

THE

BENT'S

MOON

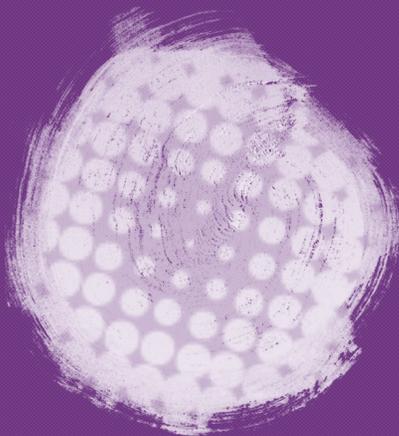
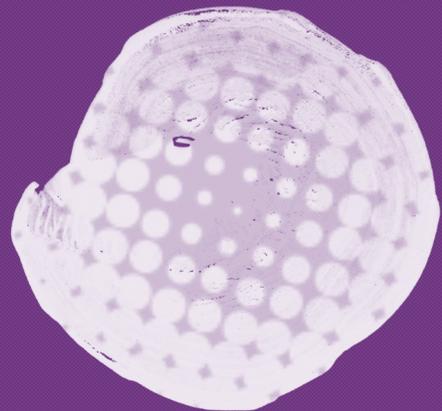
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PROJECT
PHILLIP PART 1

JEFF WAMSLEY

A PICTURE OF
PARANORMAL
FRAUD



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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SOUPERNATURAL

BY JASON KORBUS



PROVING THE PARANORMAL

I've written before about contradictions by paranormal investigators in *The Bent Spoon* [1]. How some ghost hunters say they're not in the field for fame, yet actively try to get on television. Or how they say they aren't trying to prove anything to anyone, and yet get upset and raise their voice when you don't take their word that they've captured evidence of ghosts. Well, today I want to write about a very specific type of contradiction I've seen a lot of in the paranormal community; one that has to do with the very definition of "paranormal."

Here is what I mean:

...nation" or phenomena that is "outside of science's ability to or [sic] measure." In other words, the paranormal is that which science cannot explain. That's not very helpful, is it? And it's wrong, for at least two reasons. One, scientists cannot, nor do they make the claim, to be able to explain everything. There are still mysteries about the natural world science is working on now. For instance, we are still exploring the instant after the Big Bang. But does that make the events that happened after the Big Bang paranormal? No, of course not. Science also doesn't deal with questions of morality. Asking if an action is

"paranormal" alone is not worth much.

Secondly, "paranormal," as it is defined here is very convenient for ghost hunters who are constantly trying to show they have discovered proof. It is an easy way to attempt to avoid criticism. If they are ever questioned about their evidence or methodologies, they can simply say, "Hey, science can't explain the paranormal."

But that's bullshit. If the paranormal is real and produces real phenomena that people can hear, see and experience in other ways, then it is most definitely

THE DEFINITION OF PARANORMAL

Paranormal is (coined ca. 1915–1920) that designates experiences that lie outside "the range of normal experience or scientific explanation" or that indicates phenomena that are understood to be outside of science's ability to or measure.

Let's take a look at that definition as proposed by APER (Akron Paranormal & Entity Research) on their website [2]. The paranormal is defined here as experiences that lie "outside the range of...scientific expla-

moral simply is not a scientific question. If you are investigating the topic of capital punishment from a moral perspective, are you investigating the paranormal? Obviously not. So we can see that this definition of

able to be measured by science. And not only that, but the "paranormal" would then become "normal," a part of our understanding of the natural world.

So it struck me as particularly

silly when the same team that claims that the paranormal is outside of the capability of science to prove, APER, says that they conduct their investigations using scientific methods!

I took the time to contact both of these teams to get their take on my findings for this article. I wanted to give them the opportunity to explain their thought process. Unfortunately, I have

nothing wrong with paranormal investigation as long as you are doing it correctly. Doing it correctly means using a sound scientific approach. But if you start with the idea that the para-

APER

is a private, not for profit, group dedicated to studying and investigating claims of the paranormal. We use a scientific approach to our investigations, as opposed to a metaphysical one, to obtain non-disputable evidence of the paranormal. We do not use Ouija boards, dowsing rods, or seances as part of our investigations

It's madness! Forget the fact that the vast majority of paranormal teams don't know how science operates. How can you say the paranormal cannot be proven by science, but then go around claiming you are finding evidence of the paranormal by using science? It just doesn't make any sense.

Sadly, this definition of the paranormal and subsequent contradiction isn't limited to only APER. I found the same thing when I surfed over to the website of SEOPI (Southeastern Ohio Paranormal Investigators). They, too, define the paranormal as being beyond the range of scientific explanation, then turn right around and claim to use scientific methods in their collection of evidence [3].

not heard back from them. It has now been months since my original contact, so I think it's safe to say I'm no longer expecting a response.

What, then, is a better definition of "paranormal"? For that I'll direct you to Benjamin Radford's book, "Scientific Paranormal Investigation," wherein he uses the term to mean, "something that appears to be supernatural or seems to violate natural laws." Note how he qualifies it as something that is not necessarily extraordinary at all. Instead, his definition shows that, while certain phenomena may appear to violate natural laws, those mysteries are there to be investigated and potentially solved [4].

And that's the point. There's

normal is outside the realm of science, then improperly claim to be using science to detect it, you're not only just contradicting yourself, but you look extremely ignorant in the process.

REFERENCES:

1. "The Bent Spoon" Issue 9 pp. 20-21
2. <http://www.aperrequest.net>
3. <http://www.seohiopi.com>
4. "Scientific Paranormal Investigation" by Benjamin Radford, Part 1 Chapter 1.

PROGRESSION



BY
**NICHOLAS
CALLIS**

Say I am in my bedroom and I want to go to the kitchen. The most efficient path, being a straight line, is obstructed by a wall. Let's also say that I am... inexperienced in traversing my home. I plot my kitchen-bound course and, of course, I am impeded by the wall. What is my next plan of action? Continuing on my path, I can by no means make any progress to the kitchen.

As absurd as this analogy is, there is a parallel to modern ghost hunting. The assortment of tools and techniques used by the majority of paranormal investigators is fully known to be found lacking, to say the least. So why not abandon the K2 meters and digital thermometers? Why continue talking to dictaphones and "going dark"? It's time we give up the ghost, so to speak, and make a course adjustment in the field of paranormal investigation.

While many make the claim, I have yet to see a ghost hunting team employ the scientific method. But why, you might ask, would we use the scientific method when investigating phenomena outside the realm of science? Well, to those who would ask this, know that the term paranormal does not mean outside the realm of science, but maybe more precisely, seemingly outside the realm. You see, by claiming that it is, indeed, outside of science's reach, you are making

leap of judgement about a phenomenon that has no true characteristics that have been documented or established by the field at large. The reader should also be aware that the term science does not represent a body of knowledge, but a method of pursuing truth. An endeavour that I would assume appeals to all ghost hunters.

So, where does it all begin then? How do we tackle these extraordinary claims using science? Simple, We employ a Null Hypothesis!

A null hypothesis is a prediction made by the investigator that they try to disprove or nullify. So, for example, instead of beginning an investigation by deliberately seeking the paranormal explanation, instead propose that all the claims are the effect of natural causes. Then you simply create tests to either confirm or reject your proposal. k2 meters and digital voice recorders don't come into play. And why should they? There is no empirical evidence to support their use and so, should be discarded.

