



The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

www.ghostsofohio.org

Volume 10 Issue 5

FROM THE SPOOKY DESK OF JAMES WILLIS:

The Human Touch



James

It's no secret that here at The Ghosts of Ohio, we look at investigations differently. We are constantly trying to find that tender balance between cold, unemotional equipment and those raw, unpredictable

emotions and feelings we all experience to varying degrees while sitting in the dark, waiting for something to happen.

Recently, we began a series of experiments related to a fairly new piece of ghost hunting equipment—the EM Pump. But rather than look at how the pump is supposed to affect ghosts, we decided to

use it to see how it impacts the humans using it. More on those experiments later in this issue, but for now, let's just say that those experiments triggered something within the group and caused us to take a closer look at how far the field of paranormal research has moved away from embracing the human element into investigations. So much so that we decided to dedicate an entire issue of our newsletter to all things related to how human emotions and feelings need to be acknowledged as an integral part of paranormal investigations.

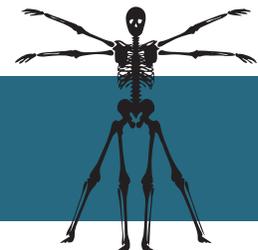
This issue is also unique in that it features an article not written by a member of The Ghosts of Ohio. Recently, we were contacted by Donna Ruwe, who shared with us her experiences over the years working in the Haunt industry and the

trend of moving away from “human scares” and more towards using animatronics. Needless to say, Ms. Ruwe's article was a perfect fit for the theme of this newsletter and we hope to have more guest authors in the near future.

For now, enjoy this issue and keep in mind that the next time you feel a little strange when you walk into a location that's supposed to be haunted, it just might be your body telling you that you're not alone!

Cheers,

James A. Willis
Founder/Director



HOW TO CENTER YOURSELF

By Janine Bourdo



Janine

Before going into the how, let me explain what it means to center yourself and why this skill is important when it comes to investigating a haunting.

When we center ourselves, we tune into what is happening to us in the present moment. What are we feeling right now? We stop getting carried away with activity going on beyond ourselves, with what other people are doing or saying. Perhaps even more important, we stop getting carried away with what's going on in our mind, like plans for dinner

or reliving an argument we had with someone a week ago. Such things could cause us to fail to notice that oppressive feeling of heaviness hanging over our shoulders whenever we enter a particular area, the same area where poor Uncle Fred died.

The how of centering means a return to our physical bodies. I very much like the beginning of a sequence described by Paul Hannam and John Selby in their book, *Take Charge of Your Mind*. Their first step is to make yourself aware of the breath flowing in and out of your nose. Next you are to remind yourself to feel the rise and fall of your chest and belly. Third, take your mind to your heart area. Investigate the feelings there. Does your heart feel warm. Is it racing? The fourth step in the

process is to remember your entire body. Can you feel your feet in their shoes? Your hands in your lap? I would suggest here taking a quick mental scan of your body. How does the top of your head feel? Work your way down the body while remembering also to keep noticing your breath.

Centering is a good thing to do on a regular basis for many reasons having to do with just living a reasonable life. Doing it regularly allows us to know what belongs to us. That heavy feeling might be something we carried into the room with us rather than anything a ghost might be trying to communicate. On the other hand, that constant tingling on top of our left shoulder may not be so familiar. Didn't someone say good old Uncle Fred liked to slap people on the shoulder?

REAL VS. ROBOTS?

By Donna Ruwe



Donna

Looking back on the past 19 years that I've been doing haunted attraction reviews, I have to say that I've seen many changes and trends come and go.

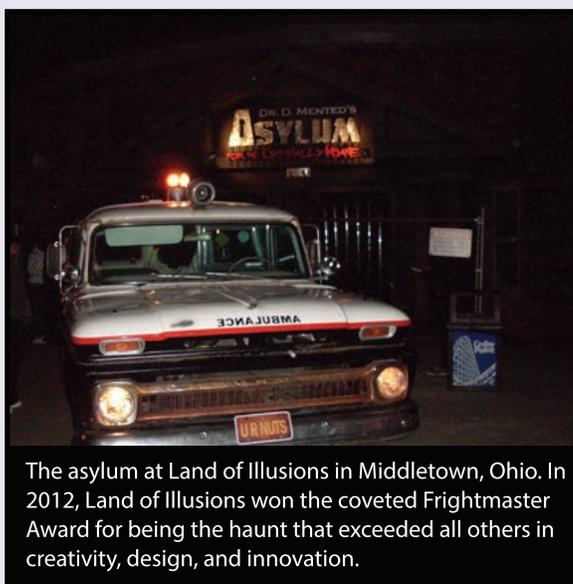
However, one thing

seems to stand out among the others in the industry and that would be the move to more/bigger/better animatronics and less reliance on actors. I'm not sure if I like that trend because I prefer my scares coming from real people and not an animated dinosaur (even if they ARE two stories high and cost a quarter million dollars). A really good actor can instill terror in people where an animatronic may just give you a passing jolt or jump but nothing really scary.

