame (seen in the image) to cause lens flare, which is why I look at the shadows. The shadows will tell you from which direction the light is coming from.

Figure 1 - The two “orbs” are in line parallel to the shadows...showing you where the light source (or cause) is.



Background Details – Look at what’s going on behind the subject of the photo. Are you looking at Ectoplasmic Mist on an image that has people drinking and smoking during a party... or maybe with a campfire burning? Perhaps that photo full of orbs is taken outside, and the ground and background objects are soaking wet... from rain. Are close objects dark, with a yellow tint to them...because the flash wasn’t used (see next section)? Apparitions reflected in glass...take note of where objects in the room are in relation to the reflective surface... and where’s the photographer in relation to the reflection? The point is – don’t simply focus on the Focus of the Photo...look at the entire image for clues to the cause.



Figure 2 - "Orbs" are seen...but not only is there snow on the ground/cars, but looking close you can see it's snowing.



Figure 3 - More "orbs", but looking at the ground and the grass, you can take note that it's raining.

Compare Multiple Images – Relying on just one image can be difficult when you really need to see different angles or views of a scene. Another issue is that one photo may not be bright enough, or the background or foreground may be out of focus. At a recent conference, I was approached by an older woman with a stack of photos. Even though she was already convinced she had ghosts, she was looking for confirmation (and not actually the truth). After showing me dozens of Orb photos (easily attributed to dust particles), she present an image with two golden orbs, and demanded that I “explain that one away”. The background was out of focus, making it impossible to tell what was in the distance of the scene; however... the golden orbs resembled out-of-focus street lamps (based on previous experience). The woman’s response included standard remarks of “I’ve had professional ghost people confirm these” and “you obviously don’t know anything”. However, the very next photo she held in her hand was the same scene, with the background in perfect focus...and showing two street lamps which matched up perfectly with the positions of the golden “orbs”. Her jaw dropping in sudden understanding and embarrassment was my only satisfaction – she grabbed her photos, insulted me some more and stormed off. (Her friend laughed and told me “I told her they weren’t ghosts...she’s just thick-headed”). The point is – different views can bring clarity to the situation.

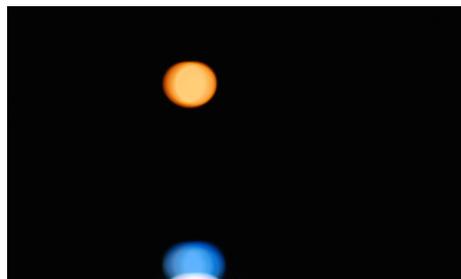


Figure 4 - Yellow/Orange "orb" with Blue/White "orbs"



Figure 5 - When the scene is actually focused on, we see the cause is a Street Lamp. The Blue/White "orbs" are caused by lens flare.



Figure 6 - This image was sent to me as "an apparition sitting on a fallen tree"



Figure 7 - A different view of the same area shows the "apparition" is actually the roots of the fallen tree

Flash or no flash – There’s a noticeable difference between images that used a flash to illuminate the scene, and those that did not...specially when taken indoors. The most obvious is the lighting; when a flash is used, the scene has a bright, white overall look to it, brightly illuminating the entire scene. When a flash is not used, the image usually has an overall yellow cast to it (when shot indoors using only the ambient light). This is typical for residential buildings that use

incandescent light bulbs. These bulbs give off a yellow light, compared to the white light of a camera flash. Outdoor photos, without a flash, can produce images with a blue tint, due to moonlight. Other light sources, such as neon lighting, will produce shadows and illumination from directions other than where the flash is.



Figure 8 - No Flash Used



Figure 9 - Flash was used

Camera Shake - When not using a flash (in low light conditions), on the No Flash setting, or using a setting called “Night Scene”, “Twilight” or even symbolized by a moon and/or star...a shaking of the scene and/or objects within the image occurs. There are several types of camera shake that can happen..

“The Buzz” – This type happens when the entire scene in the image looks like it’s being shaken violently. All edges are not in sharp focus, rather...they are multiplied, like they’re vibrating.



Figure 10 - A stable image



Figure 11 - The “Buzz” of Camera Shake

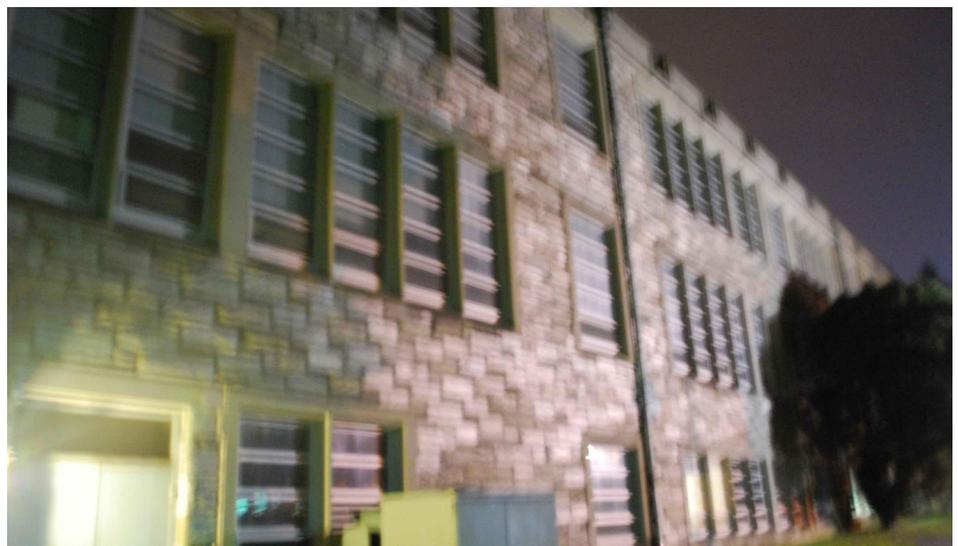


Figure 12 - “Buzz” Camera Shake from an image taken without flash and in low light conditions

