



The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

Volume 16 Issue 4

www.ghostsofohio.org

SOMETHING IS STIRRING IN THE DARKNESS



James

You hear a sound that you just can't trace*—perhaps a muffled groan. Or maybe it was the sound of bones creaking. There it is again.

Something is stirring. But what is it? Icy chills

begin to run up and down your spine as you start to make out a dark form slowly lumbering toward you.

Spending the night inside a haunted house? Nope. You're in my bedroom at Willis Woods, witnessing me trying to drag myself out of bed after an all-night ghost hunt.

May 9, 2019, will mark the 20th anniversary of The Ghosts of Ohio. That's right, I've been chasing after ghosts in Ohio for the past 20 years. Not "been interested in" or "reading books about"—20 years of actively searching, boots-on-the-ghostly-ground style, for evidence of ghosts in the state of Ohio. I would also be remiss if I didn't touch upon the fact that I joined my first "supernatural research team" back in 1985. So all in all, I've been chasing after all things strange and spooky for almost 35 years. And I have the scars to prove it.

If you're into ghost hunting (or any sort of paranormal hunting), you know it doesn't take long for the wear and tear to start showing. You spend an hour or so packing the car, drive two hours to a haunted location, stay there until 2-3 a.m., drive two hours back home, then try to get a few hours' sleep before you need to get up and face the real world and all its responsibilities.

Here at The Ghosts of Ohio, we jokingly refer to that early-morning haze the day after an investigation as the Ghost Hangover. But that hangover has been known to last for days. And the more investigations you go on, the more the battle scars start building up—the poor eyesight because you're spending hours trying to read equipment gauges in the dark, the black and blue shins from bumping into things because the batteries in your headlamp died, the knees that randomly pop because you've crawled through one too many haunted basements in your time. And let's not forget the extra 10-15 pounds you pack on because, honestly, who wants to eat yogurt and salad at 2:00 a.m.?

So why do we do it? Why do we put our bodies and minds through all this? For me, it's the thrill of the chase and the love of the paranormal. Simply put, whether or not we care to admit it, we're all hoping that there's something more to this life, this world, than what we currently see and believe. None of us want to believe that this is all we get and that we are toiling, loving, and just attempting to persevere, for nothing. Ghosts and the paranormal give me the chance to prove, if only to myself, that there's something more that we don't yet fully understand. That's what keeps me going through all those late nights and early mornings.

I know I'm not alone, either. Just looking at the almost 4,000 subscribers to this newsletter tells me that, as does the fact that the vast majority of members of The Ghosts of Ohio have been with me for over 10 years. And let's not forget all my family and friends who tolerate my severe raccoon eyes and the fact that I've been known to



blurt out meaningless bits of trivia about poltergeists or spirit photography.

To one and all, I say, "thank you." Thanks for sticking with me all these years, regardless of what odd noises appear to be emanating from my body.

Cheers,

James A. Willis

Founder/Director

**As a nod to the support my family has given me over the years, the first line of this piece comes from Queen's 1989 single, The Invisible Man. There is a bizarre dance that accompanies this song that both my wife and daughter have seen me do (and have been known to request repeat performances). The dance involves my wearing a glow-in-the-dark headless skeleton costume, which was first worn by my father when he originated the dance while frightening neighborhood children and grandchildren during my 1989 Halloween party.*

The more you know.

Ghostly Jokes Kids Love to Tell!



Samantha

Spring is in the air (despite our roller coaster weather), so I think this is a great time to have a little lighthearted fun with the world of ghosts. I asked my friends and family to ask their kids for their favorite ghostly jokes and riddles, and these are what they submitted. Enjoy!

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Boo.

Boo who?

There's no reason to cry baby ghost, I love you.

(Lily V., age 9)



Q: Where do ghosts go for summer vacation?

A: Lake Eerie!

(Lily V., age 9)

Q: What game do young ghosts love?

A: Hide and shriek!

(Sarah-Ashley S., age 11)

Q: How do ghosts go from floor to floor?

A: By scare-case!