I remember in the early days of haunted attractions, back in the late 70s and early 80s, the scariest thing you would see in a haunt would be the "Evil Clown" or the man in the gorilla suit who jumped out at you through the rubber bars of the cardboard cage. During the early eighties, haunted attractions increased proportionately in size, popularity, and numbers across the country. With the release of "Halloween" (1978), "Friday the 13th" (1980), and "Nightmare on Elm Street" (1984), people wanted to experience the scares first hand just like in the movies. A popular trend in early haunts was to base different rooms on a "movie theme" and then vary from movie to movie, room by room. Although this trend got stale very quickly and was soon replaced by larger scale total-haunt themes, many small haunts still practice it today.

The "robot" trend began around the mid-eighties when the haunted attraction

industry became more popular and more competitive. Everyone wanted to have the latest "toys" available in the industry and annual shows like Transworld and Midwest Hunters Convention showcased the latest and greatest animatronics, make-up, costumes, and anything else related to the haunt industry. Here you could see, feel, and experience scary



The asylum at Land of Illusions in Middletown, Ohio. In 2012, Land of Illusions won the coveted Frightmaster Award for being the haunt that exceeded all others in creativity, design, and innovation.

gadgets ranging from just a hand reaching out from under a box to a full-on scene straight from "Psycho" with an animated corpse being stabbed in a shower to a larger than life black stallion ridden by a headless horseman that reared up on its hind legs and exhaled fire and smoke from its black nostrils. Pretty impressive stuff, but just like with any new toy, once the newness wears off, it's old hat and yesterday's trend.

As with trends, haunts come and go (and sadly, there have been some decent ones that have closed in the past 19 years). Still, my favorite haunts are those who rely more on actors and less on animatronics for their scares. An example of a well done haunt that never fails to creep me out from beginning to end is the Baxter Ave Morgue in Louisville. The original creative designer, Joey Arena, did an unbelievable

job of incorporating a great background story with a foreboding welcoming area and pumping up the suspense by keeping the background sounds to a minimum (no loud music from "Halloween" looping through the entire haunt here!), mix in some well-placed, very eerie scenes and a few holograms and you have a class-act haunt without one single animatronic. This is the way haunts should be designed.

Unfortunately, it takes a bit of creativity to blend the perfect scary setting with the right scenes and the best actors to come out with the perfect overall experience and all too many of today's haunt owners fall short in this regard. Too many times it appears like many are in it to get what money they can and then get out instead of creating or designing haunts as an art form.

Good haunts will combine a mix of great actors, make-up (I HATE masks with the exception of Michael Myers), and a creative theme design with a select few well-placed animatronics. This design can last for years and years and be ever evolving into a new and better haunt experience without the



The author and the new friend she met at Kings Island in October of 2011.

(continued on page 3.)

REAL VS. ROBOTS? (CONT.)

investment associated with purchasing new high-end animatronics every year.

There is an upside to all this in the fact that in the past couple years the shift towards more animatronics has indeed seemed to slow down a bit, especially with the better



An example of the Hollywood-caliber makeup done every year for Cedar Point's Halloweekends in October.

haunts in the area. Maybe they got the hint that people come to be scared by other people and not the same machines going through the same movements over and over again. This isn't limited to just indoor haunts either. A fine example of outstanding creative talents by people who

wrote the book on outdoor haunts is the Sandyland Acres Haunted Hayride and Farmers Revenge in Petersburg, Northern Kentucky. Gene and Brenda Webb combine a great acting staff with just a few animatronics (they make their own!) and over the top make-up and costumes to produce one of the best and scariest outdoor haunts this side of the Mississippi. It's Children of the Corn meets Jeepers Creepers meets Joyride!

One can only hope for the sake of the continuation of the haunt industry that as time goes on this will become more the norm with all haunt owners. To continue to be successful in such a competitive business, they must learn to rely more on human creativity, atmosphere and design rather than a store bought robot. More than anything else they must rely heavily on creativity. Creativity and imagination are vital to

setting the mood for a good scare experience.

After all, a true scare isn't always caused by what you see with your eyes; it's what you see with your mind!



The 2008 Haunted House Bus Tour to Indianapolis, Indiana. Every October, Donna takes a group of people to different city and they visit 4-5 haunted attractions a night and then review them based on 10 different criteria. Feedback is then sent to the owners of the attraction.

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!

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES:

When The Ghost Comes Around

Marie H., Wapakoneta, Ohio

I don't consider myself to be psychic or anything like that. Don't get me wrong, because I love ghosts and everything about them. I even like going to local haunted houses for Halloween and would watch horror movies all day long if my kids would let me! I've always wanted to see a ghost or to experience something supernatural, but for the longest time I never thought I had or was ever going to. All that changed about a year ago, or should I say it happened a year ago, but I only realized it two months ago. Let me explain.