“Streaking Lights” – This occurs when the camera captures a scene in low-light conditions, and automatically extends the time the shutter is open (because the flash was turned off, or and Night Time setting was chosen). What’s that mean? It means, in simple terms, the camera takes a longer picture (called a “Long Exposure”) – instead of a quick fraction of a second, the camera can take a picture for up to a few seconds (depending on setting, model of camera). When the shutter stays open for a long period of time, stationary lights within the scene (either close to the lens or in the far distance) will “move” around the scene due to the camera moving – when held by hand, the camera simply can’t be held steady (motionless), as when it’s mounted on a tripod. This unsteady movement of the camera causes light sources, as well as objects reflecting light, to “move” all over the final image.



Figure 13 - Light Streaks caused by Camera Shake



Figure 14 - "Reversing" the Camera Shake Streaking effect, showing how light can streak across an image

“Ghosting” – Ghosting happens when the flash is used in addition to a long exposure. The flash captures the scene in illuminated detail, as we see in a normal photograph. However, the flash dies out while the camera is still “taking a picture”, collecting any light from the scene. This can produce an image where everything is illuminated by the flash nicely and in sharp focus...but any objects that were in motion, such as people or pets, will continue to reflect any ambient light back into the camera. This is a cause of “extra” faces, body parts and even full figures. These “extras” will be tinted that color of the ambient light, i.e. yellow from incandescent bulbs. Take note, this effect can also happen without the use of a flash.



Figure 15 - The "extra" child figure is from the flash being used with a long exposure. The boy was caught with the flash, then ran into the beam of light coming from the open hole (on the left) during the long exposure.

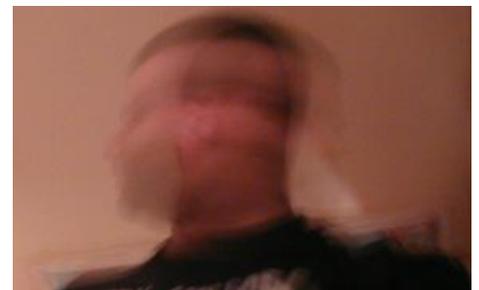


Figure 16 - Taken without a flash, causing an long exposure. I simply moved my head from right to left.

“Close Proximity” – Many times an object - such as a finger, a camera strap (yes, all you ghost hunters... it still happens), or even a section of wall – can get too close to the lens/flash, causing three effects; the obvious is that the object in close proximity is bleached by the flash. Being too close to the lens, the flash has an overpowering effect, called “Bleaching”, which renders the object bright white. The second effect is that the object can become blurred. This is due to the object being too close to the camera, and the camera being focused on the general scene further away. Effect number three is Opacity – objects too close can take on a transparent aspect, either around the edge (for larger objects) or completely “see-through” for thinner objects. The lens of the camera is focused on the scene, and not small objects (hair, straps, etc.) directly in front of the lens... which on normal settings, the camera simply can’t focus on things that close. This can be experienced by hanging a length of string in front of one of your eyes. Focus on the room, not the string... and you’ll see the blurring and transparency effect. Now imagine a bright white light (camera flash) going off.



Figure 17 - Notice the transparent line going across the map



Figure 18 - It is actually the wire from my ear buds, held close to the lens

When these three effects are combined, they can produce the classic “vortex” images, among other types of “blobs” and “streaks”.

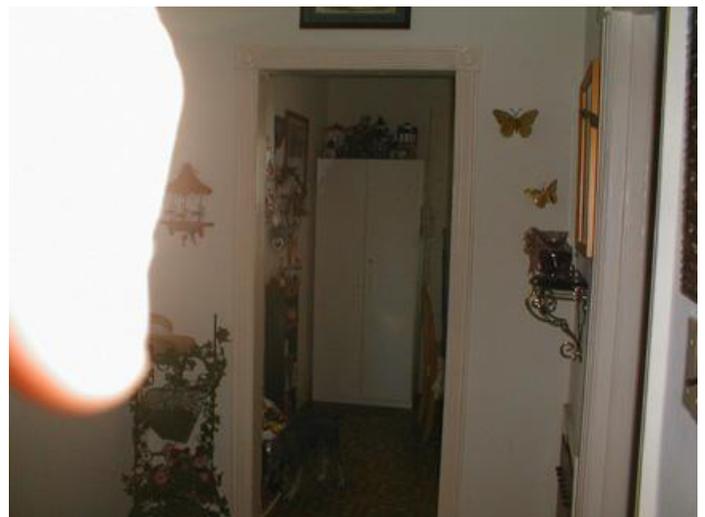


Figure 19 - This would be a finger, bleached by the flash. Amazingly, this is still confused with a spirit

“Pool Table” Reflections – This is my nick-name for pictures of “ghosts in window panes”. The general setting is the same; a photo is taken of either a room or the outside of a building (house, church, etc.) with a window in the scene. The window is at an angle to the camera, whether it’s to the side or on an upper/lower floor. The photographer (a term used loosely in this case) snaps a picture and moves on. Later on, while reviewing the images, they find what appears to be a figure reflected in the glass. They show the image to a friend or another ghost hunter, asking “See the figure?”. This usually leads to it being declared an Apparition.