(Dylan M., age 9)

If a ghost scared a skeleton, the skeleton would say, 'You made me jump out of my skin!'

(Kyler M., age 12)

Q: Why do ghosts hate rain?

A: Because it dampens their spirits.

(Jack C., age 12)

Q: What is a skeleton's favorite pizza topping?

A: Pepperboni.

(Maddy G., age 16)

Q: What is a ghost's favorite pie flavor?

A: Boo berry.

(Elena G., age 13)

Q. Why did the ghost go to the doctor?

A. He needed a boo-ster shot.

(Trent P., age 9)

Q: What do ghosts say when they are sad?

A: "Boo hoo."

(Courtney W., age 8)

This joke was submitted by two different people:

Q: What is a ghost's favorite dessert?

A: Boo-berries and I Scream!

(Sarah S., age 11)

(Dylan G., age 10)

And this final joke was submitted by three different people, making it our top ghostly joke for kids:

Q: Why are ghosts so bad at lying?

A: Because you can see right through them!

(Dylan M., age 9) (Logan P., age 11) (Jack C., age 12)

If your children have any ghostly jokes they love to tell, feel free to share them with us! Who knows? They might even be featured in a future newsletter. Keep laughing, everybody!



ADVENTURES WITH THE OVILUS III



James

Can we talk for a minute about the Ovilus? Specifically, the Ovilus III, which was recently donated to The Ghosts of Ohio and is currently making us all scratch our heads.

For those unfamiliar with the Ovilus, it's a device from Digital Dowsing that is supposed to allow ghosts to speak. You turn the device on and, if you're lucky, it will literally speak words, which are supposed to be the words a ghost wants to say to you.

I have always been incredibly skeptical of the Ovilus, mainly because when it comes right down to it, absolutely no one can explain how a ghost is able to manipulate the device in order to get it to say words. They will say things like, "ghosts can manipulate the electromagnetic field," but how a ghost is able to do that, is beyond me. Plus, no one's been able to prove that ghosts even exist, so how do we know what they are capable of doing? As for the Digital Dowsing site itself, it states that the Ovilus "converts environmental readings into words," which, if true, completely bypasses the idea that a ghost is making or causing the words to be spoken.

My skepticism went even further when I discovered that the Ovilus comes preloaded with words that it can speak. You can find the list of what your version of the Ovilus comes preloaded with, but suffice to say that they are all heavily weighted towards words like "evil," "demon," and "wicked." There's even a misspelled "shining"—"shinning," which makes me smile every time I see it because I can't help but think of the *Simpsons' Treehouse Of Terror V*, where they're doing a spoof of *The Shining*:



Groundskeeper Willie (to Bart):

"Boy, you read my thoughts! You've got the Shinning!"

Bart: *You mean "Shining."*

Groundskeeper Willie: *"Shhhhhh! Ya wanna get sued?"*

Anyway, my initial thought was that once you turned on the Ovilus, some sort of randomizer would cause it to randomly spout out words. Or perhaps there was an EMF of sorts inside the device that would cause it to speak. Either way, I was prepared to have it say things for no apparent reason and without any context at all.

So imagine my surprise when I turned the Ovilus III on and it did absolutely nothing. For three days solid, until the battery died, I left it on, hoping it would say something. It didn't. So next, I thought maybe it was tied to high EMFs and put it near things that were putting off high EMF—surround sound system, stove with the oven on, microwave, even the circuit box. Still nothing. Thinking the device was broken in the sense that it hadn't said anything despite being on for a week (because even if this device was doing nothing more than pretending to say words suggested by a ghost, having a setting that didn't make it speak for over a week sort of defeats creating the belief that a ghost is "speaking" during a 5 to 6 hour investigation), I just left it on in my house and went about my business. Two days later, while I was standing near it, it finally spoke. It said "send." Oddly enough, I was contemplating sending an email to a loved one. In fact, I had typed up the email and was just having an internal debate as to whether or not to send it. A case of forced context? Perhaps. But intriguing as to the fact that the darn thing finally said something!

