



The ghosts of Ohio[®] Newsletter

www.ghostsofohio.org

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From the spooky desk of James Willis

SO THE WORLD DIDN'T END. NOW WHAT?



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

If you're reading this, it's safe to assume that those wacky Mayans were wrong and the world didn't end. Good thing, too, because after

all The Ghosts of Ohio accomplished in 2012, I was really looking forward to trying to top it in 2013.

To be honest, as Doomsday was approaching, I joked with friends and co-workers that if the world really was going to end on the 21st, I was hoping it wouldn't be until after 7:00 pm since I needed to pick up my Honey Baked Ham at 5:00. And you know, what better way to go out than sitting with your family in Polaris Parkway traffic while gnawing on some Honey Baked Ham?

It was then that I realized I had gotten so caught up in this frantic holiday stuff that not even the impending end of the world could slow me down. And since everything in my life tends to revolve around ghosts, I reached the conclusion that my frantic pace stretches into my paranormal research. And I'm not alone.

Think about it, how many times have you driven really fast to get to an investigation, scrambled to set up your equipment, and then rushed from floor to floor, trying to capture evidence? Now ask yourself, when's the last time you went on an investigation and did nothing? You know, just sat in the darkness at a location and just soaked things up; the sights, the sounds, the smells? Probably not very often, if at all. And now for the big question: what do you think we might be missing because we're so busy running around and not paying attention?

To put it another way, maybe while you're out there scanning your eyes back and forth across a 4-camera DVR screen,

there's a ghostly girl behind you just begging to be noticed. Or maybe while you're staring at your Ghost Meter and asking the spirits to come closer and light the lights, there's a ghost standing in the corner, shrugging his shoulders as if to say "I don't know how"?

Ever think that maybe ghosts aren't talking to us because we're just too busy to listen?

So that's why my New Year's Resolution is going to be to slow down and relax a little bit. Stop and smell the ghostly roses, as it were. It might not increase my chances of having a ghostly encounter, but it couldn't hurt!

Oh yeah, and if you've got any leftover holiday ham you don't have a use for, feel free to send it my way!

Cheers,

James Willis
Founder/Director



Personal experiences

The Crooked Christmas Star

Dawn H., Columbus, Ohio

My story starts a long time ago. I am from a large family that always likes to get together for a big party on Christmas eve. As long as I can remember, we always had the party at my uncle Steve's house. He never got married or had any kids, but he loved Christmas. He would always decorate like crazy and do the entire house up really nice. He was a little bit of a perfectionist and if somebody moved one of his decorations during the party, it would drive him wild. One time, I don't remember how long ago it was, the star on top of uncle Steve's Christmas tree was crooked. Somebody told my uncle and he freaked out and dragged a chair over there to fix it. He did fix it but about 10 minutes

later, it went all crooked again. My uncle dragged that chair back over there and fixed it again. This went on for most of the night with all of us laughing every time my uncle would drag the chair over there to try and fix it.

My family enjoyed that so much that every year after that, someone, usually my dad, would sneak over to the tree and make the star go all crooked just to see uncle Steve drag his chair out and fix it. I'm pretty sure my uncle knew what we were doing but he never said a word.

My uncle died in 2009. When we were going through his things, my mom found the Christmas star and told my dad he



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The Crooked Christmas Star (cont.)

should keep it. So he did. That Christmas, we put the star on top of our tree when we decorated. On Christmas eve, we left to go to our family party. When we got back that night, we noticed that the star on the tree was crooked! We thought that was kind of weird because it had been up for weeks and had stayed straight the whole time. Well, my dad straightened it out and we all went into the kitchen to have some cocoa. When we came back out with our cocoa, the star was crooked again! My dad was kind of annoyed and this time, after he fixed it he kind of shook the tree to see if it would wobble around any. But it didn't. We all went to bed and when we got up

Christmas morning, that star was crooked again. Boy was my dad mad! He fixed it again and we started to open presents when we all heard a little THUNK and the star was crooked! My dad pushed the star back into place and said, "OK, I get it, Steve! Merry Christmas!" The star never moved again that year.

