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Controversial subjects. The theories expressed are not the only possible interpretation.

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The viewer is invited to make a judgment based on all available information.

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Tonight on Sightings, the search continues for America's most wanted cult murderers

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when we uncover the shocking truth behind mass mind control.

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If I started murdering people, there'd be none of you left.

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Do they possess supernatural powers?

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Then, superhumans that do possess amazing powers of strength

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and have we discovered the secret to ghost writing?

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Welcome to Sightings. I'm Tim White.

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On tonight's edition of America's Most Wanted, you've just seen what can happen

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when a cult leader goes out of control.

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Now on Sightings, we explore just how Ervil LeBaron,

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a sadistic cult leader and brutal murderer,

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seems to control the minds of his family even now,

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12 years after his death.

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There are 27 known victims of Ervil LeBaron's murderous cult family.

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Since his death in 1981, the family claims Ervil LeBaron

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has sent execution orders from beyond the grave

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through his privately published hit list called The Book of the New Covenant.

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Investigative journalist Scott Anderson, author of The 4 O'Clock Murders,

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has done extensive research into the 18-year history of the LeBaron case.

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Although Ervil had died in 1981, the LeBaron story had gone on

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and become much more bizarre and much bloodier after his death.

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Sightings has set out to investigate if there really is a supernatural power

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that cult leaders like Ervil LeBaron possess.

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What is behind the mystery of mind control

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and what makes someone give up their rational mind

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to follow an irrational cult leader?

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Outrage and shock.

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We feel it time and time again when cult members perform heinous crimes.

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Why then are so many drawn into cults?

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And why are some cult members willing to do the bidding of leaders like Charles Manson,

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Jim Jones and Ervil LeBaron?

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We'll have our full special report on the LeBaron cult later in the program.

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But first, a look at how mind control can be used toward a different, more benign end.

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There are people who claim to have harnessed a deep inner energy

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that allows them to perform superhuman feats.

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When scientists are at a loss, they can't explain the source of these mysterious powers.

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It's not a phenomenon exclusive to the West.

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In almost every culture throughout the world, there are people who appear to have superhuman powers.

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How is it possible for these people to endure the excruciating pain of needles and rods?

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Where does the strength come from that enables this man to pull an airplane single-handedly?

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When we see these kinds of phenomena that we don't understand, it's easy to call it magic.

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00:03:18,000 --> 00:03:20,000

Once we understand it, we call it science.

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This is really important that scientists do take a closer look at this kind of phenomenon.

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If even one person can do it, it shows it's possible.

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In Russia, we discovered a man whose superhuman abilities seem to be more than just the result of mind overpowering body.

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Valery Lavrenenko is renowned throughout his homeland as a real-life superman.

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He has abilities that go far beyond the bounds of what is accepted as humanly possible.

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Saitin's first encounter with Lavrenenko was at the Moscow Aquarium,

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where he tried to best his own personal record by holding his breath under water for 15 minutes.

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He believes his startling abilities first began after a paranormal encounter as a young boy.

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00:04:04,000 --> 00:04:15,000

During a summer break, when I was in the fifth grade, I was hiking with some of my buddies in a local forest.

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Suddenly, I saw a shining object that reminded me of a plane.

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I took off on my own and was drawn to the place where I thought it had landed.

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All of a sudden, odd shining stones were flying at me.

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00:04:31,000 --> 00:04:36,000

I thought, run, or you'll be hit. But it was too late.

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00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:45,000

There was a powerful blow to my head and blood was pouring from a wound.

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00:04:45,000 --> 00:04:54,000

For years, it was a mystery to me until recently when information about UFOs was allowed to surface in Russia.

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Lavrenenko believes it was this experience that gave him his superhuman powers.

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Two minutes and ten seconds.

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Lavrenenko's constant companions are his wife Natasha and his son Edward.

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Saitin's brought them to Moscow to meet with our team of doctors, investigators, and researchers.

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Here, they observe what appears to be electrical impulse coming through a heated needle in his forearm.

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The same energy also seems to flow through his finger and burn a newspaper.

