

## INTRODUCTION

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### The Real Reasons We All Love Ghost Stories

**W**henever our family gathers for a holiday, eventually—usually late at night—talk turns to stories about the haunted house that we acquired in the summer of 1973. Although they are now in their 40s and late 30s, my four children have deep-seated memories of the occasionally nasty ghost that tried to drive us out of the old farmhouse.

We should have been forewarned about the haunting when a relative of the previous owner said that we had purchased the perfect home for a peculiar fellow like me, always chasing around the country looking for spooks. He laughed that I wouldn't have to leave the house to find a ghost.

The problem between our family and the ghost began after we had modernized the house with indoor plumbing, modern toilets, and a variety of electrical appliances in preparation for the winter months. When I was home alone one morning, I heard a series of mysterious thuds, thumps, and bumps sounding throughout the house. When I ran up to the attic to investigate, the thunderous sounds would move to the basement. This process was repeated a number of times until I grew tired of running up and down three flights of stairs and simply decided to ignore the manifestations.

Bryan, the oldest boy in our family, was treated to a similar performance a few nights later when knocking on the front door distracted him from his homework. Since he was home alone, he went to answer the door and was surprised to find no one there. Then a series of knocks summoned him to the back door. After playing a game of tag between the front and back doors, the disturbance finally sounded on both doors and all the downstairs windows at the same time. The absence of footprints in the freshly fallen snow proved that no human tricksters were playing a prank on him.

Steven, our youngest son, began to dread coming home after he left his after-school job because of the manifestations in his room, especially the rocking chair that would creak back and forth until nearly dawn. Kari, our eldest girl, heard her name being called in whispery voices that came from the attic. The children's mother often found herself locked out of the house when she stepped outside, and once she awakened to find herself being held down in bed by the ghost of an old man.

Julie, the youngest family member, became the victim of a bizarre facet of the haunting that would wait until she came home from school and was alone in the house before it began to torment her. The comingled sounds of voices and eerie music would grow louder and louder until she would be driven out of the house to seek refuge at a neighbor's home.

I had grown up in a house with paranormal manifestations and had seen my first ghosts when I was about four years old, but those entities in my old homestead were relatively quiet, and most certainly benign. My first articles on the paranormal appeared in 1957; my first book, *Ghosts, Ghouls and Other Peculiar People*, was published in 1965, so when we moved into the haunted house in 1973, I had experienced a wide variety of ghostly phenomena. Once I so angered a spirit that it smashed down a door and hoisted my fellow researchers and me in the air. By that time my family and I were experiencing regular encounters with unseen forces in our home, which was something quite different from ghost hunting in someone else's domicile. For months we underwent a supernatural barrage of phenomena, including mysterious lights appearing both inside and outside the house; footsteps moving up and down the stairs; and a noisy repertoire of assorted poundings, drummings, and tappings. Eventually, the phenomena seemed to grow more accustomed to our presence, or it wore itself out to a degree where coexistence with us became possible.

Interestingly, about four years ago Julie summarized that time as comprising some of the most horrible days of her life. More recently, she has been able to find positive aspects of the eerie ordeal. "Although it may have been totally terrifying at times, we did experience proof that there really is something within us that survives physical death," she said. Her frightening experience provided Julie with the rationale behind every ghost story that has ever been told: To experience a haunting, or to see a ghost, is to receive proof that life goes on beyond the grave. Accounts of haunting phenomena, no matter how terrifying they may be, provide evidence that existence continues for the spirit on more than one dimension, and that human beings are multidimensional entities that consist of mind, body, and soul.

My colleague Brian A. Schill of the American Society for Paranormal Research and Investigation (4661 Donovan Street, Orlando, Florida 32808; aspirusa@aol.com) has written a book entitled *The DNA of Ghosts* that

explains the afterlife existence of the “ghost” within us in scientific terms. Schill points out that every living being has a bioelectric cycle that functions at 60 Hz. This cycle, he says, enables our hearts, brains, and central nervous system to function and communicate within the organism itself. Examining that medical truth within the context of the first law of thermodynamics (which states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, only transformed), we are able to recognize that two-thirds of our life experience exists within our intangible mind and spirit (life force, soul, etc.), while the third part is made up of our physical body. If two-thirds of our total existence is in the form of intangible energy, what happens to this energy when we die?

With permission, I quote from Schill: “When a person dies the bioelectric energy is released from the body into the local environment where it may perform one of two actions. The unconscious energy may dissipate into the local environment and there will essentially be no manifestation thereafter or it may, through covalent bonding, remain in the local environment and attach itself to a certain place or object that the person was attached to in life, or any place that has an electron deficit (this is the theory behind ‘repeat’ hauntings). The energy may, upon rapid release from the physical body (such as in accidental death, tragic situations, or a rapid natural release, etc.) coagulate within the local environment over a short period of time, maybe only a couple of minutes or so, and amass to such a degree that the greater portion that was originally in the body has now become self-aware outside of the body.” Psychological forces of conscious will may also trigger this type of reaction. When self-awareness occurs, there is generally a degree of confusion because of the new form that the person is in, one of pure energy rather than a physically manifested body.

Over many years, cases, and investigations, observers have documented that hauntings often have several striking similarities that cannot be ignored. The first of these similarities is that there are low-level electromagnetic field disruptions. These disruptions generally fall between 3 to 100 milligauss (Mg). The cause of these disruptions is the intangible biomagnetic field that makes up a ghost. This disruptive field would also explain why electronic devices malfunction on occasion.