Later on, I asked my dad why he said that, as if he thought uncle Steve's ghost was in the house. My dad said he didn't know why he said it. It just popped in his head.

Now here's the really weird part. Every Christmas since then, at some point on Christmas eve, that star will go crooked,

sometimes when we're even watching it with our own eyes. No matter how many times my dad tries to fix it, it keeps going crooked until my dad calls out to uncle Steve by name and wishes him a merry Christmas. I can't say that I've ever seen my uncle's ghost, but it does make me happy to know that his spirit comes by every year to wish us a merry Christmas and maybe get a little revenge on my dad for tormenting him all those years.

Merry Christmas to you, too,
Ghosts of Ohio!



A review by James Willis

PARANORMAL PAPARAZZI



Let me start off this review by saying that I really, really, really wanted to like Paranormal Paparazzi, the latest MY-Tupelo offering that premiered on the Travel Channel back in October. I make no bones about my dislike for the vast majority of paranormal-based shows, but Paranormal Paparazzi sounded truly unique and different. And I'm not ashamed to admit that I was actually excited for its premiere.

Why I thought the show was unique was that it was going to be hosted by Aaron Sagars (he's also a co-Executive Producer), the guy who runs Paranormal Pop Culture, a blog-type site that covers all aspects of the paranormal, including books, movies, and video games. You won't find anything too in-depth on the site, but as its name implies, you do get a great cross-section of information related to how the paranormal has crept into pop culture. So for me, I took that to mean Paranormal Paparazzi would be focusing on trends within the paranormal field, be it within movies or TV shows. Having been in this field for a long, long time, I have always been fascinated with not only the general public's perception of the paranormal, but what people were "in to."

I was also intrigued with the show's description, which said that Sagars would be joined by "a team of reporters" who would "track down" stories. The list of reporters included Rachel Fine, Branden Wellington, Julie Alexandria, Sona Oganessian, Joshua P. Warren, and Scott Gruenwald. Of all the names on the list, I was most interested in the last two.

Joshua P. Warren is a well-known name in the field of paranormal research and he has devoted years of his life attempting to have the field be taken a bit more seriously than it has been. Warren's theories are unique and sometimes controversial, but he injects new ideas into a field that is notorious for going stagnant on a regular basis.

And then there's Scott Gruenwald, whom I considered the wild card of the bunch.

Gruenwald is perhaps best known as the host of Paranormal STU, a comedy-based paranormal talk show. On the show, it's clear that Gruenwald believes people in the paranormal field take things (and themselves) far too seriously. So his shows sometimes wander off into the land of lampoon and satire and he himself is not above poking fun at the current state



Got a scary story to tell?

Have you had a ghostly encounter in Ohio? Want to see it featured in a future issue of The Ghosts of Ohio Newsletter? Then here's all you have to do:

Just write down your story and send it to info@ghostsofohio.org with the subject line "Newsletter Ghost Story." Be sure to also include your name as you'd like it to appear with the story. We'll take it from there and send you out an email letting you know which issue it is going to appear in. That way, you can get all your friends to sign up for the newsletter so they can see how famous you are!

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PARANORMAL PAPARAZZI (cont.)

of affairs in the world of ghost hunting, specifically reality television. Heck, he's been known to literally wear his heart on his sleeve by walking around conventions with "Para Whore" emblazoned across the front. Seeing Gruenwald's name associated with the show made me think that for the first time ever, laughter (and by that, I mean intentional laughter) was going to be injected into the paranormal. And I couldn't wait.

So after all that, I was firmly convinced that when Paranormal Paparazzi premiered, what I would be seeing would be something like a weird hybrid of TMZ TV and Fact or Faked: Paranormal Files. And, it didn't take long to see that I wasn't far off.