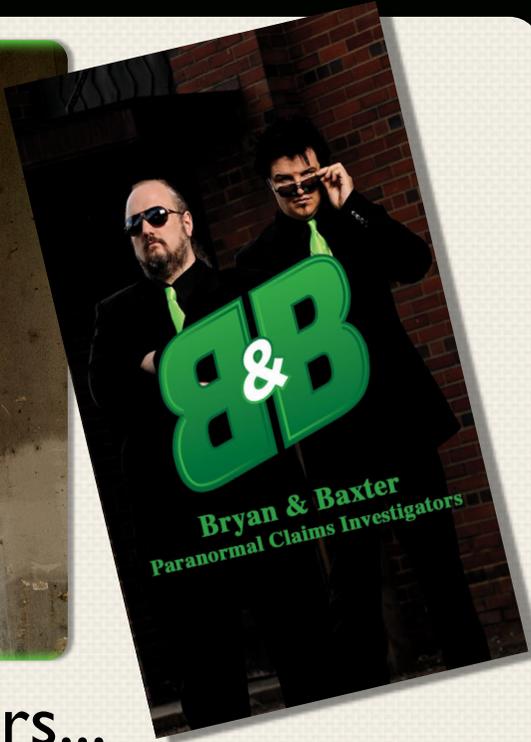
The next step is creating and performing tests to disprove your prediction. This would entail creating events and circumstances that would produce the effect of the paranormal claim. If they are successful, you will have supported your hypothesis that the phenomena was indeed natural. Of course,

we should keep in mind that unexplained does not mean unexplainable. In other words, if your tests fail, it is still unwise to jump to the paranormal conclusion, since you may not have all of the factors at your disposal. Whatever caused the phenomena in question took place in an uncontrolled environment, so there are bound to be lurking variables that you cannot possibly account for. The most important thing to know is that it's OK to say "I don't know".

Finally, we come to the results and what to do with them. Instead of pouring over hours of audio and video, searching for anomalies, publish your collected data (consisting of the claims, your hypothesis, and your tests) to a blog or your team's facebook page so that your peers and colleagues can review and repeat the tests you created and add valuable input to your investigation.

Hopefully I've made a case for progression in paranormal research. While I understand that it may be hard to reject the familiar form of "tradition" in ghost hunting, we should all make sure not to trade what is rational for ritual.

BRYAN & BAXTER



Investigating the investigators...

For years Bryan and Baxter have put out the fires started by unprofessional paranormal groups. More than once they've received 3am calls from terrified people who've been mistreated by other "investigators". These groups cause damage by using risky investigation practices and spreading dangerous beliefs. Finally, Bryan and Baxter decided to do something about it. They began

investigating the investigators to expose the harm they cause to the public. The pair exposes fake claims of space aliens, abduction victims, demonic possession, dangerous alternative medicine, and people who believe they can communicate with the dead. The results are hilarious, often dramatic and always entertaining.

Beyond the deception they uncover, Bryan and Baxter still encounter strange phenomena that they can't explain immediately. They've seen chairs move in an empty room, they've heard disembodied voices, and once Bryan was slapped by an unseen hand. Sometimes, the questions remain unanswered; at least for now...



PROJECT PHILLIP

PART ONE



BY
**BOBBY
NELSON**

One of my favorite stories in the circle of paranormal/parapsychology research was a phenomenon in which a group of researchers claimed to have made contact with an entity who called himself Philip. It was in the early 1970's when a group called Toronto Society of Psychological Research announced they contacted this spirit. Philip was a middle aged man who lived in the mid 1600's. Philip was a married man who was having a secret affair with a gypsy. When Philip's wife found out about this, he had the gypsy tried for witchcraft and burned at the stake. Philip, fearing for his reputation, never said a word in defense of the gypsy. Feeling so guilty that he didn't speak up and save the gypsy, Philip ended up committing suicide.

It took TSPR almost a year of trying to contact Philip when he decided to show up. The group was using a method called table tipping and through this technique they were able to talk to Philip through rapping and knocks. The group was able to find out how Philip felt on political views, they also claimed that they were able to tell what type of mood Philip was in at the time; if he was in a good mood the table would tip back forth with lots of energy, if Philip was in a

bad mood sounds of scratching could be heard. Supposedly, Philip wasn't just limited to the table, he could turn the lights off and on and also move other objects in the room (though none was shown in any of the documentaries I've ever seen). One day when Philip was incredibly "active," someone in the group asked an interesting question of Philip, which was, "Philip do you know you are not real?" After this Philip's activity ceased.

Philip was not a disembodied ghost but an experiment conducted by the Toronto Society of Psychological Research. The story was carefully thought up, along with a portrait the group had drawn up for Philip. Unfortunately for the group, they were never able to answer the how and why questions for this experiment. Was it the group's collective subconscious working together or was it really a spirit that was conjured and attached itself to the story of Philip? One interesting thing to look at is that Philip couldn't provide information other than what the team thought up for him, which in my opinion is always a red flag.

What you just read about Philip was from an article I wrote about 4 years ago. I used to be obsessed

with the story of Philip, I always found it amazing that a group of people could fabricate a biography of a person that never existed in the 17th century and receive "positive," ghost-like evidence such as rapping, knocking, lights turning on and off, moving objects around, and so on. I remember thinking that this phenomena was so impressive, it was so amazing that the naysayers were just over looking the evidence.

Today I have a different perspective on the story of Philip. Though it still remains one of my favorite stories (and nothing more), I no longer believe it to be amazing. In fact, I don't find it at all remarkable that a group finds what they believe to be "positive" evidence of something that was non-existing. Even if this "evidence" seems to be paranormal in nature.

To prove this, Jason Korbus and I devised a plan to show that if you give your run-of-the-mill ghost hunter a back story to a location and deem it haunted, they will most likely confirm your findings with what they consider positive evidence. We carefully created a story that went something like this: a local Toledo family needs the help of a paranormal investigation team. The family is experiencing activity that includes phantom voices, phantom footsteps, and objects turning on and

off by themselves. Jason then placed an ad on Craigslist and also contacted a few local groups by email. Almost instantly we had a response from a group that goes by the Northwest Ohio Paranormal Society. Jason then arranged a place to have a sit down meeting with them, followed with NWOPS investigating the said location (my house).

Jason and I were playing the roles of what we call anomalous sociologists, a term totally made up by the two of us, our job was to follow around a group of ghost hunters to clear up any misconceptions the general population may have on how they really operate.

Before we went into the location to meet NWOPS for the first time, Jason noticed that I had my skeptic pin on. I quickly removed it because we didn't want the team to know that we are skeptics. From personal experiences, we have found that when a group knows or

thinks you are skeptical of paranormal claims, they do not act like themselves, they start telling the skeptics things that they want to hear. For example:

“We know that a lot of paranormal teams use EMF meters to detect ghosts, however we use them just to find out if there is any type of correlation between a spike and possible activity.”

We wanted to avoid excuses like this. We wanted the group to act as natural as possible.

After a quick introduction, we got right down to business. There were some questions we were highly interested in.

After about a half hour, we had NWOPS follow us to my house, which we said was my cousin's house, and they had full access to it. One thing we said was that my cousin was a bit of an occultist because I have a collection of paranormal

oddities so this would be a suitable explanation as to why these things were in the house. When we arrived at the location we gave a quick tour of the house and showed them

where all of the “hotspots” of activity were, we also explained that a woman named Rayleen had died in the house. After that, we let NWOPS set up their equipment for the investigation. The first weird thing I noticed was that while setting up the equipment, we were told by one of the investigators (who was handling all the equipment) that they had no idea what any of the equipment did and that they almost always break a piece of equipment during set up.