The second similarity that has been documented is that the air temperature often drops between 10 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperature drops are thought to be due to the unintentional attraction and condensation of free electrons in an environment. The condensing of an energy field leaves a momentary void of heat in an area.

The third similarity is found in the infrared spectrum just below the level of visible light. This level of the electromagnetic spectrum seems to be where the greatest number of manifestations take place. Because infrared light

borders on the lower portion of the spectrum of visible light (red, orange, yellow), this could possibly explain why glimpses of entities are seen with the peripheral portion of the eye instead of within the direct line of sight. Manifestations seen with peripheral vision also attract the attention of our unburdened subconscious rather than our conscious mind, which bears the fears of social restriction and repression when we experience something that is out of the ordinary. Because of ghosts' placement on the electromagnetic spectrum, this may explain why cameras are able to photograph them, recorders are able to pick up their voices, and so on.

If we wish to discuss the subject of ghosts thoroughly, we must also include near-death experiences, astral projections, poltergeists, appearances of human doubles, manifestations of religious figures, the mystery of spirit possession, the process of mediumship, the phenomena of glowing orbs, and the controversial matter of animal spirits. Each of these nonphysical phenomena comprises an intriguing facet of human experience that may one day help us define the farthest reaches of the soul.

After researching the paranormal for more than 50 years, I spend little time these days theorizing about what ghosts may be. I accept the reality that within each of us there is a spiritual essence that is imperishable and eternal. I completely accept the existence of spirit phenomena, and I contend that it is extremely multifaceted. While I believe it may be difficult to separate ghostly manifestations into definitions of type and purpose that are truly distinct from one another, I submit that real ghosts and restless spirits often fit into the following categories:

1. *Spirit Residue*: If the strange noises you hear in your home are not due to a squirrel in the attic, clanging water pipes, or an overactive imagination, then they are probably caused by what I term "spirit residue." I have found that a large number of structural hauntings are caused by the residual presence of spirits. In these cases a powerful human emotion—fear, jealousy, hate, pain—has somehow been impressed into the environment. It is my contention that the sounds and sights of the haunting may be perceived by the psyche of a sensitive individual as if they were images on a strip of motion picture film that keeps being fed through a projector again and again. The percipients of these kinds of hauntings cannot interact with the ghosts any more than one can interact with the images on a motion picture or television screen. Ghosts that have been seen by many witnesses over many years may literally begin to take on a kind of independent existence, much like psychic marionettes, responding to the fears and expectations of their human audience.

2. *Spirits of the Dead*: For many years I stubbornly and dogmatically held to the hypothesis that all ghosts are the products of psychic residue. I strictly separated evidence of the spirit's survival after death from accounts of ghosts.

However, as my on-site investigations increased in number, I encountered spirit manifestations that clearly seemed to be the result of identifiable intelligences that wished to communicate messages from the other side to loved ones or interested parties. Other haunting phenomena appeared to be caused by earthbound spirits of deceased humans that were unable to detach themselves from the people, places, and things of the physical world and had not progressed to the light of a higher dimension.

3. *Poltergeists*: In common parlance, any violent and disruptive haunting is said to be caused by poltergeists—raucous entities that toss objects about the room. In the view of many psychical researchers, such phenomena is born not in the psyche of a dead being but rather in a living being who is undergoing some kind of stress, psychic upheaval, or severe and dramatic psychological adjustment. Such an individual (most often an adolescent) expresses unconscious aggression toward others through dramatic manifestations of psychokinetic power (mind over matter), such as the overturning of furniture and the propelling of objects through the room. In some cases I have investigated, poltergeist phenomena have interacted with the haunting manifestations that already existed in the home, thereby producing intensely negative and disruptive energy.

4. *Spirit Parasites*: I used to be as dogmatically opposed to the concept of demonic possession as any modern investigator is supposed to be. Many years of research and encounters with entities that are unabashedly evil have convinced me that homes in which murders or other violent physical deeds have been committed may become repositories for nonphysical leeches of the soul that I prefer to call “spirit parasites.” These beings are hideous and grotesque in appearance, often manifesting as reptilian-like entities. When humans make themselves physically and spiritually vulnerable through drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuous sex, and other excesses of the physical body, they may not be aware of spirit parasites in their presence that are capable of possessing and manipulating them.

5. *Spirit Masqueraders*: In my opinion some appearances of ghosts and spirits have nothing to do with psychic residue, psychokinetic explosions of a human psyche undergoing stress, or survival of the spirit after death. I believe these pseudohauntings to be the machinations of another order of beings that in the past we have called fairies, elves, or nature spirits. In contemporary times they may represent themselves as extraterrestrial visitors, but these entities have interacted with humans for centuries by abducting humans, making mysterious circles in crops, and deceiving humankind about the truth of who they really are. These beings are more nonphysical than they are physical. Indeed, they may be parapsychical interlopers from other dimensions. They are “in-between” beings, posing from time to time as ordinary humans, disguising

the fact that they are really phantoms, creatures that have materialized from some haunted dominion unknown to us. In some benign instances, they may be angels in disguise that have come to give comfort, aid, and inspiration. In some of the more frightening cases, they may be fallen angels that aim to deceive, lie, and enslave. Theoretical physicists now speak freely about parallel universes; perhaps from time to time these entities intrude into our world from a universe that may almost be a mirror image of our own. Or perhaps, as the ancient philosophers suggested long ago, the appearance of spirits is evidence that we are part of a larger community of intelligences, a complex hierarchy of powers and principalities, a universe of interrelated species, both physical and nonphysical.

And now I invite you to follow me as we explore the many dark and shadowed pathways that will lead us to encounter real ghosts, restless spirits, and haunted places.