The issue is that these amateur photographers forget to take into account the Angle of Reflection. Just like adjusting a the rearview mirror in different positions so you can see what’s behind you (according to your height and position in the seat), the windows are reflecting an image at an angle...not straight on. This is where the “Pool Table” comes in. If you ever shot a game of pool, you quickly realized it’s a game of angles. You have to figure (in most cases Guess) the best angle to hit the Cue Ball (white ball) into the target ball to get it to go into a pocket. Angles, angles, angles...

Angles are what the majority of ghost hunters are missing. As you view a window at an angle, it is showing a reflection of a scene at the opposite angle. This must be taken into account when one believes they caught an apparition. There may be trees, bushes or any number of other objects on the “other end of the angle” that, when mixed with Pareidola, can be perceived as a figure – but it’s not. Most ghost hunters (and amateur photographers) disregard the Angle of Reflection, mostly from ignorance. They don’t look at what is actually being reflected in the glass, and this hurts their conclusion of what is actually being seen.

Type of Material – In association with the Pool Table Reflections issue, the type of materials used in some windows has a drastic effect on reflected images. The glass used in many of our older buildings is not the flat sheets of glass our modern age is accustomed to. The processes used developed panes that were not completely flat, distorting light as it passes through... or reflected off of it.

Distorted images by “wavy” glass are a major cause of apparitions seen in reflections. Simple reflections of living people, including the photographer themselves, can appear as apparitions in “period clothing” or even as a completely different-looking person. Ordinary objects and furniture can also become distorted into resembling faces or figures. It should also be noted that in low light conditions, not only will you get reflected images of your side of the glass...you’ll get some bleed-through of what’s on the other side of the glass.

In Conclusion – Don’t take photographic evidence, or any evidence, at Face Value...Ever. Most paranormal photos have an easy and natural explanation to them, if you just take the time to look at the details. They’re there, and with experience... you’ll be able to find them. I strongly urge ghost hunters, investigators and skeptics to take a photography course or pick up a book on the topic (unrelated to the paranormal). You’ll get a much better understanding of what can happen naturally...rather than supernaturally.



Figure 20 - This “apparition” was captured at an angle AND off distorted “wavy” glass.

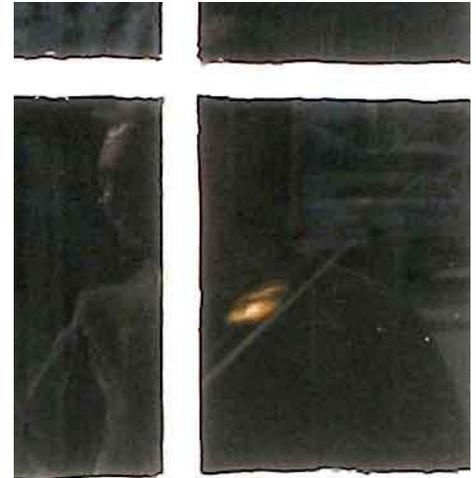


Figure 21 - Turns out that the “apparition” is simply the reflection of the photographer’s father. In the next pane of new, flat glass...his shoulder could be seen.

GHOST A HOBBY, A SCIENCE, HUNTING OR A SYMPTOM OF A SERIOUS SOCIETAL DISEASE?



Ghost Hunting: A Hobby, a Science, or a Symptom of a Serious Societal Disease?

I could write an article about how ghost hunting in the dark is contraindicated, or how FCC regulations essentially make all EVP invalid, the conceptual differences between datum and evidence, or how pareidolia is a legitimate sensory phenomenon. Others have already walked down that path, either in this issue or other publications altogether. Honestly, how many times do you need to read a story about why you should not use an EMF detector to detect ghosts, or even this supposedly harmful (science has already debunked the harms of EMF) natural occurrence.

But at the end of the day, this is all systemic of a much more troubling issue. Ghost hunting, both in practice and in the media, is just a symptom of our ailing education system in America. The methods that the majority of ghost hunters claim to use is the scientific method, yet nearly every one I have talked to has been unable to properly describe the scientific method.