I next gave the device to a member of The Ghosts of Ohio, who kept it on at her place of business for several days. It did nothing for the first few days and then



spoke THREE times (although it repeated one of the words twice), each time, the word spoken was in context.

Most recently, we took it on an overnight investigation and it spoke three times again (three separate words this time) during the

course of the 7-hour investigation. Two of the words could be taken as being in context. The third, not so much.

I'm still in no way convinced that the Ovilus III is allowing ghosts to communicate. But what I can't seem to figure out is what is triggering this thing to speak. Like I said, if it's all for entertainment and just randomly spouts out words based on some sort of internal timer, having it set to go off once every few days is not going to make a novice ghost hunter want to purchase one of these (and they are not cheap). But the device also doesn't seem to react to EMF levels, so I'm not sure what the trigger for it speaking is. Of course, you could just say a ghost is responsible, but I need a better explanation than that, especially since the Ovilus has spoken when all the EMFs, thermometers, and even a thermal camera placed next to it haven't detected anything.

So how about you guys? Have you used an Ovilus III before? What have been your experiences? More importantly, what do you think is triggering it to speak? Let us know!

MY NIGHT AT BROWNELLA COTTAGE



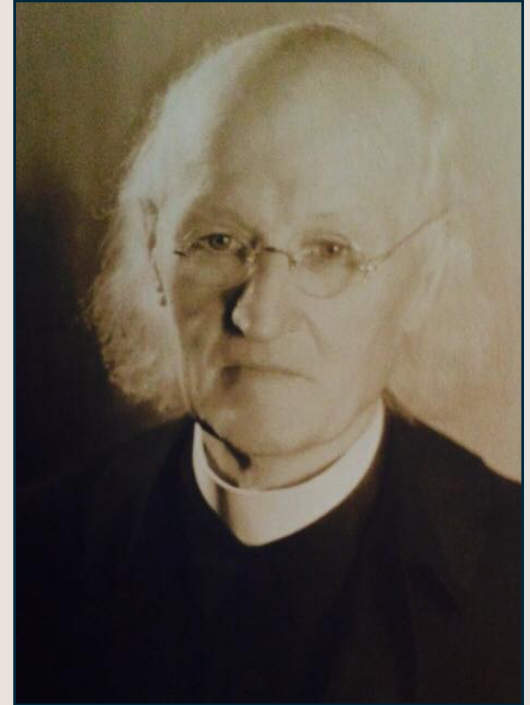
Josh

Halloween 2015 was a gamechanger for my wife and me. The whole day had a feel of such anticipation and excitement. The two of us, along with Barry and Cathy Moneysmith, (who run the tours and investigations at Brownella Cottage) were going to be spending the night in Brownella Cottage. Halloween is always a perfect time of year for a paranormal investigation right? But at Brownella Cottage, there's even more significance because Bishop William Montgomery Brown actually died in the cottage on Halloween morning 1937. He was even embalmed at the cottage. So in my head, this had to be the perfect storm. Not only is the veil supposed to be at the thinnest point between our world and the afterlife on Halloween, but we had a chance to visit a location on the anniversary of a death—and boy we were not disappointed.

The evening began with food (because who investigates on an empty stomach?) and we sat around talking with Cathy and Barry about recent events at the cottage and such. And then, I always like to walk around and just say “hello” to let whomever or whatever know that I'll be here tonight if they want to talk. I learned early on that if

you are going into someone's house, just because they may not still be here in the living sense, you should still be respectful and introduce yourself as a guest. Now, I will say this was only our third time back to the cottage (we are up to 7 or 8 trips currently) and we have always had activity, but this night, it was all over the place.