Right off the bat, it became clear that Paranormal Paparazzi was borrowing heavily from TMZ, in that you have the standard "hey, let's all hang out in the common area of our office and chat about stuff." But then Sagars called them all to order (a la Paranormal Files: Fact Or Faked) and they started to chat about things like UFO encounters and ghosts said to haunt local high school. The stories were all rather short and light. Sort of like when TMZ TV reports about Tom Cruise dancing all crazy on a beach somewhere; they show him dancing from 3 different angles, cut away to quick interviews of people who witnessed said dancing, then back to the studio where all the reporters point at Cruise dancing and laugh. It's all pretty light and fluffy stuff, but it works for TMZ. Oddly enough, it works for Paranormal Paparazzi, too. Not everything in the paranormal is worth an in-depth look and this show did a great job at giving quick sound bytes to those minor stories. But it was when they tried to tackle and delve deep into certain stories that the wheels fell off this show. And they fell off pretty darn fast.

Case in point, on the very first episode of Paranormal Paparazzi, Scott Gruenwald is sent out to meet up with the Teen Exorcism Squad; three teenage girls who apparently travel the country conducting exorcisms. As expected, Gruenwald takes a tongue-in-cheek approach to the interview, which lasts about a minute before cutting back to the studio. At this point, Sagars asks Gruenwald (and



The Paranormal Paparazzi team (L to R): Joshua Warren, Rachel Fine, Aaron Sagars, Scott Gruenwald, Julie Alexandria, and Branden Wellington
—via www.paranormalpopculture.com

rightfully so), if he thinks these girls are just doing this to become paranormal celebrities. Gruenwald responds that he went into the interview with an open mind and then mentions that there was "a test." A test that Gruenwald said "he failed."

Before there's time for the audience to ask "what test are you talking about?", there's a quick jump back to the interview, which now features Gruenwald crying out in agony while someone holds a cross to his forehead and what appears to be a Bible to his back. The segment ends with the Teen Exorcism Squad telling "Satan" to "leave" while Gruenwald appears to vomit into some random Tupperware.

Now cut back to the studio, where Gruenwald's co-hosts all have their hands to their mouths in disbelief. When pressed, Gruenwald claims he has no recollection of what happened. And so, after a quick "don't try this at home" announcement and a bit of pondering by Sagars over how far people will go to become famous, the segment ends.

Let's start with the obvious problem with this segment; what was the deal with the exorcism? And why didn't the show think that was something, I don't know, newsworthy and worth digging

deeper into? Were we really supposed to believe that Gruenwald had Satan himself expunged from his body, all while cameras were rolling? Remember, Gruenwald is the guy who likes to poke fun at the paranormal community, so if this was faked, he should have jumped all over it. I kept looking for Gruenwald to turn and give a knowing wink to the camera, but he never did. Not once.

So then, does that mean Gruenwald really was possessed? Again, if that's the case, you would have thought it would have hit news wires all over the place; the filming of an actual exorcist. And yet, once again, nothing. This particular episode aired months ago and still, if you Google "Gruenwald and exorcism," the most you're going to get are links to this episode on YouTube.

My personal belief? It was faked, which is one of the main reasons I have a hard time believing anything on this show anymore. But it goes deeper than that. I am also disturbed by what they decided to leave out of the segment—things which, for me, would have made for a much more intriguing piece.

You see, the audience is never told anything more about these three girls other

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PARANORMAL PAPARAZZI (cont.)

than they are “teenagers from Arizona.” But if you watch the segment, you’ll see that there is an older man, dressed as a priest, who is always sitting or standing near the girls. He even takes part in Gruenwald’s exorcism. That man is none other than Bob Larson, the radio and television evangelist who has been proclaiming the evils of rock music and the lure of Satanism for decades (I used to listen to his Talk Back show in the 90s simply because he would randomly try to exorcise demons from people who called into his program). He’s also the guy who has repeatedly fallen under the microscope of various watchdog organizations who claim that Larson swindles people out of their money by making them pay hundreds of dollars for an exorcism. Oh yeah, those three teenage girls? One of them is Larson’s own daughter.