Scientific literacy in the US is depressingly low. Scientific literacy is defined by the National Science Board as knowing basic facts and concepts about science and having an understanding of how science works). For example, a poll published in 2001 by Newport and Strausberg as posted online by the National Science Board (a division of the US Government) states that nearly 45% of Americans believe houses can be haunted, and roughly the same number of respondents stated that they “know” the earliest humans

lived alongside the dinosaurs (false). Only 43% of Americans were able to answer questions correctly concerning how to conduct a scientific study. With 49 million children in the public education system in our country (National Center for Education Statistics, accessed Nov. 23, 2011), presumably being taught the same basics, that’s about 21 million kids who will scatter throughout our country and job market without some aspects of basic knowledge! And one must wonder, how many of those 21 million kids will grow up to be future educators? The importance of scientific literacy doesn’t just apply to making aspirin in high school chemistry or knowing how far away the sun is from the planet in grade school, but our very government and legal system is suffering. In 1993, a landmark case had the US Supreme Court rule that judges must use scientific standards such as falsifiability and peer review, when determining what expert testimony is admissible in court. This means the difference between allowing a PhD in biology testify to the effects of a drug on the local environment, or just some guy who read a bunch of books and chained himself to a tree for a few days as part of a protest. What is terrifying, however, is that a 2001 study published in the Journal of Law and Human Behavior found that the concept of peer review was only understood by slightly less than two thirds of the judges surveyed, and roughly 85% of them did not understand the concept of error rate. These are the very people deciding the fate of our country, cases that set precedent for future litigation, and clearly science is being left out of

the mix.

The numerous reports of school districts banning the teaching of evolution, or the inclusion of non-scientific content to be taught in science courses (such as creationism or intelligent design) further demonstrates the danger of scientific illiteracy. In Georgia, stickers were affixed to textbooks stating that evolution was “a theory, not a fact”, a process repeated by Alabama, Oklahoma and Louisiana throughout the 90’s. The clear lack of understanding of what a scientific theory is has an impact over what children are learning about the foundations of their very existence.

Additionally, pop-psych books such as *Freakonomics*, pretty much anything by Malcolm Gladwell, or films such as *What the Bleep Do We Know?* have the general public convinced of ideas and numbers that have been either debunked or dismissed by actual scientists in their prospective fields. Going back to Malcolm Gladwell, his recent book *Outliers*, proposes that if one practices something for 10,000 hours, they become an expert. Such examples of this phenomenon include musicians, athletes, and chess players. There aren’t many other stipulations other than the correlation of time served in the practice of these activities. There may be a number of other variables involved. What may be misunderstood here, especially by ghost hunters, is that practice makes perfect. However, if you practice something wrong for 10,000 hours, all that does is make you an expert in something wrong. So how does ghost hunting play into this? The popularity of paranormal television shows under the guise of

reality is misleading to viewers. Our tendency to worship celebrities further exacerbates this problem. It's the fundamental attribution error: we tend to attribute explanations for observed behaviors to the individual rather than examining all variables involved. This normally comes out in behavioral research when one says that the person didn't respond to treatment because they are flawed or bad, when it's more likely that it's the intervention itself that didn't work. Fans of Ghost Hunters are more likely to believe what the hosts of the show say, noting that any criticism is because those voicing the concerns are jealous or bad people, while not examining that there may very well be issues with the methods or information that their idols are putting into the public sphere.

A great example of this comes from the depths of the TAPS website. Founder of TAPS (The Atlantic Paranormal Society, based in Warwick, RI) Jason Hawes, writes in an article titled "Schizophrenia" about the symptoms of Schizophrenia. No citations for the information. Furthermore, I highly doubt that a plumber from Rhode Island practiced psychiatry (a medical degree requiring a minimum of seven years of post-secondary education) for 10,000 hours. While many of the statements about symptoms can be cross-checked, we cannot, and should not, assume they are true. In nearly every episode of Ghost Adventures (airing on The Travel Channel since 2009), lead cast member Zak Bagans will mention that ghosts are "said to give off" EMF without providing any further evidence. I could say just about anything, but that doesn't make it true. If science literacy is a dangerous problem in our country, then how do we go about fixing it? I have some ideas, as many do. One would be to develop a national curriculum for all subjects taught in school that indicates what basics need to be taught to students. For example, any school receiving funding from the US Government (and this measure does include nearly every

private school in the nation due to subsidies and reimbursements) would be required to teach the scientific method and practice it. One way to test this would be standardized testing, however, with numerous papers and studies demonstrating the inaccuracy and problems of standardized testing, this proposal needs further refinement. Another possible measure would be to develop testing methods and requirements for professional fields. Lawyers, judges, doctors, and others may need to test and receive special licensure indicating they are educated and comprehend certain aspects of science. These certifications could be required in order to receive degrees or certifications to practice in their fields—a judge must be certified in scientific literacy in order to be a judge, for example.

But how many of these ghost hunters are professionals? Very few, I would argue. This could be a place where the FCC steps in. Require that any non-fiction program air a disclaimer coming back from every commercial break stating something to the effect of "The methods and data presented in this program may not be scientifically supported. Viewers are advised to research methods and data before practicing methods and activities presented in this program."

What can we do on our own? We can read. Not just online encyclopedias, but real books. Books by people in their respectful fields. We can educate people in discussion—if someone says something anti-scientific or misunderstands a concept, we can educate them. This is something so many of us are afraid to do because it makes us look like assholes. But what's worse, looking like an asshole or indirectly contributing to the failure of our very existence? Of course that's a big leap for me to make, but one that I personally envision. A world without science may have an element of magic, but if magic was all we needed, we would have no cancer, or computers, or cell phones, or antibiotics.