After they set up all the equipment, none of which was broken, they decided that they wanted to start off the investigation by splitting up into two groups. One group of two in the basement and one group of two on the main floor. I went with the group in the basement and

	Randy (Lead Investigator)	Veronica	Lee	Richard
Age?	30	25	26	40
Experience Level?	2008	2008	2012 (1 st investigation)	2012 (1 st investigation)
Interest Started When?	12	7	Young	18
Paranormal Experiences?	Witnessed an apparition	Family visiting after death	None	Doors opening by themselves
Religion?	Lutheran	Undecided	Christian (Methodist)	Christian
Education Level?	High School	High School	High School	High School
Why do this?	To prove skeptics wrong.	To have fun.	To help people.	The thrill of the hunt and to help people.
Methodology?	Scientific and equipment based.	Scientific and equipment based.	Scientific and equipment based.	Scientific and equipment based.

Jason stayed with the group on the main floor.

In the basement, I watched as Veronica took the lead, teaching Richard the ropes of paranormal investigating. She explained why they used EMF meters and the different “theories” of why ghostly presences hung around. Richard was in charge of using an infrared thermometer and taking temperature readings and Veronica was taking pictures with a digital camera. I noticed that every few minutes, the temperature was checked and each time, a verbal report was given that it was getting colder than the original base line reading. I got the feeling that he was trying to make some sort of paranormal correlation between the temperature dropping and the possibility of a spirit being present. However, that is just my own speculation. After about 30 minutes of temperature readings and eye-blinding pictures being taken, the batteries went dead in a piece of equipment brought by the team. I was assured that these were fresh batteries and to take note of this experience because this is what usually happened when a ghost was around. What the entity was doing was trying to harness the energy given off by the battery to manifest itself.

After the batteries were replaced, the lead investigator announced that he wanted the team to start an EVP session. However, he wanted the group to stay in two teams and do the EVP sessions simultaneously. This was alarming, the fact that there were two separate groups, one in the basement and one on the main floor, both doing an EVP session at the same

time? The bleed through alone could lead to an inordinate amount of false positives.

Upstairs, Jason Korbus was experiencing something that very well explains how NWOPS operates. According to Jason, after about 5 minutes of doing an EVP session (I must make it clear that Jason does indeed say that he could hear the EVP session going on in the basement), the lead investigator stops the digital recorder, rewinds, and reviews the audio, on the spot. After a few minutes of listening to the audio, the lead investigator announces that he caught an EVP. He approached his team member and asked if he could make out what the voice was saying. The team member replied with, “look down,” the team lead gave him a nod in the negative, then he said, “no, it is saying, ‘go.’” It was almost instantaneously that the newbie was in full agreement with the team lead.

This was a common occurrence throughout the night; the team leader was never challenged. He almost always heard something different than what the rest of the team thought they were hearing, but his word was golden, whatever he said was what was going on, discussion over. I witnessed this several times during the ghost box session, which is what I will get into next. After the EVP session, the group decided that we should all gather in the living room, where I had said Rayleen died. A ghost box was brought into the room and surprisingly (to the group, not to me or Jason), nothing happened for a while. Almost instantly, we started getting apologies from the team for the lack of activity that the box

was producing. This caught me off guard; it showed me that this group obviously felt as if they had an obligation to show us some type of paranormal evidence. It was also around the time that my dog, Indiana, was jumping on the back door, causing big bangs to be heard all throughout the house. I made it very clear many times that night that the bangs were indeed the dog. After a while of listening to the same five questions being asked over and over again, nothing happened.

The group decided to take a 10 minute smoke break and we all went outside, we were told that sometimes the entities like to speak into the recorders after everyone has left the premises. When we went back into the house, the group decided that we should continue the ghost box session in the bedroom, another “hotspot” of activity. This was the room in which we got a visit from a voice through the box, again Jason and I heard nothing. The team lead said that the box had said, “hello,” that its name was Paul, and then a bunch of typical random words and phrases it always said, such as “drunk,” “get out,” “two,” “fuck,” “help,” “out,” “get out,” “miller,” “mead,” and “please help.”

Now when the box said all of these fascinating things, that only the team lead was able to decipher, he would also give reasons why it was legit. For example:

“We know that the FCC regulates language on the radio, the word fuck would never be allowed to be said on the airwaves.”

Also, what I found to be extremely interesting was that the box supposedly said the words Miller and Mead, both of which have significant relevance to individuals on the team, specifically last names. I remember thinking, “how convenient.”

Now that the box was hot, the group then decided to go back into the living room for another session. Again, the team leader was excited to announce that the box said the word “asshole,” and to remember that words like this can’t be said on the airwaves. But it wasn’t too long before we were visited by another entity; this one went by the name of Katie. Katie didn’t say much, however it wasn’t long after that that a little girl named Megan showed up. Again, we were bombarded with words only the team lead could decipher, but it was amazing watching the rest of the group confirm everything that he was saying. They were all like little yes-men.

Shortly after the ghost box sessions ended, NWOPS decided to call it a night. They assured us that they would get back to us in about a week to discuss their findings.

After about 5 days, Jason received an email with a ton of substandard evidence, and I mean the substandard of substandard. NWOPS sent us everything from orbs flying around my dusty basement to horrible EVP’s and ghost box clips of phrases and words that can’t be made out even after being primed. They also sent a recording of the sound of a loud bang that they say couldn’t be explained because no one heard it at the time. I will say, no, we all heard it and I

explained that it was my dog jumping on the back door. I made that clear on a number of occasions during the night.

The findings can be seen here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xi5ulNmZkI&feature=youtu.be>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt46vhtVLYY&feature=youtu.be>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm12CQlxgRI&feature=plcp>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNkMANcJiEA&feature=plcp>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id7ZXy1oyjE&feature=plcp>

NWOPS confirmed that the house was indeed haunted, not just by Rayleen, the ghost created by myself and Jason, but also by three other entities, Paul, Katie, and Megan. The one thing I found highly disturbing was that there was absolutely no resolution on how to deal with said paranormal squatters. NWOPS said that they offered help, but that is absolutely not true. No help was given, they only established that the house was haunted and presented substandard evidence.

This shocks me more than anything else. I was honestly expecting some type of remedy to be offered, a house blessing, a shaman walking around with a feather and a bowl of burning sage, anything really. However, since nothing of the sort was suggested, I can only express my extreme disgust with what did happen post-investigation.

What I kept thinking was, “What if I truly believed my house was haunted? What if I was seriously scared? I suggested to this team that I wanted the ghost out of my house but the only thing they did

was confirm that there were multiple ghosts present (and one was a swearing man named Paul who said drunk and get out).” I cannot begin to explain how irresponsible this is and it must be known that Jason Korbus tried multiple times to figure out what the next step was. Email after email sent, asking how to get these entities out of the house, they all went ignored. A lot of people ask me, “What’s the harm in having a paranormal team come to your house to do a ghost hunt?” Well, this is just one example. Potentially coming to a location where a homeowner may be scared out of their wits, offering to provide them with help, confirming that the house is inhabited with disembodied spirits, and when asked for help, the inquiry goes ignored. Not to mention the loads of improper and false information that was given at the time of the investigation. There should be a penalty for behavior like this.

However, though I was highly displeased with the way NWOPS presented themselves, I must say I was very happy with the results of this little experiment (but by no means was this a controlled scientific test). I just wanted to show that if you create a ghost story and find a team that is doing nothing more than trying to confirm ghost claims, they will indeed find “positive” evidence, much like the parapsychologists in Toronto. Creating a ghost and psyching yourself and others out with false positives and claiming that it is positive evidence of paranormal phenomena is not science, it is not research, it is not investigation, and it is not impressive, it is not impressive at all.

MOTHMAN RISING

AN INTERVIEW WITH

JEFF WAMSLEY



JASON KORBUS

The Mothman Festival, which takes place annually in Point Pleasant, WV is just around the corner. Celebrating the local paranormal legend it draws its name from, The Mothman Festival will kick off it's 11th installment Saturday September 15th and run through the 16th. I had the pleasure of talking with Jeff Wamsley, the driving force behind this event, to get his thoughts on the festival, as well as the sightings that sparked it all.