We went lights-out and sat a REM Pod in the music room and Barry placed a flashlight on the main staircase that leads upstairs. I wanted to just sit quietly and let the house open up. So we sat in the main parlor and waited. The silence and still of the cottage was broken up by the sound of footsteps walking down the upstairs hall towards the steps. The three of us sat quietly (Cathy had to leave for a Halloween Party) and continued to listen but heard nothing more. I grabbed a spirit box and started to walk up the stairs to investigate. It scanned with no noises or random voices until I walked by Ella's bedroom. A male voice came through the spirit box and to us it sounded like a cough, as if to say excuse me, followed by what I can only explain as having the feeling of walking into spider webs. Sarah and Barry both confirmed they felt the energy change in the hallway. We then heard a bell and I saw this grayish shadow low to the ground dart down the hallway towards the



Bishop William Montgomery Brown

steps. (Upon listening back to the recorder that Sarah was carrying it does indeed sound like a bell, followed by a panting and/or whimper of a dog). Barry informed us that we must have been visited by Gypsy, the dog who is said to haunt the cottage. In the midst of talking about this, we heard the REM POD in the music room start to beep very quickly and loudly. By the time we reached the bottom of the stairs to check this out, it, of course, had stopped. But now the parlor was full of the smell of very sweet pipe tobacco, which we confirmed the Bishop liked to smoke from a pipe. We rolled some more audio, but nothing further showed up upon live playback.

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MY NIGHT AT BROWNELLA COTTAGE *(continued)*

Off the parlor sits Bishop Brown's library and religion room. We sat down and just started to talk, asking the Bishop about his thoughts on current day Communism and how he felt about the nickname he was given as "Bad Bishop Brown" since he was really a nice, charitable guy. We listened back to audio and again nothing further had shown up. Before leaving, Sarah asked, "Bishop Brown, if you are here with us tonight, please do something to catch our attention." I can't tell you how many times we have used this strategy only to usually be left waiting or wanting. We gathered back in the kitchen to get some snacks when the bell outside the kitchen chimed. This was the Bishop's way to summon his servants while he was upstairs. This caught all three of us off guard. Barry also reassured us it shouldn't ring like that and he had



Brownella Cottage

never heard it before. But we all did! Was it the Bishop letting us know that he was there listening to us that night?

While the rest of the night was pretty hit or miss, we did gather some good audio from the Bishop's study and gave some high school kids the scare of their life. (Ask me about that one in person sometime.) Now while this night might not sound like a lot of activity, you have to remember it's not always about the activity—it's also about trying to retrace steps and walk into history. This night really opened my eyes a lot, and now we visit at least two times a year.

Upon returning, we have experienced everything from the sounds of a door slamming, motion lights being set off, audible voices,

more bells and chimes, and a little girl humming in the museum. I had a bracelet almost get pulled off while sitting in the middle of a room with no explanation! We also got one of the most emotional EVPs we have ever captured. While investigating the Carriage House, we received an EVP that says, "The baby on your shoulder." We had no idea why or what this was about...until Sarah took a pregnancy test the following morning and guess what? She was pregnant. Some might say this is just a random lining up of events or even the mind trying to matrix or make up something to fit. But to us, this was something we had never experienced before and, in that moment, it was real.



Walkway to Bishop's study

DEAR TRAVEL CHANNEL, PLEASE BAG GHOST BAIT



James

Ghost Bait is the latest offering to come down the Travel Channel's paranormal chute. The fact that Travel Channel chose

to premiere *Ghost Bait* in the spring time rather than the fall with all the other ghost reality shows can only mean one of two things. First, that *Ghost Bait* was so ground-breaking that it needed to be released as soon as possible. Or, that *Ghost Bait* is so bad that Travel Channel knows it can't go toe to toe with the established ghost reality shows.

So which is it? Well, if you read the title to this article, as well as the fact that yours truly wrote said article, you already know the answer to that one. Except it goes far beyond that. For while I have softened in my old age and learned to appreciate the entertainment value of most paranormal reality shows, *Ghost Bait* is unique in that it represents the first show that repulsed and sickened me. And not for any paranormal reasons, either. But rather for the utter disrespect the show has for the very people the paranormal field are trying to assist: Those who turn to the paranormal community for help.

Ghost Bait focuses on two individuals—"paranormal pioneer" Bob Magill and "empathic investigator" Tina Storer—who travel to various haunted locations.