Ghost hunting is a symptom of a bigger and much more terrifying problem: a failing education system. Specially, scientific illiteracy. Do a little experiment of your own. Take a piece of paper and write down every single thing you do in the day. Then write down all of the items and processes associated with it (if you drive to work, that includes cars, roads, etc. If you take medications, the number of pills and details). Now cross out everything that was created with science in some way. What's left?

<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/>

<http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind04/c7/c7s2.htm>

CAUSE & EFFECT



There are many places on the internet that I call upon for inspiration for my articles. Paranormal news sites, discussion forums, radio shows, but most of all, Facebook. Every ghost hunting group under the sun has their own fan page and I've found them to be an invaluable resource. One such recent occasion, I discovered a series of posts invoking neutrinos in relations to ghosts, as they are both known to pass through matter. Neutrinos are a very low mass, sub-atomic particle with no electric charge. Being electrically neutral allows them to pass uninfected by electromagnetic forces, unlike electrons. It takes a strong nuclear reaction, like that of a sun, to create a neutrino, so you won't find them coming from everyday appliances or wiring like with electromagnetic fields, though about sixty-five billion per second pass through every square centimeter perpendicular to the direction of the Sun in the region of the Earth. These tiny particles are traveling at an enormous rate of 299,792,458 meters per second, while claims of ghosts report them casually walking through your bedroom wall at an average walking speed, somewhere around 1.6 meters per second. Quite a discrepancy. I brought this up to the fore-mentioned Facebook poster to which I received the reply;

“not necessarily. mass and velocity are closely related. if they some-

how have a large mass they cannot “always” move at or faster than the speed of light...”

True, I suppose, though they do not have a large mass. Anyway, I explained, in order to formulate a theory, you first have to create a hypothesis that connects neutrinos and ghosts, then create a test that can either confirm or falsify the relation. Unfortunately, there are no known properties or facts pertaining to ghosts.

“totally true.” they replied,” but it's nice to wonder about these things instead of running around with an emf detector shouting demon.”

And here is where I arrive at the crux of my article. For you see, it is the same as “running around with an emf detector shouting demon.” Not only are human beings equipped with pattern seeking minds, but we also seem to be predisposed to inventing causal relationships. For instance, I asked another paranormal investigator to explain why he and his team used EMF meters. He had this to say:

“It's not anything extravagant - not even our theory - but the common theory that EM fields are produced when an entity attempts to communicate. We've seen a common correlation between the spikes and sudden activity. I won't begin to claim the full knowledge of my fel-

low team members, but It's something we're still testing because it still happens. While yes I agree that most of the time it's been used for the ‘flashy’ aspect on TV, but the legitimacy isn't fully diminished. “

The line to notice here is “We've seen a common correlation between the spikes and sudden activity.”

While they may, indeed, be monitoring EMF “spikes”, they certainly cannot establish beyond the shadow of a doubt that any paranormal activity is taking place, but for sake of argument, say they could. Even then, they are still forming a false causal link between the two. This is a fairly common logical fallacy called post hoc ergo propter hoc. Basically cause and effect, but the relation is assumed based solely on speculation and confirmation bias.

This is the reason every ghost hunting team uses EMF meters, non contact thermometers, night vision cameras, and so on. A loosely related characteristic or anomaly that can't be established becomes a “theory” and everyone jumps on board in the name of progress, while if any of them truly wanted to make any real progress, they'd abandon all of these tools and methods that yield no results. They'd stop appealing to quantum physics and jumping to conclusions.

This isn't how theories are made and this isn't how science works.

THE SHADOWS WALK AMONGST US



Sometime in the 1990's a new phenomenon started to occur in the world of the paranormal.

A figure often seen dashing out of the corner of your eye or this figure is seen quickly in your peripheral vision, when you turn to look at it, it is already gone. This phenomenon has been dubbed ~~floaters by optometrist~~ Shadow People.

So what are the characteristics of this "other worldly being"? According to Paranormal Researcher, Rosemary Ellen Guiley:

There are different types of Shadow People. The core, dominant experience is the nighttime bedroom visitor: a tall silhouette of a man, often dressed in a coat or cape, and a brimmed hat.

The figure is blacker than black and 3-D, obstructing light and blocking the view of objects.

There are no facial features or eyes (sometimes red eyes are reported), but the experiencer knows he is being observed with great intensity. The figures do not communicate, but often radiate a malevolent, trickster, or evil intent

In the typical experience, a person wakes up from sleep and sees a Shadow Person in the bedroom. It stands right at the bedside, in a corner or in the doorway.

It may emerge from a closet or slide out from under the bed. Some of them come through the walls.

The experiencer is usually terrified and screams. A reaction often makes the Shadow Person disappear, either by vanishing into thin air, zipping down a hallway, or melting through a wall or ceiling (or back under the bed!). People may feel paralyzed to do anything but shut their eyes, hoping that the figure will be gone when they open them. Sometimes it is – and sometimes it isn't.

Some people feel threatened by the Shadow Person. It sits on the bed, or presses on them, making them feel as though they will suffocate or choke. The experience ends before actual physical harm occurs, however. – www.Visionaryliving.com

First I want to mention, Rosemary just described a condition called sleep paralysis. I mean she explained it 100%. I myself suffer from sleep paralysis quite frequently and I understand how vivid and scary they can be.