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00:05:32,000 --> 00:05:44,000

It's coming out not from his nail, but from his finger, from the depth of his body.

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A burn like this can only be caused by electricity and to explain this is impossible.

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Four minutes, fifty seconds.

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On the outskirts of Moscow, at the Central train depot, Lavrenenko agrees to demonstrate another feat of strength and endurance.

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It was hard for our investigators to believe that one man could pull a thirty-ton train up an incline.

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But they were even more astounded to see how he planned to pull the equivalent of nearly sixty tons of weight.

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It was a feat no one in our team had ever witnessed.

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A warning, the following is not for the squeamish, and Saitin's cautions that no attempt should be made to duplicate this experiment in any way.

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Using pliers, Lavrenenko inserts two eight-inch wires through his forearms and then attaches the wires to a rope that is connected to the train.

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At first, he is unable to move the train. The pressure on his forearms should rip the wires right through his skin, but the wires hold fast.

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Despite the fact that he is pulling the equivalent of sixty tons, Lavrenenko barely bleeds and the wires remain intact.

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This is not a trick, it's a miracle. From the standpoint of a surgeon, what just happened cannot happen with an ordinary man.

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When you injure soft tissue, there is always bleeding associated with it. When the metal rod pierces the soft tissue, like we've just seen, there is always extreme pain associated with that.

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And furthermore, there was sixty tons of pressure on his forearms. How all that's possible, I just don't understand.

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There are lots of documented cases of controlling bleeding through the power of the mind. That's probably one of the last great frontiers in medicine.

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It's not just a matter of pain control, but it's also a matter of controlling bleeding. What kind of vasoconstrictors? How did he actually close off those blood vessels when that needle went through his arm?

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I think the place to start is honoring the phenomena. Study the lack of bleeding, study the

electrical phenomenon demonstrated here, study the ability of people to exist for long periods of time without oxygen.

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There's enough contained in any one of these phenomena to force a reevaluation of how mind and body work.

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After nearly seven minutes under water, Lavrenenko began to surface. Although he didn't break his own record, for most people, just two minutes without oxygen could cause some brain damage, but Lavrenenko emerges unscathed.

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Science always progresses like this. It's the odd example that one studies to find out what the boundaries of reality really are. That's how we paint the canvases and shred the old models by studying the things that just don't fit in.

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Although Lavrenenko has performed superhuman feats that few, if any, can duplicate, the doctors and scientists that we spoke with believe that his powers are not his alone.

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They suggest that all of us have the same potential to control pain, endure physical stress, and achieve a greater degree of strength.

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00:10:07,000 --> 00:10:14,000

In the future, we may all learn how to use our minds to unlock our full physical potential.

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Coming up...

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Now we return to our special report on Herbal Lavren, the man whom some believe demonstrates the power to give execution orders from beyond the grave.

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It's a sad fact that Lavren's use of mind control is nothing new in the annals of crime. The history of mind control and its practitioners is a virtual who's who of maniacal leaders who have used their powers for evil ends.

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It's been estimated that there are over 5,000 cults operating in the United States today.

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While their members remain devoted, some cults are dangerous, even deadly. For the first 30 years of her life, Peggy Hill claims she was held captive by a mysterious force in her own family.

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I was taught that I was a very powerful being, that I had to be very, very careful because I could kill somebody with my thoughts. That's a pretty heavy burden for a kid to live with, and that was from mind control.

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Through therapy, Peggy has recalled a frightening childhood where she was forced to participate in satanic rituals with other cult members.

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It was being pulled out of bed in the middle of the night to go to a moon ceremony. It was being dropped off by my mother for a 48 hour ritual in a closed observatory with strangers.

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Here I am, I'm naked, and I'm a little kid.

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Experts estimate that some form of mind control is influencing as many as 20 million people in cults around the world.

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Just how do cult leaders gain control over their victims' minds? Is it only the weak who succumb? Or are all of us susceptible to the control of powerful cult leaders?

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00:12:12,000 --> 00:12:27,000

And what is the source of a leader's power? Some insist it is supernatural in origin. Others believe it is the result of sleep deprivation, hypnosis, monotonous drills, and the practice of isolating the victim to gain control over the mind.