"I was born and raised here in Point Pleasant. I was 5 years old when the sightings started," Jeff says. "We lived a few doors away from (original witness) Linda Scarberry, so as I grew older and saw books like John Keel's "The Mothman Prophecies," I realized that this stuff all happened real close by."

What happened was the Mothman, and it is among the most talked about stories among paranormal enthusiasts. For those that don't know much about it, Jeff recounts the details: "Point Pleasant first saw this thing on November 15th 1966 up in the TNT area. Two young couples saw it. 7 feet tall, giant wings and glowing red eyes. From there on out over 100 reported sightings were filed; tons of UFOs too."

But the intrigue didn't stop there. In the wake of these sightings, more strange things started happening. According to Mr. Wamsley, "many Mothman and UFO witnesses were approached by strange looking men dressed in black who warned and threatened them about speaking to the press, newspapers and media. Many witnesses were intimidated into keeping quiet, and some are still silent to this day."

Unfortunately, Jeff himself has had no luck getting them to open up either. "Believe me, I have tried to get them to sit down with me and talk about what they saw. Not going to happen."

Jeff is aware as anyone that the story of Mothman can sound a little far fetched, and understands why some might be skeptical of it. But, as he puts it, skeptics are just a part of the story. "It would be hard to believe this stuff unless you had encountered it or spoke to people who did and I have. These people are not professional liars by any means. Too many people saw it and described it the same way."

Aside from growing up in the area, Mr. Wamsley operates the world's one and only Mothman Museum. It is here that folks come to check out props from the film John Keel's book inspired, as well as grab a souvenir or two, be they books, pins, t-shirts and more. Simply put, the story of Mothman, as well as his hometown, are important to him.

"Not every small town like Point Pleasant has its own monster," Jeff jokes. "The festival was started (over) 10 years ago to get some folks to visit Main Street. Now there is nowhere to park during the festival. I really feel I owe my hometown something. It was a great place to grow up. It just happened to also be the home to UFOs, Men in Black, and giant things that flew around."

If you are interested in heading to Point Pleasant for the Mothman Festival this year, Jeff says you can expect plenty. "Lots of people, food, guest speakers, vendors, live bands, hayrides, bus tours. We try

to bring something new each year. It's just a big family reunion for all who come each year. Its always good to see old friends who like to hunt for Mothman."

Myself, as well as the two founders of The Bent Spoon, Bobby Nelson and Nick Callis, will be heading to Point Pleasant this year and look forward to enjoying the festivities. We're also planning to drop in on the TNT area to conduct our own investigation. Maybe we'll see you and the Mothman there!

For more information about the Mothman Festival, including speakers as well as restaurants and accommodations you might want to check out in the area, please visit www.mothmanfestival.com



WHISPERS ESTATE INVESTIGATION



BY
**KENNY
BIDDLE**

Whispers Estate Investigation
July 2 to 4, 2010

*Those Present – Myself, Donna,
Shaun, Nathan, Stacy,*

History

The building which is now called Whispers Estate is believed to have been built around the year 1894 (it seems to be unknown at this time, and this is a “Best Guess”). Dr. John Gibbons and his wife, Jessie, bought the house in 1899, using the 1st Floor rooms for the doctor’s medical practice of over twenty years.

John & Jessie are reported to have adopted several orphaned children, two of which (that we know of) died in the house. Rachael, aged 10 years, is reported to have started a fire in the Front Parlor. The child suffered severe burns and passed away two days later. Elizabeth, aged 10 months, reportedly died in the Master Bedroom of unknown causes. Jessie Gibbons, John’s wife, also died (reportedly) after a two week battle with pneumonia, though there is no date or time frame given. It is on these three deaths that the majority of the paranormal claims are based upon. What is important to note here, there is no documentation known at this time, to back up the claims that these children actually died in the way the stories claim they did. As of this writing, they are nothing more than stories.

Other history of deaths include an older gentleman that passed away in the 2nd Floor bathroom, with a rumor that he was in the tub. A child, Gary T. (aged 9 years) fell down the main stairs and died before help arrived.

In 2006, a man purchased the house after it had been left empty for several years. While restoring the house, the owner reported hearing voices, among other strange experiences. The owner would constantly ask friends to stay over, who also reported the same activity. The voices are behind why the house is now called “Whispers Estate”.

In 2008, it seems that the house was purchased by the current owner (as of 2010). I was unable to speak with the owner, but reports from ghost hunters I’ve talked to vary as to whether the voices, which is supposed to be the most amazing experience, are actually still happening.

There are other historical claims made on the Whispers Estate website, and copied on other ghost hunting websites. This information is not going to be repeated here, as none of it has been verified and some is very damaging to a man’s name.

Paranormal Claims

Rachael -The most popular claim is of the voice of Rachael, the 10 year old girl who died as a result of a fire she started. There are recordings of her singing the nursery rhyme “Ring Around the Rosie”, among other short answers. The “amazing” part of the claim is that these voices are audible by everyone in the main parlor (as apposed to EVP, where the voice cannot be heard until the recording is played back). Rachael is also thought to be the

Elizabeth –Right along with Rachael’s singing is Elizabeth’s crying, which is just as audible (and recorded just as much) as the singing. A sound that has been claimed to be a baby crying is heard from the main parlor.

Tremors – Visitors claim to feel tremors/shaking in the “Doctor’s Bathroom”, as well as seeing beds and couches shake “violently”.

Big Black – A “shadow” figure that has been sighted throughout the house. It’s actually been claimed that this is “not of this world” (Yes, an alien being in the form of a shadow that decided to haunt this house in the middle of Indiana).

Dr. John – Reported that the spirit of Dr. John whispers in the ears of young women, as well as grabbing and/or fondling them.

Various Experience – There are other, classic haunting type experiences reported; footsteps, toys moving, EVPs, etc. that have been reported from within the house.

Set Up

I positioned eight DVR cameras with IR capability throughout the house, as follows;

- 1- Dr. Bedroom
- 2- Dining Room
- 3- Rachael's Room
- 4- 2nd Floor Main Hallway from Servant's Quarters
- 5- 2nd Floor Hallway looking down Main Stairs
- 6- 2nd Floor Servant's Staircase, covering stairs and back door
- 7- Attic Bedroom, against windows and facing Bed and Doorway
- 8- Attic, Séance Room, against back facing doorway and doorway to Bedroom

Audio Recorders were also attached to each camera, with additional recorders placed as follows;

- 1- Half-Way up Main Staircase
- 2- Surgical Room – On top of Fireplace, above vent
- 3- Kitchen – Next to the open vent.

I photographed the entire interior and exterior of the building prior to setting up the video equipment. I was then taken on a tour of the house by Shaun Burris, who gave me the history of the house as he knew it.

Investigation

Friday – I set up the DVR cameras & system through the house (reference list above). The cameras were set in place to monitor all of the areas where activity has been reported, since it only seems to happen when no one is present. The

cameras were also set up to keep track of the other people staying in the house this weekend. This is not intended to imply they are not trustworthy, only that this is the first time I was meeting most of them. Certain factors must be taken into account when “teaming up” with ghost hunters from different areas and backgrounds (personal beliefs, ideas, perspectives, experience, etc.) when conducting an investigation into specific claims. Having cameras up helps to cut down and any “help” the ghosts might get from the living.

Shaun, who was leading this ghost hunt, began calling for the ghosts to make contact at about 10 o'clock, following a list of times/experiences left by the current owner. For well over three hours, they attempted to get the ghosts to respond. I was curious as to how the other people present with me (and my wife) would conduct this ghost hunt. Some of the attendees were busy drinking, which I suspect was to both calm their nerves (in the expectation of what they

believed was going to happen tonight) and to enhance the thrill-seeker experience the ghostly voices were sure to provide.