Sleep paralysis is a feeling of being awake but unable to move. It occurs when a person passes between stages of wakefulness and sleep. During these transitions, you may be unable to move or speak for a few seconds up to a few min-

utes. People having an episode of sleep paralysis may feel pressure or a sense of choking. These episodes are not pleasant; people who suffer from sleep paralysis say they can feel an evil presence, often related to demons or shadow figures. Bright lights and little people crowded around one's bed is also trait of sleep paralysis, which can also explain alien abductions.

These experiences can be so vivid; the person will actually feel like they are awake when in fact they are not. It can be intensely scary and it often leads people to search for answers, leading them into the supernatural. But as we can see, these experiences can be explained rationally.

But there is something else I wanted to talk about when dealing with these shadow people, another person by the name of Heidi Hollis claims to have coined the name Hatman, to describe a different "breed" of shadow people. The description of Hatman is pretty much identical to shadow people, only a few differences:

The Hat Man's gear consists of what can be described as him wearing a long-black trench coat, three-piece suit, white collared shirt, and a flat rimmed gaucho hat. Some have even reported seeing a gold watch hanging on his side

on a chain. Some people describe seeing red eyes, others see solid black eyes if they see any eyes at all under the shadow of his hat.

He's described as being pale, tall, thin and may or may not have a noticeable goatee and thin moustache. He may grin, tip his hat, or stare undeniably at a person at length or briefly.

He appears in most any location, but most commonly is reported in people's bedrooms as they sleep at night. A feeling comes over the person where they wake up to find him watching them nearby. – <http://www.jesuisnojoke.com/theshadowpeople/id19.html>

After a quick search on google images I was able to find drawings of what people claim Hatman look like.



I found something very odd though. There is a children's network called Boomerang that plays

reruns of old cartoons from the 70's. I caught an episode of Dynomutt, an old childhood favorite of mine. It was released in 1977 and the episode was titled Shadowman. I had to take a picture of the villain, re read the description while looking at the picture, he fits them perfectly and his name is even Shadowman.

Now I can't sit here and say that this thing people are calling shadow people are the result of a cartoon, but perhaps some may be, I don't know, I just thought it was cool.

However there are people who will ask "what about the shadow person I saw while I was awake?"

Well usually the people I talk to, they don't want a logical answer they usually want a supernatural explanation. However what I think shadow people are is simply one's brain making a pattern out of the low image quality of peripheral vision. Another possible explanation could

be floaters in the eye. Or the one I think may be the most common is simply misidentification, seeing a shadow cast from an object and labeling it paranormal. We have to understand, the human brain can be easily fooled.



THE FLASHLIGHT TRICK



**GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
KENNY BIDDLE**

In a dark room of a 1700s Inn, a group of investigators sit in chairs that encircle a group of gadgets set up in the center of the floor. Among the audio recorders and EMF meters with their multi-colored LEDs...is a single flashlight. The head of the flashlight has been turned just enough so that the light just comes on...adjusted so that if it's turned a hair back, it would shut off. As it lies on the floor, an investigator asks "Are there any spirits here? If so, can you turn the light off?" Seconds tick by, as all those present watch the light eagerly.



"Please, turn the light off to let us know you're here." The light flickers, and goes dark. Excitement and shocked gasps make their way around the room. "If you're a woman, turn it back on...if you're a man, leave it off". The light snaps back on, and the team is thrilled they have made contact with a female entity.

It's been seen on several of TV's

(un)reality paranormal shows, countless YouTube videos and described in numerous "case reports" on websites of paranormal teams all over the internet. It has become a "tool" to "prove" not only the existence of spirit activity, but that two-way communication is possible.

It is a trick.

Science is the cause, not a spirit. Science of electricity and engineering makes this cute, little light show possible. It has nothing to do with the paranormal, I assure you. The flashlight of choice has been the Mini Maglite®. It has a "Spot-to-Flood" adjustable beam, an anodized aluminum body to resist corrosion and support durability and requires two AA batteries to operate.



Let's take a look inside this sweet flashlight. The basic operation is pretty straight-forward; you twist the head of the flashlight

to turn it on (counter-clockwise) and off (clockwise), there is no On/Off button. Under the head we see the bulb stuck into what's called the Upper Insulator...which is set into the Lower Insulator. Located in the Lower Insulator is a Contact Tab which goes from the bulb to the underside of the beveled top of the body casing



(seen as the white tab in the upper right of the image). The second Contact Tab (center, on the left lower side) goes from the bulb to the battery. The bottom end cap has a spring attached to it. When batteries are installed and the end cap is screwed in, the spring pressure forces the batteries up, forcing the Lower Insulator up and...forcing the Contact Tab to make contact with the casing. Without the head attached, the circuit is complete; the flashlight is "on".

When the head is screwed on and all the way down, the spring pressure is overcome – the Upper & Lower Insulators are pushed down and the Contact Tab

literally loses contact with the body casing...disrupting the flow of electricity and turning the flashlight "off". It is this Contact Tab that is responsible for the "ghostly responses".