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Dr. Margaret Singer, professor of psychology at the University of California at Berkeley, has been researching brainwashing for the past 48 years and is one of the nation's leading experts on mind control.

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We're all susceptible to getting recruited into a cult to being exposed to a mind control program. Not everyone that's recruited into a cult or exposed to a mind control program stays for very long.

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But we're all vulnerable. You don't have to argue people into mind control. Quite the opposite, you sweet talk them. And you deceptively sweet talk them in to coming along with you to join your group.

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The power of a cult leader can be so strong that certain members will do just about anything, including murder, for the person they believe is more important and powerful than a god.

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I testified in one trial where a cult leader had carried out her orders at, quote, making the child submit, making the child surrender. And they had beaten the child for two and a half hours and the child died. And the parents who did it were, when I interviewed them, remorseful and knew that for all time they had to live with that.

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In 1967, at the age of 19, Dennis Ehrlich joined a very well-funded, well-known cult. He escaped with his family after 15 grueling years, but not before he had risen to the very upper echelon of power within the cult.

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I walked in, you know, sort of a confused young man, but very nice, you know, I mean, a person who wouldn't harm a fly. I've been hit and haven't hit back many times in my life. And I came out of there just a vicious, you know, who was used to shoving people around and getting compliance, if you understand what I mean.

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00:14:31,000 --> 00:14:48,000

Making things happen, making it go right, and not caring what I had to do to do it. So I had quite a bit of power and responsibility within the organization. I would liken my position to the quality control officer in a brainwashing factory.

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I'm the guy who makes sure that all the brainwashing is standard.

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The worst of it is the kidnappings that occur, the brutal mental treatment of people in dark corners of their building, where they're pounded by five or six people to confess certain crimes, the kind of mental punishment that breaks a person because he has nowhere to go.

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When Dennis objected, he himself was severely punished.

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I was locked under guard in a sub basement of the Fort Harrison Hotel in Clearwater, Florida, for 10 days. A place where somebody like Jeffrey Dahmer would bring their victims to do their thing to them. A scary place to be locked or under guard.

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Dennis finally had the courage to take his family and walk away from the cult he had given his life savings to. The cult he had called home for 15 years.

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I could not have pulled myself from the orbit that I was in and pulled my family from that orbit. Were it not for something in me that says you cannot put your children through what you're willing to go through?

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00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:14,000

Dennis credits the counseling he received from the cult awareness network with saving his life and the lives of his family. One of the network's directors is Patricia Ryan.

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My father, Congressman Leo Ryan was assassinated by Jim Jones as people's temple members in 1978 in Jonestown, Guyana. That's the incident that most people associate with the dangers of cults.

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But it wasn't until four or five years later that I got involved with the cult awareness network and that was really as a result of my sisters joining a cult shortly after my father's murder.

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Since then, Patricia Ryan has devoted her life to helping victims of the people's temple and other dangerous cults overcome the lasting effects of mind control.

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It's amazing what people will do in order to get somebody else's approval. And if you're not a real strong person and you're not real aware of what's happening to you, that's the first step to a long line of things that you never in a million years would have believed that you would have been capable of.

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I have been through hell with this. I just want to warn people away from it, stay away from it. I wasted 25 years of my life, 15 years in and 10 more years to recover from this. And I just have to start all over like a new person.

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We have to, as a society, remain aware that the cult phenomenon is still with us and is ever present and is a danger always.

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Awareness is just the first step to eliminating murderous cults. Until we find a way to neutralize the influence of cult leaders, they will continue to be a danger.

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Believe me, if I started murdering people, there'd be none of you left.

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Joining us now is Dick Forbes, assistant chief investigator for the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office. Lieutenant Forbes has been investigating the LaBaron cult for the past 18 years.

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Lieutenant Forbes, thanks for being with us.

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Thank you.

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He exercised mind control over his followers and he had specific techniques. What were they?

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Basically, the way he controlled people, Tim, was first of all, he was a very powerful communicator. He had influence over people. He was a good salesman.

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He would separate people from society once he had convinced them that he was right.