Now I ask you; isn’t that a big investigative-style report just begging to be made? A man repeatedly accused of conducting fake exorcisms now has a daughter doing exorcisms? And Gruenwald would have been perfect for this! He could have pretended to be possessed and then, halfway through it, popped out of it and yelled “surprise” or “Baba Booy!” Or something. But no. Instead we’re asked to believe that an actual exorcism did indeed take place. Sorry, but I’m not buying it.



Paranormal Paparazzi reporter Scott Gruenwald interviews the Teen Exorcist Squad (L to R: Brynne Larson, Tess Scherkenback, and Savannah Scherkenback) from Season One, Episode One –via www.travelchannel.com

The bad journalism (or whatever you call faking an exorcism) doesn’t stop there. In another episode, reporter Rachel Fine travels to Amityville, Long Island, while the show’s narrator explains to the audience how Ronald “Ronnie” DeFeo was convicted of killing six members of his family and that after that, the Lutz family moved in and

starting being attacked by ghosts.

Once Fine drives past “the house,” the narrator explains that recently “some local divers made a discovery that may shed some light on the mystery.” Cut to Fine interviewing Bill Pfeiffer, owner of Island Diving, who states that while diving in the canal near the site of the DeFeo murders, they recovered the remains of a pistol, adding that “we believe that a second firearm was involved [in the DeFeo murders].”

Cut back to the studio. Again, shocked faces all around. Could this really be the remains of a gun used during the DeFeo murders? One of the other reporters asks Fine, “How do they know the gun’s from that murder?” (Again, great question.) Fine responds with, “They’ve actually been able to date the gun and it is from around the same time period. The times line up.” And they leave it at that. The show quickly moves on to a quick interview with one of the Lutz children, Daniel. But they don’t talk about the gun again.

Once again, I can’t help but shake my head over the complete and utter lack of investigative reporting going on here. And I’m not even going to comment on the narrator claiming the Lutz murder took place in 1972 (it was 1974). Here’s the deal: until recently, the only murder weapon ever associated with the DeFeo murders was

a .38 Marlin Rifle, which was owned by Ronald DeFeo. It was determined that during the murders, eight bullets were fired and eight bullets were recovered from the scene, as were their shell casings. The second gun theory comes from the idea that a police report stated it could not tie one of the eight bullets to DeFeo’s Marlin rifle (although the shell casing



The DeFeo House, as seen in Season One, Episode Four of Paranormal Paparazzi –via www.travelchannel.com

could be). Sure, Ronnie DeFeo said there was a second gunman. But over the years, he’s claimed he did it alone, had a accomplice, slept through the whole thing, might have been possessed, or was forced to do it by the Mafia.

The only person who is really pushing this second gunman theory is a man by the name of Ryan Kalzenbach, who also happens to be working on a three-part documentary entitled Shattered Hopes: The True Story Of The Amityville Murders. The “Second Gunman” plays an integral part in the documentary.

As for Island Diving, the diving group that recovered the gun, the dive was sponsored and paid for by Katco Media, the same group backing Kalzenbach’s documentary. On top of that, the gun was recovered after several dives, all of which were scheduled with the sole intent of recovering the remains of a handgun. I can think of a bunch of my conspiracy theory friends who have just started salivating after reading that last bit.

Finally, there is nothing that ties the remains that were recovered to the DeFeo murders. In fact, there are those who are arguing that the remains are not that of a pistol, but a flare gun. All of this information can be found with just a quick Google search. Go on, try it for yourself.

And yet, after hearing the Earth-shattering news that someone is claiming to have found another weapon used inside what some people call the most infamous haunted house in America, host Aaron Sagars simply says, “I’d actually like to move on to something else.”

And you know what? After having to watch several episodes of Paranormal Paparazzi, so would I.