When electricity flows, it causes heat. When metallic objects are heated, it causes the metallic object

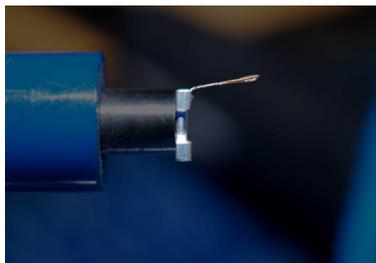


to expand. Why? Because all materials are made up of atoms, and in a solid material...these atoms are vibrating in fixed positions. As heat is applied, kinetic energy increases, and the atoms move around more. The increased movement requires more space...so the material expands. With a small tab bent at an angle of approx. 100 to 110 degrees, heat causes the tab to decrease the angle slightly. When the angle is decreased, it pulls the contact away from the bevel of the body casing...effectively blocking the flow of electricity and turning the light "off". Once the metal cools down, the tab opens up to the original angle – once again making contact and turning the



light "on". Once you twist the head and find this "sweet spot", you've effectively put the flashlight into a loop; turning it off and on, at varying time intervals, until either someone turns it off or the batteries are drained. This is the natural explanation of it – nothing paranormal about it, people...just science.

However, there's a psychological issue that is associated with this trick, as well. Ghost hunting groups love to ask questions, repeating the same question 2, 3, 4 or more times...usually until they get the expected response. It's a common issue that can be seen with "Ghost Box" or the "Can you make a noise?" (in which any noise heard is sufficient enough to be considered a positive response).



When a ghost hunter asks the same question (ie. If you're here, Sarah, can you make the light go off?), it simply allows more time for the science to work it's "magic". If the light doesn't turn off on the first attempt, the question is asked again, perhaps with an added "Come on, Sarah". A third attempt and the light goes out – Success! The ghost of Sarah MUST have done that! Sadly, the first two negative responses are forgotten and ignored...while the third positive hit (coincidence) is focused on and praised. Basically, the ghost hunters using and believing this trick are making it "real" – by manipulating the flashlight first, then asking a ques-

tion over and over until they get the response they desire...essentially "fixing" the outcome.

Granted, some ghost hunters do this while completely ignorant of what's happening or what they're doing to help it along. However, many know what they're doing (despite not having an actual understanding of the process involved) and even time the On/Off intervals so that their questions carry more impact when the flashlight "reacts". No matter the case, it's still bunk. You can ask Sarah to play with the light, or Poly the Parrot –the light will go off and on regardless. Hell, leave it alone and just stare at the flashlight for ten minutes...you'll find that the process will be unaffected by the absence of any suspected spirits.



When all is said and done, this is simply another example of the bad "science" that is introduced and promoted on Unreality Paranormal TV, and then trickles down to the ghost hunting groupies that swear by them. Perhaps we should listen to our parents, who told us not to watch so much TV...and stick your head in a book, or research a scientific (non-ghost hunting) website, or...try an experiment – like taking apart a Mini Maglite® to study how the parts interact. Ya might learn something real.

SOUPERNATURAL

BY JASON KORBUS



PICKING A PARANORMAL TEAM

Recently on Facebook I came across a post by Kim Kowalczyk. Kim is part of the Ghost-Breakers Paranormal Research Organization. She put out an open call for friends to answer this question:

“If you need help, how would you pick a team that says they are a paranormal investigative group? Where would you look for one? Would you just take their word or who’s recommendation’s would you take or ignore?”

I found it an interesting topic of discussion and wanted to share my thoughts. But I also wanted to see how other folks would respond.

One person said experience was important to them. I can agree with that to a point. Experience is nice, but what if the team’s experience is wrapped up in pseudoscientific methods and they have never solved a case? In such an instance experience isn’t going to do anyone any good; and I’m sorry to say this probably describes the vast ma-

jority of amateur ghost hunting groups.

Another person said they would want a team that is “open minded to all possibilities” but who didn’t go “to extremes.” Of course, that is a subjective request. What the extreme is depends on who you ask. In this case, the person said they would not be crazy about the use of a Ouija board, but that a “big plus” would be if the investigators “were going to be carrying smoky quartz.” The respondent feels that this “helps to thin the veil.” In other words, the person is comfortable trading pseudoscience for other pseudoscience. This hardly seems acceptable if you are truly trying to help people or solve mysteries.

My own response was pretty straightforward. Though I figured it would result in some criticism from the other ghost hunters populating the thread, the only direct response I ended up getting was a “like” from Larry DP of Debunk Paranormal in Michigan:

“If a team claims to be following a scientific methodology, but claims to have evidence that ghosts exist...they’re either fooling themselves or trying to fool you.”

Clearly there are many other things you would ideally like to see, but this sums up a great deal of it for me. Removing from consideration the thousands of teams who claim to be doing science, but instead are basing their conclusions off of blinking lights and noise generators aren’t doing anyone any favors. Granted, around 99% of teams will be eliminated, but at least the remaining candidates aren’t as likely to be mystery-mongering instead of truly investigating.

What do you think? Am I wrong? Do you have advice you would like to share? Send in your feedback so it can be addressed in a future issue of The Bent Spoon.