Although no voices were heard during the night. There were plenty of small instances in which jumped the excitement of several attendees. Most were simple noises associated with the settling of the house, expansion/contraction on the building and also some hyper imaginations. One that stood out was the “ticking” noise. While asking for Rachael to talk to us, one of the ghost hunters kept saying he heard a “ticking” noise coming from the 2nd floor. I asked if all the ceiling fans in the 2nd floor bedrooms were turned off. He assured me they were. However, since I'm not one to take anyone's word for it...I headed up the stairs to check it out. Sure enough, I found the ceiling fan in the front bedroom still spinning rapidly, with the brackets for the lights actually making contact with the post of the bed. Once the fan was turned off, the ticking noise vanished. Mystery



The four post bed with the ceiling fan that it makes contact with.

solved.

Unfortunately, in the end, nothing strange happened. What's worse, is that I was well into a bad case of Strep Throat and had to turn in early (2 AM), while several people stayed up well into the wee hours of the morning.

Saturday – After a night of unrest (caused by a fever from the worsening strep throat), I woke up to some of the guys removing a panel under the main staircase. We had discussed removing the panel the day before due to my opinion that the voices being heard had been “piped in”, meaning they were recorded audio clips that had been played and heard through the ventilation system.

With the panel held on by one screw, it was easily moved aside enough to allow us a peek inside, under the main staircase. Two things stood out; a single child's boot and a large, gaping hole in the floor. The child's boot was the

focus of a very short-lived idea that is was connected to the children supposedly haunting the place. This was dismissed almost as soon as it was brought up...since the boot was a very modern version. The hole, however, was of more interest to me.

The hole was approximately 36 inches wide. It seems to have been connected to a large, aluminum vent shaft which ran towards the large, make-shift Air Conditioning unit in the basement. I headed down to the basement, rigged a step stool, and climbed up into the crawl space that encompassed more than half of the area below the house. The crawl space is about three feet high, with at one time was a simple dirt floor. Now, with so much exposure to the outside elements (compliments of the holes throughout the porch), the floor took on a sponge-like texture. It also did not allow footprints to form.

The two main paranormal claims

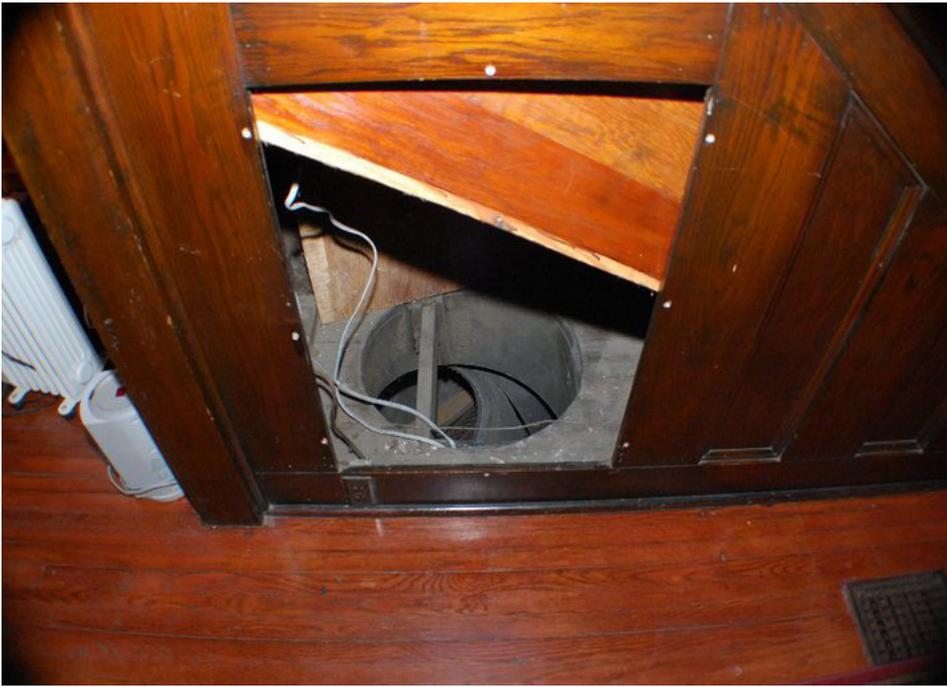
of the house is the voice of Rachael (Talking, Singing), and the Cry of Elizabeth (sound of baby crying). A key note concerning these claims is that they are heard at their loudest by the main staircase. In addition to the three foot wide hole hidden behind the main stairs, there is a vent grate in the floor just to the right of the panel we removed, within the main hallway. This vent grate was not connected to any ventilation duct, it was another open hole to the basement/crawl space, approximately 4 feet from the larger hole under the staircase.

Something I also noticed was that there was still part of the aluminum duct attached to the three foot wide hole under the stairway. What I also noticed was that this created an echo effect when I spoke to the guys up on the first floor, while kneeling down and looking around the crawl space. This set off a Red Flag in my head, because of the many audio recordings I've heard come from Whispers Estate. Among all the singing and talking that has been recorded, they have all something in common; an echo. Granted, an echo is usually heard when playing back audio from within a room (when not using professional recording equipment). However, the echo from the ghostly voice was distinctly different from the echo heard from the living people in the room (usually asking Rachael to talk to them). This echo was what initially gave me the idea that the voices were pre-recorded and were piped in.

I decided to try a simple experiment, since the majority of people that were present at this time had previously heard the voices. I



Opening the panel, and the open vent in the floor



Looking at the hole under the stairs with the panel moved out of the way

pulled out my small digital recorder and hit “record”. I sang (badly) a bit of the nursery rhyme Ring Around the Rosie, as well as repeating “Mommy, Mommy” a few times. I then replayed it while holding the recorder within the remnants of the vent duct. The people in the 1st floor Parlor verified that it sounded much like what they’ve heard in the past (except for my voice substituting for Rachael’s).

Although this wasn’t concrete evidence that this is where the voices came from, it did begin to piece together a logical, natural (and faked) solution. Another piece came when I was making my way around the crawl space, searching for any other clues or oddities that would stick out. One did; a speaker. Right beside a support beam, which was set in between the hole under the stairs and the open vent, was a Pioneer Bookshelf 25 watt speaker, Item Number 66698 SPU. I hadn’t

noticed it at first due to its rather plain look. I honestly didn’t realize it was a speaker until I picked it up, noticing the wires coming out the back and the speaker grate on the front. It had been sitting square up against the beam and the wires wrapped around the corner of the support beam and headed towards the area of the basement that was suitable for standing. The speaker was not connected to anything, the wires simply stopped at a section of bare wire.

Later on, several more speakers were found buried under piles of hoses and other junk. An old CD player, with its top casing removed, was also found on workbench in the corner of the basement. Further questioning of the current owner revealed that the brother of the previous owner had worked on / experience in repairing audio equipment. These four clues; 1- The open hole under the stairs (with partial vent

duct still attached) and an open vent in the main hallway. 2- The discovery of the speaker placed between the two open holes. 3- The similar echo of a my recording to that of previous recording of the little girl, when played through the open hole under the stairs and 4- A family member of the previous owner with knowledge and experience in audio equipment and repair – all lead to the strong possibility of a hoax. In addition, it seems that the voice of Rachael has been somewhat absent since it was sold to the current owner, which only lends strength to the hoax idea.

We grabbed the speaker and attempted to power them up from a stereo on the main floor. Unfortunately, it didn’t work...but I was not surprised. If it had been part of a remote audio system, it had most likely not been used in approximately two years. A “bookshelf” speaker, exposed to the elements (heat, cold, moisture, rain/flooding) is not likely to operate after two years.