While the show doesn't make it clear, there are not-so-subtle hints dropped that lead the audience to believe Magill and Storer have been contacted by these locations/owners for help.

Upon arrival, Magill and Storer go through the standard interviewing of the clients and then do a walkthrough of the location. Nothing new here with the exception that each *Ghost Bait* episode is only 30 minutes long (closer to 20 minutes when your account for commercials), so everything feels a bit rushed and it seems sort of strange that people coming into a location blind are somehow able to figure out who's haunting the location within hours of visiting. I get that shows are compressed for time, but *Ghost Bait* goes out of its way to throw up supers like "Day Two," so unless they're purposely playing with the timeline for effect, it seems a bit farfetched people can reach such definitive conclusions so quickly.

The reason for all the rushing is that the bulk of each episode is dedicated to the ghost bait portion. And that's when things go sideways. Essentially, Magill and Storer bring the person that the haunting seems to be centered around (or, what appears to be more obvious, the person who is most freaked out about what's going on) into a dark room, tell them they have to confront the spirt alone, and, as if that's not enough to freak someone out, Magill ties a burlap sack over the frightened person's head.

Yes, a burlap sack. Think *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, *The Visitors*, or even Scarecrow from Batman, except Magill's sack doesn't even have eye holes. Once in place, Magill and Storer have the person sit down in the dark, and leave them to go watch the monitors in the other room.

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DEAR TRAVEL CHANNEL, PLEASE BAG GHOST BAIT *(continued)*



The opening to *Ghost Bait* attempts to rationalize the use of the burlap sack by declaring “there’s a theory that human fear feeds the paranormal.” New one to me, but OK. Where they lose me is when they say Magill and Storer “turn fear into bait to force a supernatural reckoning to end the most terrifying hauntings.”

So basically, you’re scaring the s**t out of someone—someone who turned to you for help—for no other reason than you believe fear is going to draw a spirit in and then you can get rid of it? That’s repulsive and borderline abuse, in my opinion. I mean, why are you scaring people to draw the spirit in when these people are already scared by things happening when they’re not wearing a burlap sack? And wouldn’t a “paranormal pioneer” and a “empathic investigator” be able to locate the spirit without subjecting already fragile clients to needless fear?

In multiple episodes, Magill (who apparently was the creator of the original web-based *Ghost Bait* show) also attempts to rationalize the need for the mask by saying it restricts the wearer’s sight, which will heighten their other 4 senses. OK, fine. Then couldn’t they just wear a sleep mask or some really dark sunglasses? But again, this raises an ever bigger question: If someone has had multiple encounters with a ghost and at no point was that person wearing a mask, then why force them to wear one?

The answer is clear: It’s creepy and might help ratings. And that is where this show crosses a line that should never be crossed—treating clients as nothing more than ratings boosters and human guinea pigs. Say what you will about the other ghost reality shows, but I can’t think of a single one that treats people experiencing a haunting with such reckless abandon.

Put it this way: Regardless of whether you’re someone from a ghost reality show or just a local ghost-hunting group, when you go into someone’s home—someone who has turned to you seeking help—you are instantly “the expert,” whether you like it or not. As such, you owe it to those people to treat them with the utmost care and respect. *Ghost Bait* does none of that.

For me, the most gut-wrenching part of each episode is watching the clients once they have the bag on their head. It’s wasn’t scary and it didn’t build any tension. It just made me sad. Incredibly sad. By far, the one that upset me the most was a woman who believed that she was being haunted by the spirit of her deceased fiancé. A man who, while he was alive, was not a very nice person. Watching the episode, it’s clear that this woman was emotionally and quite possibly physically abused by this man. She feared him when he was alive and now she fears him even more in death.