REVIEWS

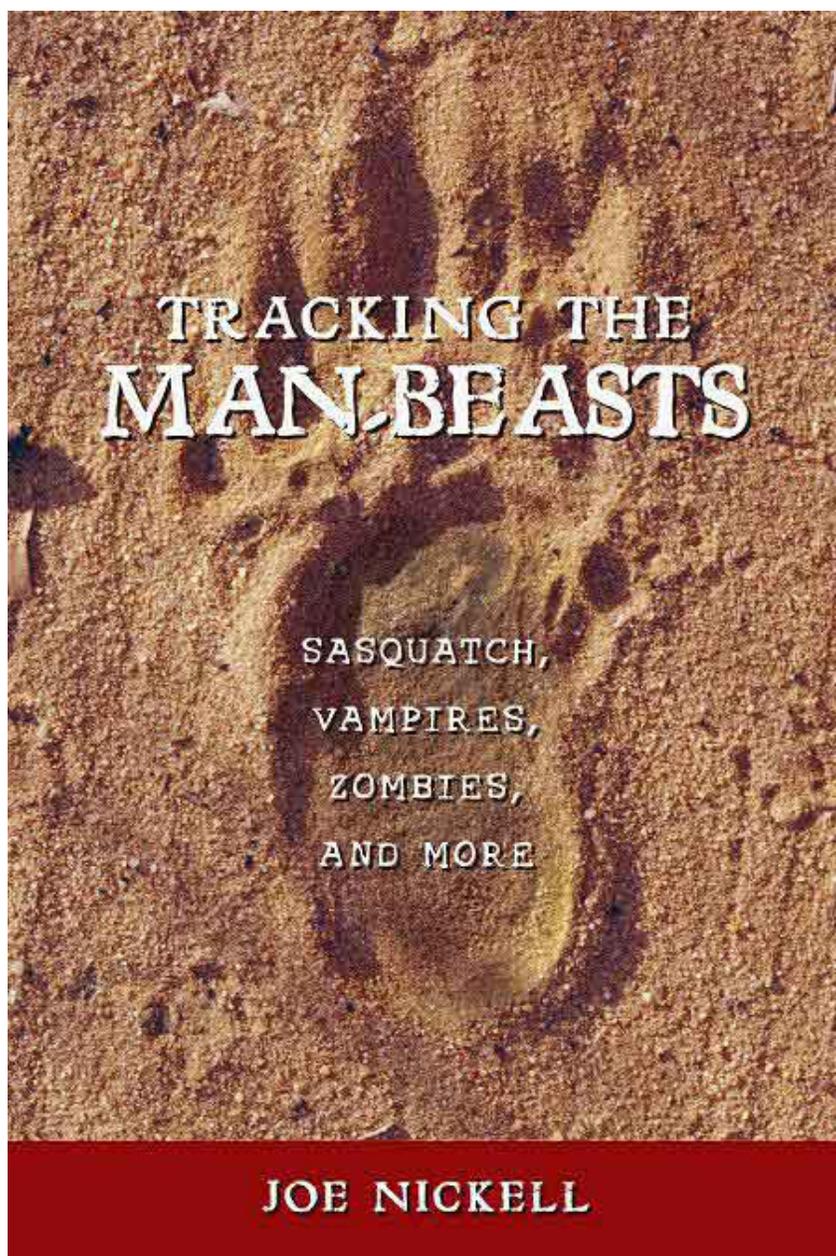
Joe Nickell is called “the modern day Sherlock Holmes” for a reason. He has had a long and distinguished career as a full-time paranormal investigator, solving many mysteries and casting strong doubt on others along the way.

In his latest book, “Tracking the Man-Beasts,” Nickell presents summaries of a variety of monster and manimal lore, taking the reader along on his own investigations, reporting on the investigations of others, and shining light on the most pertinent facts along the way.

If any criticisms could be made of this book, it’s that it just is not very in-depth on the cases. Most chapters are summed up in just a few pages, leaving me wishing for more investigations reports that go further and delve deeper into the individual mysteries presented. Readers who are well read in monster lore will be disappointed.

Still, that may be me reviewing what I wish the book had been instead of what it is. If you are a new or intermediate

reader into monster mysteries like I am, you’ll find this book valuable. Though case studies are short, the information that is provided is solid. I learned many interesting details I had missed elsewhere and, if you pick up this book, you’ll learn a few things, too.



ODDS & ENDS

The Bent Spoon would like to pay respects to Christopher Hitchens who sadly passed away December 16, 2011 from esophageal cancer. May your memory never be forgotten and may your words be read by and to the generations to come. I fear the world has lost one of its last true intellectuals.

So we now raise our glasses of Johnnie Walker Black in your honor and say so long Hitch.



CORRECTIONS

In the “Ghost Hunting” issue of The Bent Spoon, I included a brief “debunking” engineered by Ben Radford of The White Witch of Rose Hall, Annie Palmer. In the article, I wrote that Annie Palmer could not have existed because she was completely made up.

Astute reader and friend, Ken Summers, pointed out to me that Annie Palmer did, in fact, exist - just not in the way the fictional legend would indicate. I apologize for the slight error, and direct curious readers to Ken’s post on this topic for more information: <http://whofortedblog.com/2011/12/09/jamaican-scared-rose-hall/>

Jason Korbus