Although I believe this explains the singing and talking that has been heard in the past, I don’t believe it explains much of the crying that is believed to come from the spirit of Elizabeth – I think it’s a cat. I have the unfortunate luck of living next to a woman who I have nicknamed “The Cat Lady”, due to the amount of cats she feeds from the neighborhood. It’s a least once a week that I hear what sounds like a crying baby out in front of my house, only to find it’s a cat sitting in the driveway. Incidentally, a quick internet search will produce a multitude of sites with people complaining



The basement, with a view of what the crawl space looks like

about how their cat sounds like a crying baby. Another search on YouTube produces several video that allow you to experience the weird “crying baby” sound from a cat. On Saturday afternoon, I had witnessed a tan-striped cat run into the neighbor’s yard. I attempted to contact the neighbor, but they weren’t home (or didn’t want to open the door to a crazy ghost hunter stay at the haunted house next door...which is understandable).

Cat Crying Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2XavgBL2ZQ>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASL19uHcFgU>

We did discover a possible cause for another paranormal claim. While standing in the room that is believed to be the Doctor’s office (not the current bedroom, but the room adjacent to it), Shaun brought up an interesting experience; while standing near the windows, Shaun commented that the floor was shak-

ing/vibrating. Coming over to stand beside him, I found that the vibrations were very strong...strong enough to give the impression of “earthquake-like” tremors. The cause of this, we found, is the large Air Conditioning unit in the basement. When it kicked on, as well as while the compressor was running, the floor shook/vibrated in various spots throughout the Dr.

Waiting Room, Operating Room, Dinning Room and even in the Main Parlor. This can easily be attributed to the Tremors and Vibrating Furniture that has been reported in the past. Though, obviously there will be people that will not accept the connection, feeling more comfortable and content in associating the activity with an unknown entity.

This night included a broadcast from our hosts podcast The Ghostman and Demon Hunter Show, in which they would keep the microphones open for most of the night. This allowed for the listeners to hear all sorts of spooky creaks and snaps and whispers (from the living people present), so that they could type it into the chat room for all to ponder. True to form, this was pretty much exactly what happened this night as well.

I accompanied two of the ghost hunters up to the third floor, to



Looking down at the hole under th main stairs

what's been nicknamed the "Séance Room". It's a small room, with a blanket and candles laid out on the bare, wood floor. A large, square mirror – tilted 45 degrees so the corners

point up/down and right/left – hangs on the wall. I sat in here with Shaun and Jerry, and brought up the topic of Big Black (the shadow figure supposedly seen throughout the house). There doesn't seem to be one or two or three answers as to

who, or what Big Black is. According to the website, it could be a demon (from the description several psychics have given), an alien being (as stated by the current owner on the History section of the website), a dog-like entity that comes up

to the edge of the bed and sniffs guests (as described by some of the attendees) or even the mother of Dr. John Gibbons (as described by other attendees).

This is a classic and common problem with paranormal claims; everyone seems to have their own idea and/or version of the explanation of the claim, though none have any evidence what-so-ever to back it up. In the claim of Big Black, this "entity"

can be used as the cause for any shadow seen within the house.

Although, the town of Mitchell is small (and closes down almost completely at 7 PM every night), there are still plenty of cars, motorcycles, scooters, and modified golf karts (yes, I'm

serious) that go up and down the street, casting shadows throughout the house (there are plenty of windows, and reflective surfaces that are mighty good at bouncing shadows and lights). The extra is-



What the hole under the stairs looks like from the crawl space. Notice the duct that is crushed on the ground...and whats still attached to the hole.

sue of every one of the attendees knowing at

least one version of the story, and the heightened excitement of ghost hunters (whether drinking or not) leaves most with a slight expectation of seeing some kind of shadow, which will naturally feed the Big Black legend into growing more and more, with each ghost hunt.

At around 2:30 AM, I turned in for the night. In addition, the night was uneventful as well.

Summary

I went into this investigation with one main purpose; to experience the voices of Rachael and Elizabeth, and find out what was causing them – ghosts, cats, pre-recordings, whatever. After not experiencing the voices, I went looking for any clues

that may point me in some direction. Once the panel under the stairs was removed, the pieces

started falling into place. In all honesty, we can not say for sure that Rachael's voice was a hoax, the result of previously recorded audio clips played over a hidden speaker positioned under vent/holes in the floor. We didn't find an intact remote audio system, we only found speakers and an open-cased CD player. The rest of the clues – the brother with audio repair experience, where the speaker was

found, the sound heard from a recording when its played from the remaining duct work under the stairs, the fact that the voices have not been heard since the new owner took over – all points to a simple conclusion...a hoax. For me, this mystery is solved.

What would be the gain of such a hoax? In this particular case, there is the aspect of financial gain. The house had previously been a Bed & Breakfast, but it was located in a small town that (to me) was in the middle of nowhere. Ghosts have



quire line-of-sight, and can travel through floors, walls and cabinets. A remote can be as simple as a one-button “Pause/Play” option, and easily concealed within a shirt pocket, pants pocket or even within a shoe (yes, its been done). A simple timer could also be used to set off a recording, setting it to play at a specific time.

Over the course of three days (and battling Strep Throat and a fever), I found reasonable, natural explanations for the ‘Earthquake-like’ tremors, found that Big Black could be just about anything that resembled a shadow in the dark, and can easily attribute the crying of Elizabeth to a neighborhood cat (compared to my personal experience and against videos of this weird, but true action). Solved, solved and solved.

Three days was not enough time to get through all of the claims,

had the tendency to make a place a bit more attractive to groups of ghost hunters who are willing to spend their money. However, if a place that claims to be haunted doesn’t produce results, that potential income fades away. A gimmick such as “ghostly

voices heard with the naked ear” is something that will bring them in from all over the country. At the time of my investigation, the rates quoted on the website were as follows; “Flashlight Tours” - \$10 a person, “Public Investigations” - \$40 a person, “Private Investigations” – \$560 for up to 20 people. Given that the owner does not actually live in the house, the ghosts are the main source of income from the house. This is reason enough to keep the stories going. This is not to say that the

current owner is continuing a hoax, are being dishonest with clients who rent the house for their own investigations. He simply posts (on the website and Facebook page) what other ghost hunting

groups reportedly experience at the house.

With the right knowledge (such as from someone who repairs audio equipment), setting up a simple RF controlled CD player is pretty simple. RF signals do not re-





Cat crying like a baby video
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2XavgBL2ZQ>
Cat Crying like a baby video
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASL19uHcFgU>
RF Remote Control - http://www.crutchfield.com/S-ufyzZLX4RRQ/learn/learningcenter/home/multi-room_remote.html

though I'm sure that there will be more added over all the weekends in which excited, ready-to-believe ghost hunters will stay at the house. However, my time here was well spent – I investigated the claims that I came to check out, and I solved them to my satisfaction. As I saw with the incident of the fan that was still spinning (making a ticking noise when contacting the bed post), simple sounds can easily be caused by normal objects, normal house settling noises, and also misinterpreted by human error...especially when no one goes to check it out.

Although there were many more “experiences” to test, I physically did not have it in me (the fever and late nights were taking its toll on me). Given enough time, and using more of a scientific method to look for causes, much of the “ghostly” activity now has a natural explanation to them... and the mystery becomes less mysterious.

References

Paranormal Claims & History - <http://www.whispersestate.net/html/history.html>
Reservation Rates - <http://www.whispersestate.net/html/reservations.html>



A PICTURE OF PARANORMAL FRAUD



BY
JASON
KORBUS

There is a paranormal group that goes by the name of Ghosts of New England Research Society. G.O.N.E.R.S, for short. Recently, they began publicizing a hoaxed ghost photo as authentic. They have also been using the hoax, in part, to promote an episode of the Discovery Channel series “American Haunting” that they’ll be featured on this fall.