NEW for 2013

Tracking down ohio's urban legends



I have always had a soft spot on my heart for urban legends. For me, they are like the redheaded stepchild of the paranormal world. The stories are always so out there that there's really no way

that they can be taken seriously. And yet, there's a part of me that desperately wants them to be true just because the stories are so twisted and creepy. I mean, come on. Who doesn't get a fiendish little glint in their eye when someone tells you a story about the local crybaby bridge or which

creepy old house some guy with a hook for an arm has taken up residence inside of?

Over the years, I have always felt that in order for one to be taken seriously in the field of paranormal research, they had to admit that a lot of stories currently floating around out there weren't true. That included most urban legends. So for that reason, I kept my love of urban legends a secret. That is, until now!

You see, what fun is a creepy story, true or not, if you can't share it with your friends? That's the idea behind a new feature that you'll see popping up in The Ghosts of Ohio Newsletter: Tracking Down Ohio's Urban Legends.

Beginning with the February 2013 issue, we will be taking you all into the strange

and spooky world of Ohio urban legends. That's right; you've all got an open invitation to take a trip up Gravity Hill, down into Satan's Hollow, and maybe even to the Top of the World. All without leaving the comfort of your favorite chair. Just keep your eyes peeled because you never know when a Melonhead or Bloody Mary might come leaping from the shadows at you.

Along the way, we'll dig into the history of each Ohio urban legend, including its origins and if there's even the tiniest bit of truth to the story. So rest up, because we've got a lot of road to cover in the coming months. Are you up for it?

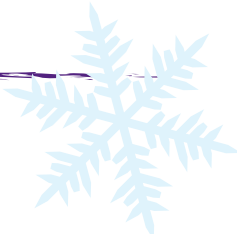
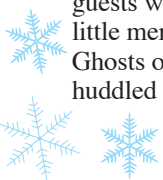
— James Willis

THE GHOSTS OF OHIO 2012 MERRY SCARY HOLIDAY PARTY

Here at The Ghosts of Ohio, October is traditionally our "busy season." So much so that while we're always talking about having a Halloween party, there's never a spare moment to plan, let alone have one. So about nine years ago, we decided to do the next best thing; just jam Halloween and Christmas together and have one heck of a year-end bash! And the Merry Scary Holiday Party was born!

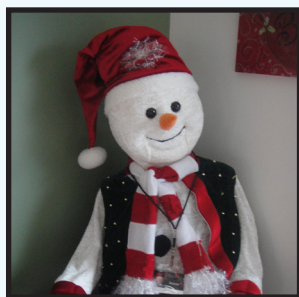
Every December since, we break out the egg nog and witches' brew and gather together for a night of great good, laughs, and a fond look back at everything The Ghosts of Ohio has accomplished. This year's party, which took place on December 8th, was no different.

And now, for your viewing pleasure, here's a peek at some of the random guests who chose to show up and spread a little merry scary holiday cheer with The Ghosts of Ohio. Oh yeah, and all of us huddled around the Christmas tree, too!





Happy Holidays
from all of us at
The Ghosts of Ohio!





Got Ghosts?

Request for more information

From time to time, The Ghosts of Ohio learns about a haunted location that, try as we might, we just can't seem to dig up any additional information on. That's when we turn to one of the largest group of Ohio ghost experts out there—our newsletter readers! That's right, we're asking you to let us know if you have any information (or better yet, have had a personal experience) at any of the following locations. If you have, shoot us an email at info@ghostsofohio.org. And who knows? You just might get the chance to investigate the location along with The Ghosts of Ohio!

Buffington Island (Portland/Meigs county)

Buckeye Belle (Beverly/Washington county)

Chadwick Inn (Maumee/Lucas county)

Marshall Inn (Port Clinton/Ottawa county)

New London Road Jogger (Hamilton/Butler county)

Watkins Road Bridge (Columbus/Franklin county)

COMING IN THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Love From Beyond The Grave

On The Trail Of The Melonheads

Paranormal "Ripples In Time"

Investigations & consultations

The Ghosts of Ohio has already begun scheduling investigations for 2013. 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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In addition to our website, here are a couple of places where you can find The Ghosts of Ohio lurking online:



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