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That way, the only input that they had was from the cult and from him rather than from the outside.

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He would then create paranoia within those individuals' minds, making them believe there were enemies out there that wanted to get them, and he was their only protector.

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He would then infect them with his own teachings and beliefs, making them believe that he had supernatural powers, if you will, or that he spoke directly to God, and that what he told them was absolutely right.

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Irving LaBaron was not the only cult leader to claim that his powers were supernatural. Have you seen this evidenced in other contemporary cult leaders?

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Yes, I have. In the studies that I've made of several groups, I think Jimmy Jones exhibited that, and you can see where he took those people. He separated them down in Ghana.

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And Charles Manson, he took his group to the Spawn Ranch.

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Is the LaBaron cult finished now?

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I think it's effectively neutralized at the moment. There are two individuals that are still fugitives, Aaron LaBaron and Tarsel LaBaron, who we believe probably are in Mexico, who are dangerous in my opinion and can still wield influence over other members of the family.

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But I think, as I mentioned before, they're probably effectively neutralized right now, and hopefully we'll be able to apprehend and prosecute those other two, which I think will certainly slow it down.

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Lieutenant Dick Forbes, thank you very much for being with us.

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Thank you, Tim.

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And we'll be right back with more sightings in just a moment.

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When we return...

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Arthur Spirits here.

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Have we discovered the secret of the Polaroid Ghostwriter, a special update next?

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Recently, we brought you a special report about the appearance of so-called ghostwriting on

Polaroid Instant Film.

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Well, since then, we have continued to search for answers to what might be causing the phenomenon.

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One plausible explanation has come from Michael Weber, a professional magician who agreed to try to duplicate the ghostwriting under our own controlled conditions.

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During our initial investigations, dozens of pictures were taken that showed some kind of anomalous or ghostwriting, and we were unable to find any evidence of a hoax.

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And her professional magician, Michael Weber, who claimed he could duplicate the ghostwriting under close scrutiny, I invited him to our controlled studio.

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Michael was given one of the cameras from the Ghostwriter house, and a pack of factory sealed Polaroid Instant Film.

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00:20:52,000 --> 00:20:56,000

He was not allowed to examine or handle the camera or the film prior to this moment.

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You can ask the question either before or after I take the photograph.

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00:21:00,000 --> 00:21:01,000

I'm going to ask the question before.

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00:21:01,000 --> 00:21:02,000

Okay.

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00:21:02,000 --> 00:21:04,000

Are there spirits here?

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00:21:08,000 --> 00:21:10,000

Leave the camera right here so you can keep an eye on that.

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00:21:10,000 --> 00:21:12,000

Alright, I'm going to turn it to the camera.

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00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:15,000

Okay, it's coming up now, and it says,

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00:21:15,000 --> 00:21:17,000

We are here.

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00:21:17,000 --> 00:21:31,000

I can produce identical, if not very similar results by completely natural scientific means, and all that does is put everybody back at square one where either possibility, the possibility of spirit manifestation,

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00:21:32,000 --> 00:21:36,000

or the possibility of some other means are on equal playground.

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00:21:36,000 --> 00:21:43,000

Although Michael Weber produced his own ghostwriting, he does not rule out the possibility that the phenomenon could have a supernatural origin.

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Our investigation continues.

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If you've had a paranormal experience, call our sightings hotline at 1-900-740-SITE.

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Each call 75 cents a minute, average call less two minutes, and you must be 18 years or older.

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Again, the sightings hotline is 1-900-740-7483.

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Join us next time for new investigations into the unexplained.

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00:22:06,000 --> 00:22:08,000

For Sightings, I'm Tim White.

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00:22:12,000 --> 00:22:18,000

Sunday, married with children's Christina Applegate and David Faustino, host Fox's slam dunk comedy lineup,

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00:22:18,000 --> 00:22:22,000

starting with a special movie presentation of Don't Tell Mom the Babysitters Dead.

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00:22:22,000 --> 00:22:29,000

Then, after an all-new married with children, Rodney Dangerfield guest stars in an all-new and living color at a special later time.

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Now, stay tuned for more sightings.