Understandably, this has gotten a number of people in the paranormal community up in arms. Fraudulent ghost photos are something most investigators decry and, indeed, it was skeptical paranormal investigators themselves who spotted the fraud in the first place.

The photo, taken at Ryder’s on Main, a bar and restaurant in Meridan, CT shows the hazy silhouette of what G.O.N.E.R.S calls “The Holy Grail of Paranormal Research: A Full Body apparition of what appears to be a women in 1920s-30s period attire...” Of course, anyone familiar with famous ghost photos recognized this image as the well-documented “Madonna of Bachelor’s Grove” taken at the Chicago cemetery by members of the Ghost Research Society in the summer of 1991. It had

simply been superimposed on a photo taken inside Ryder’s on Main by way of photoshop or perhaps even a smartphone app.

Skeptical paranormal investigator Kenny Biddle who, in full disclosure, must also be noted as a contributor to The Bent Spoon, first spotted the forgery on Facebook, drawing attention to the striking similarities between the images and quickly swayed opinion. While many on the thread were originally hyping it up as a great piece of evidence, they soon turned to castigating the paranormal team in question for using it to market themselves.

The story soon went viral and Ghosts of New England Research Society took the image down, apparently not commenting publicly on the matter. Many in the paranormal community have taken this incident to be the prime example why paranormal investigation is not accepted by the scientific mainstream. Even Brian Harnois, former cast member of the longest running fraudulent paranormal reality series on television, Ghost Hunters, said it is incidents like this that caused him to

retire from the field.

In defense of G.O.N.E.R.S, it is unclear whether they hoaxed the photo themselves, or were duped by the bar/restaurant. Either way, however, the paranormal team is culpable. They should have known how famous the Bachelor’s Grove image is, for one. Secondly, they should not have publicized and promoted the photo from Ryder’s on Main to get attention for their upcoming television exposure. They fell into a trap they set themselves with their own ignorance.

But is this really the cause of paranormal investigation not being taken seriously by science? Is fraud really the reason ghost hunters don’t get more credit from the scientific establishment? I think not. Fraud happens in science as well. Things like peer review help eliminate it, something most paranormal enthusiasts don’t seem to use. But even having examples of fraud throughout the history of science gives no one logical license to distrust the scientific process. It has worked for hundreds of years.

No, the reason ghost hunters are not taken seriously by science

is because they do not respect science. Ghost hunters, by and large, have a fundamental misunderstanding of how to operate under proper scientific methodologies or even to control their experiments. The evidence they put forth is not given credibility because it isn't evidence. At best, it is often just anomalies they found on their digital voice recorders or readings they took on their EMF meters. Anomalies which, by the way, have been explained countless times by science-based investigators.

If there's a lesson that can be learned from Ghosts of New England Research Society, it is this: your photographs are not proof of ghosts. But it can be proof that you don't seem to know what you are doing. So, if you want to be taken seriously by science, start taking science seriously and educate yourselves.

 **Ghosts of New England Research Society** shared Ghosts of New England Research Society's photo.
Yesterday

From the Ryders on Main, Meriden, CT., investigation. Soon to be seen on "American Haunting", Discovery Channel, this October.

The Holy Grail of Paranormal Research: A Full Body apparition of what appears to be a woman in 1920s-30s period attire. She is sitting and you are viewing her from her right side. Also captured at the restaurant in central CT.



The photograph in question



The original

OPEN FORUM

Those Odious Orbs Carolyn Dougherty

Recently my friend Wes Forsythe invited me on his show “Paranormal Filler” to discuss the never ending battle with those who believe in “spirit orbs”. He posed the question, “How the hell did we end up losing the orb debate?”

At first, I wasn’t so sure we (meaning those of us who don’t accept that orbs are paranormal since there is no supporting evidence) have lost the debate. After all, many more paranormal teams are now dismissing orbs in photos or videos, recognizing them as airborne particles. People are actively calling out teams who post them as “evidence”. Some paranormal sites won’t allow orbs photos at all. For example, MyPara.net enforces a strict no-orb policy. And thanks to experiments conducted by credible researchers,* there is plenty of available evidence showing what actually causes orbs in photos and video. But the fact that we’re still having the debate, despite all the information listed above, indicates we haven’t exactly won, either.

So, why? There are many people who want to believe in ghosts so badly that they will cling to any “evidence” that will support their beliefs - even after it has been soundly disproved. There also those who are emotionally invested

in catching “evidence” because it somehow feeds their egos or agendas. They create justifications of how “their” orb is the real deal. How many times have we heard the following: “But there was no dust when I took the picture.” “But I recorded an EVP in the same spot we caught the orb.” “But I felt a cold spot, when I took a picture, there was an orb.” “But this orb is real because it is more opaque than dust orbs”. Of course, all of these have also rational explanations, which people either don’t bother to learn about or choose to ignore. Then there is my personal pet peeve: “99% might be dust but there’s the 1% that are paranormal.” Who came up these numbers and where is the data to support them? There is absolutely nothing to substantiate this claim! Yet, it has been repeated so often that some people accept it as fact.

There are also claims that some orbs have been seen with the naked eye. There is no evidence that these are paranormal either. There are known phenomena to consider first, including ball lightning, electric discharge, piezoelectricity, bioluminescent matter, as well as visual misperceptions due from physiological and environmental factors. Before we call something supernatural, we should try to better understand the natural world first.

One of the biggest criticisms of paranormal investigating is that most people in the field fail to educate themselves about their equipment or scientific methodology before they go traipsing around with cameras, recorders and EMF meters. Many spend much more time coming up with nifty team names and logos and collecting “likes” on Facebook than they do learning the simple basics of how their cameras work. Even some “seasoned” investigators who boast they have been in the field for a decade or two are still presenting common false positives such as lens flare and long exposures as evidence. In today’s world, where information on basic photography is widely and easily accessible, there is no acceptable excuse for this.

Business-minded people recognize these issues and exploit them for profit. That is why we still have paranormal themed TV shows portraying orbs as evidence. Some try to be clever by changing the terminology from “orb” to “light anomaly, but it’s just the same camera affect caused by the same conditions. Unfortunately, bogus evidence attracts more viewers than does rational explanations. And viewership equals advertising revenue for the network, so I doubt they have any burning ambition to set the record straight.

In addition, many historic cities have at least one ghost tour. Again, the owners of these tours are in it for profit, so they promote false positives as “proof” to attract naive tourists. They also know these customers will share their “ghost photos” that they captured on these tours with friends and family. It’s great free advertising. And other businesses are cashing in on orb photos: for a fee, you too can “investigate” and “catch evidence” at so-called haunted hotels, restaurants, and abandoned hospitals. These owners are invested in continuing the promotion of spirit orbs. Not a lot of people are as willing to fork out the money if all they know that they are only photographing dust.

To be honest, I like to keep an open mind. After all, I used to be a believer myself before I took the time to do a little research. Maybe there are spirit orbs floating about. But until somebody comes up with technology that can provide objective data to differentiate them from the orbs caused by all the other known factors, I will remain skeptical.

So moving forward, how do we “win” the debate? My answer: inform and educate. If you have a voice, a website, or blog, then you have the power to counteract the misinformation being pushed onto the public by TV shows.

Make paranormal investigators and business owners accountable for any “evidence” they promote. If you spot someone presenting orb photos, contact them directly and provide relevant resources for them to learn from. If they persist after that, then either call them out publicly or notify someone who will.** The notion that orbs are ghosts didn’t pervade popular culture overnight. It was repeated as “fact” for a while before it took hold. With a little time and a lot of persistence, the truth will prevail.

