Local paranormal investigators talk theories, experiences with profession

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Hunting season has arrived, but I'm not talking about hunting the living. Throughout our rocky history, Louisiana has become a haven for paranormal activity and ripe for investigations of the ghostly persuasion. Locations like the Myrtles Plantation, the Dauphine Orleans Hotel and the Hanging Jail frequently appear on "Most Haunted" lists and are ripe for any supernatural sleuth looking for their own evidence.

What's in it for them? Possible understanding. "Through the Veil," a television show featuring paranormal investigators, member BJ Haggerty travels across the state with his fellow ghost hunters seeking to master the metaphysical and help a few folks out along the way on both sides of the veil.

"You buy a house and start rebuilding it and all the sudden activities going crazy?" Haggerty said. "Well, think of the spirit that did that; if they don't realize they're dead, and it's all centered on 'Who is this person and what are they doing to my house?' That is the situation, and you know, it's a tragedy. We've got to try to figure out a way to help them."

Haggerty said he's come across a few different spirits in his time as a hunter, like the spirit of a young boy who drowned and simply wanted his mother, or an old whistling jail guard pacing the floors. Both of them just using the energies around them to make their presence known to those on the physical plane.

But not all apparitions are created equal. "We went into someone's house. It was very, very dark. There were claims of stuffed animals locked in a glass cage appearing in other rooms, which to have that kind of power is more than a little nerve-racking," Haggerty said. "We did the investigation, and I was cut that night."

The wound appeared behind his ear. Later that evening, in another dark room, the entity tossed Haggerty into a corner and began to attack him. The gruesome onslaught would change his life forever, and change the way the group would proceed to, before entering a supernaturally active location, pray for protection first.

"When a family decides to call a paranormal investigator, and they go, 'I've got a problem! I always think, how scared are they to reach a point where they think 'We need to go to a paranormal investigator.' This is very different than 'We've got to bring you to a doctor,'" Haggerty said.

Though it's not always homes that are the source of the problem; Haggerty also points to objects that can possess links to the supernatural world. Some objects carry curses, while others may hold significance for those who have passed. Something akin to your favorite cup will still be your favorite cup after you die, and perhaps your spirit isn't done with it yet.

"Met a girl that had about 100 haunted dolls," Haggerty said. Brandi Lampin and her husband Tony Lampin, the "Louisiana Ghost Hunters," have both experienced spooky specters and began to search for the uncanny in their off time. The Pair lock and load themselves with digital recorders, flashlights and other tools to tempt the departed souls into contact.

Our son, age 15, was with us, and for some reason, his energy was being used to answer questions," Brandi Lampin said. "The light he was holding was used for questioning. It only worked if he was holding the light. After the questioning was over, he was ice cold to the touch."

Mainly hunting in cemeteries around DeRidder, Brandi Lampin said she feels some ghosts may not even know they are dead while other spirits may pop in for a visit from time to time. Between the two of them, they've collected evidence of shadows, growing sounds and, as with their son, direct responses to questions.

I did a bit of my own ghost hunting over the past few weeks, picking up a few phone apps to test the supernatural for myself and possibly gain a bit of understanding. Using the "Ghost Radar Legacy" App, it allowed spirits to manipulate the air around me to see if they had something to say about our old building.

The words "Someone," "Eventually," "Push" and "Fireplace" appeared within 10 minutes of the app starting. Though I believed the words to be random at first, "Fireplace" struck me. I sit 10 feet from a fireplace within our office. I'd venture it's the one of the only fireplaces on campus.

Want to find a few ghouls for yourself? Author David Castleton has a great tip: "In Louisiana, it's said that if you cook a meal in silence and stir it anti-clockwise, a ghost will slip in and sit at the table."

Happy hunting.