Magill and Storer take this all in, reflect upon what they’ve heard, then ask the woman to put the ol’ burlap sack on. Once it’s on, they tell her they are going to leave her alone, but that they’ll be in the next room if she needs anything. Cold comfort when a short time later, the woman says she believes her ex-fiancé’s spirit is in the room and begins sobbing uncontrollably. Magill and Storer do nothing more than stare at the monitor and tell her to be strong. The next scene where this poor woman is literally crying out for the spirit of her dead

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DEAR TRAVEL CHANNEL, PLEASE BAG GHOST BAIT *(continued)*

grandmother to come and protect her is heart-breaking and clearly shows how far ghost reality shows have fallen.

And it's not that I'm not saying this woman wasn't indeed being haunted. It's just that *Ghost Bait* moves its audience beyond that point. Because if she is indeed being haunted by an angry spirit, asking a novice to go up against such an entity is cruel and unusual punishment and should never be done under any circumstances. Telling people to stand up and take back their house is one thing, but if you have an entity that appears to have this much power over an individual, you remove said individual from the situation. You don't provoke things. And haunting aside, the look of fear and dread in this woman's eyes is all a seasoned investigator would need to see that she, at the very least, is in need of counseling—not being tortured even more by being made to sit in the dark with a bag on her head.

Another episode that had me shaking my head centered around a couple that had been experiencing so much activity the husband felt he had to sleep in a travel trailer on the property as opposed to in the house with his wife. That's because they believed the husband was being targeted whenever he was in the house. He had gotten so frightened while sleeping in the master bedroom that if he woke up in the middle of the night, needing to use the bathroom, he would have to wake his wife up so she could try and chase whatever it was away. Oh yeah, and he claimed to have had



“8 heart attacks and 8 strokes” as a result of what's going on in the house.

Thankfully, *Ghost Bait* decides to show a bit of mercy and doesn't make the husband wear the burlap sack (they make his wife wear it). But they do make the husband—he of 8 heart attacks and 8 strokes—sit in the dark in the master bedroom all alone. You know, just for fun. Wouldn't make any sense to have him be with someone should he feel #9 coming on, would it? I mean, it's not like he was even the ghost bait, so what's the harm of having him sit with Magill and Storer?

But I guess that would break *Ghost Bait's* story arc. In fact, when every episode reached its climax, Magill and Storer were still off in another room, telling the freaked-out person with the bag on their head to “be strong” and “confront” whatever is tormenting them. Yup, that's all they do for these people—tell them to be strong. Based on the swelling music that comes up at the end of each episode, I guess we're

supposed to believe that all it takes to get rid of an evil spirit is to put a burlap sack on your head, scare yourself silly, and then tell the spirit to leave. Or maybe not, because in the postscript for several episodes, the paranormal activity continued even after the *Ghost Bait* crew left.

I've been taught to always look for the silver lining in things. But I'm having a hard time doing so with *Ghost Bait*. Even the tout of it featuring a “paranormal pioneer” doesn't help because none of their equipment is ground-breaking or gets more hi-tech than a newer model EMF, a ghost box, and an XCAM. Even if they did have some new gadget, it wouldn't have helped. Bottom line: *Ghost Bait* offended me. It offended me as a paranormal investigator and as a human being.

WANT TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH THE GHOSTS OF OHIO IN 2019?



It's true: The Ghosts of Ohio is getting ready to start releasing a list of locations where you can investigate with us as part of our Spend the Night with The Ghosts of Ohio program!

What's the Spend the Night program? Simply put, it's an opportunity for some of our fans to get locked inside of a haunted location with us on a private, overnight ghost hunt.

All you need to be is an active subscriber to this very newsletter. As long as you are, there's a chance your email address will be randomly pulled from the list. When that happens, you and a guest are headed to a haunted location with us for the night!



Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts of Ohio are continuing to schedule investigations and consultations for 2019. If you or someone you know is experiencing something unexplained in a home or place of business, contact us at info@ghostsofohio.org or visit our website to fill out an investigation request. All investigations are offered free of charge, and confidentiality and discretion are assured.

Not sure if you want or need an investigation? The Ghosts of Ohio also offers consultations. Let us sit down with you to discuss your current situation and what help we may be able to offer. For more information, please visit <http://ghostsofohio.org/services/investigations.html>

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