*Kenneth Biddle: *Orbs Or Dust: A Practical Guide To False Positives*

Craig Telesha: *Strange Frequencies*

Midnite Walkers Paranormal Society: <http://midnite-walkers.com/experiments-false-orb-experiment.php>

Association for Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena: <http://www.assap.ac.uk/newsite/articles/Orb%20Zone%20Theory.html>

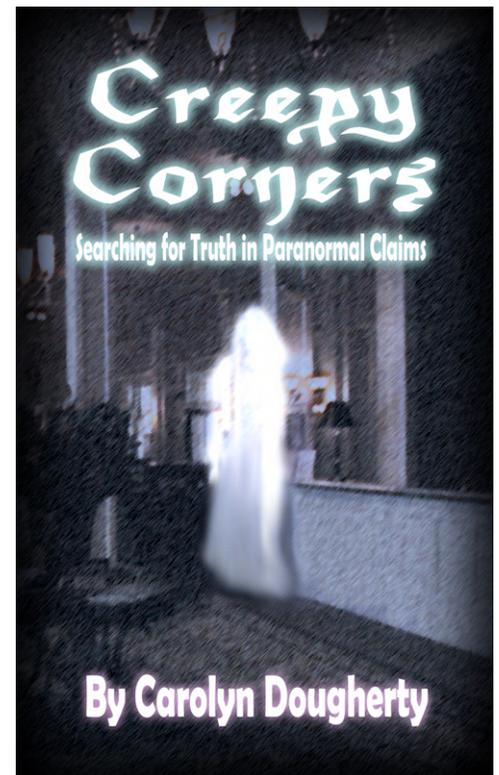
** Worst Paranormal: <http://www.worstparanormal.com/>

VIPER Paranormal: <http://www.viperparanormal.com/>

Debunk Paranormal: <http://wwps.grou.ps/home>

Carolyn Dougherty is a paranormal investigator and writer. Visit her blog: <http://carolynscreepy-corner.blogspot.com> Her book,

Creepy Corners: Searching for Truth in Paranormal Claims, is due for release in July.



OPEN FORUM

DISCLAIMER – From Bobby Nelson

One thing we want to do here with The Bent Spoon is get people to question their belief systems...and for the most part, I think we have accomplished that goal. We always encourage people to submit articles and or questions and comments. However, one thing I didn't expect, was that people would submit comments or rebuttals under anonymity. This in my opinion is nothing less than cowardice. The rebuttal you are about to read was submitted in response to the interview given by Professor Peter Boghossian to The Bent Spoon. I am personally against publishing this rebuttal because it was submitted under anonymity, however since there was never a "no anonymous submission" rule, I agreed to have to published only if I could write this disclaimer.

This rebuttal was submitted to Professor Boghossian for a response and he simply replied that he doesn't respond to anonymous comments. Who can blame him? And he isn't the only person that has said this... Ben Radford in a past issue, though he did ultimately respond to an anonymous comment, said pretty much the same thing.

I also feel that it is important to know, the person who submitted this rebuttal does indeed know he will not be receiving a response from Professor Boghossian because it was submitted anonymously and still he/she will not attach their name to

their writing. Again I feel that this was one of the most cowardly things a person can do, call someone out personally and not have enough common decency to speak as yourself, but to hide under anonymity. From this point forward, The Bent Spoon will no longer accept anything anonymously.

A Response to Professor Boghossian

By Dionysius Areopagiticus

The most recent issue of The Bent Spoon (issue 11) featured an interview with Professor Peter Boghossian, a philosophy professor at Portland State University (PSU) who specializes in critical thinking and reasoning (with renowned martial artist Matt Thornton). Boghossian has apparently caused a stir by recent, outspoken remarks claiming that faith is both a delusion and a cognitive sickness. "There's been considerable backlash from my colleagues," says Boghossian, "including formal complaints. I've not experienced any backlash from my friends."

I am writing this as a skeptic of sorts. Specifically, I am skeptical that Professor Boghossian has any real expertise in critical thinking and reasoning in this matter, despite his profession. I have no desire or intention to start an unfruitful and tiresome argument regarding atheism vs. theism (hence the pseudonym—no solicitors, thank you). Indeed, such a discussion is unnecessary for the topic at hand.

I may make no arguments for or against either. My concern is purely with the logic of Boghossian's statements, and it is to those statements that I now turn.

After voicing a legitimate complaint about faith-based reasoning, however, he immediately moves on to question begging: "How does superstition affect the world negatively, since religion is by definition superstition. [sic] It's an ongoing, global catastrophe." Given that there is a vast qualitative and categorical difference between believing that if a black cat crosses one's path certain misfortune will result and believing that there must be, for example, some uncaused, necessary ground of our contingently existent universe, this statement begs the question, "Why begin with such a ridiculous and uncharitable definition of religion that no religious person and few non-religious people would be willing to accept?" Indeed, this is another fallacy: a straw man. And it is easy to light a straw man on fire and mock it for being powerless not to burn, but try igniting a real, flesh-and-blood man and one is sure to encounter serious resistance.

Speaking of question begging and straw men, here's another one: "Let's define faith as, 'Pretending to know things you don't know.'" He then proceeds to show that he, at least, is not so presumptuous. Sadly, precisely the same fallacy is used in the opposite direction all the time. Religious simpletons

have been known to say (in so many words), “Let’s define atheism as ‘denying that God exists when you know he really does.’ Oh, you’re an atheist? Then clearly you’re just deluding yourself.” Illogical? I agree.

Next, we find a wonderful example of an argument from ignorance: “It’s never been clear to me what the relationship is between a god and morality. What does God have to do with morality? If the universe was created by a being that we call ‘God,’ how does this necessitate that we should behave in certain ways? I just don’t understand this move.” In this particular incarnation, the fallacy takes the form of “I cannot comprehend X; therefore X is incomprehensible.” Thankfully, neither the reasonableness nor the veracity of X is dependent upon whether any particular person can comprehend it, in any case for anything. If someone is interested in intelligent arguments for this connection that Boghossian does not understand, I would simply refer them to a few far more sophisticated thinkers than myself, such as Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, or Vladimir Solovyov, since repeating what they have already said on the topic would be superfluous when people can just read their works themselves, not to mention the fact that doing so is outside the scope of this paper.

Back to question begging and straw men, Boghossian continues by assert-

ing that belief in God is “a

claim about a make believe ‘spirit’ being.” He may be right that religious belief is different from believing that his wife loves him—I’m not defending that argument—but surely no reader of *The Bent Spoon* can fail to see how hopelessly uncharitable the latter statement is. It is, once again, a straw man and begs the question, “Why in the world would Boghossian use such an uncharitable definition in the first place?”

Indeed, taken together the straw men depict a ridiculous (make-believe, in fact) picture of the religious intellectual. This could only occur, however, through a terribly unscientific methodology. It is a classic example of the confirmation bias. If one wants to determine the cognitive effects of prolonged physical activity on chimpanzees, for example, one does not select ten old and sickly chimpanzees for the purposes of research unless one actually wants to produce poor outcomes to justify (rather than simply test) a weak hypothesis.

This failure only lends to propagating yet another logical fallacy: the ad hominem. Oh, you’re religious? Then, of course, you’re irrational, delusional, and sick-minded. No need to listen to you in the first place. Boghossian gives the impression that he has little experience actually listening to real religious intellectuals. In any case, he does not accurately represent their positions. Furthermore, based on the

overwhelming evidence provided by his numerous logical fallacies in this recent interview, one is fully justified in concluding that Boghossian is, in fact, deluded if he thinks himself to be objective and reasonable with regards to the question at hand. (By the way Professor Boghossian, your colleagues are your real friends.)

Lastly, Boghossian concludes by commending “being honest, epistemically humble, and not pretending to know things you don’t know.” I conclude by commending the same to him.