About two years ago, I got divorced. Bad times, but I was at least able to get sole custody of my two children. Last year, I was able to buy a house for us to live in. It was an older house that needed a lot of work. It has been foreclosed on and had sat abandoned for two years, but I didn't care. It was a nice house and it was mine.

Almost as soon as I moved in, I would get this weird feeling whenever I was sitting on the couch watching TV at night. It was as if someone was standing in the doorway behind me that led into the kitchen. It didn't happen a lot, but when it did, I was always convinced that if I turned around, one of my kids would be standing in the doorway watching either the TV or me. I guess it would happen maybe once a month. It wasn't a scary feeling or anything, so I never really thought it was ghosts or anything like that. I guess I just assumed the feeling was due to me being tired or overworked.

That changed a couple of months ago when one of my close friends, Steve, came over for a visit. He brought his new girlfriend he had only been dating for a month. We all had a nice dinner and after I had put the kids to bed, the three of us went into the living room to watch a movie and catch up. I sat on the couch in my usual spot with my back to the kitchen doorway. Steve's girlfriend sat on the couch with me and Steve was in an easy chair on the other side of the room.

We were just chatting away not really watching what was on TV when all of a sudden I got that weird feeling again. It was weird because I was usually alone when I felt it and this was the first time I was with people. But like I had always done in the past, I brushed it off and went on like nothing was wrong. Maybe two minutes later, Steve's girlfriend looked over my shoulder, made a weird face, and then said to me "I don't want to freak you out or anything, but there's a spirit standing in your kitchen doorway looking at you." I instantly turned around, but didn't see anything. Steve said he didn't either.

The girlfriend went on to say that she was psychic and could see spirits. She said that she saw an older man who was telling her that he used to live in the house a long time ago. After about 20 seconds, she said the spirit turned, walked towards the kitchen, and faded away. It was right around that time that I realized I no longer had that weird feeling.

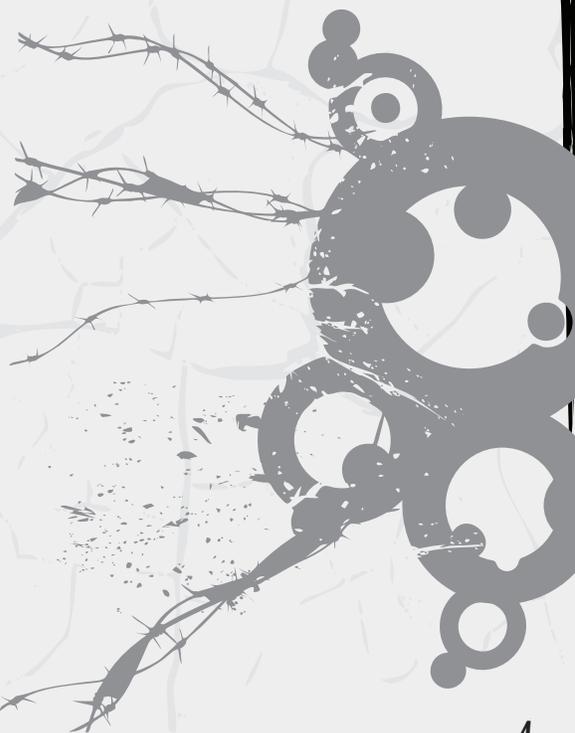
I asked the psychic for more information about the spirit, but she said she wasn't able to pick up too much information, but that she could try to reach out and get it to come back if I wanted her to. I said she could try, but I didn't tell her about the weird feelings I would get sometimes.

The psychic sort of closed her eyes and got really quiet. After about maybe 10 minutes, that old familiar feeling came over me again. At almost the same time, the psychic opened her eyes and said, "He's back." Steve and I looked at the doorway, but there was no one there. I still had the feeling, though. Then the psychic said, "He says his name is Lyle and that he used to live here. He helped build the house." Steve said, "Why is he here?" The psychic waited a minute or two and then said, "He says he's here because he loves the house and he wants to keep an eye on it. He also says that he likes to check on you, Marie, every once in a while, because he knows you live here

alone with your kids and he wants to make sure you're safe. But he doesn't want to frighten you, so he just hangs out in the doorway behind you."

What she told me totally freaked me out! I didn't tell her anything about the feelings I would get that felt like someone was standing in the doorway watching me. But what she said fit so perfectly that I was convinced that whenever I got that feeling, that it was a ghost!

Even today, I still get that feeling. It always happens when I'm sitting alone on the couch at night. I guess it happens about once a month, sometimes more, sometimes less. But now, whenever it happens, I just look back at the kitchen doorway, wave, and say, "Hi Lyle. Thanks for checking on me. I'm fine." It's weird but as soon as I say and do that, the feeling always fades away. I've yet to actually see Lyle but just feeling him and knowing he's there is a great comfort to me. It may sound selfish, but I hope Lyle never leaves and keeps checking on me.



THE GHOSTS OF OHIO SPEND THE NIGHT AT THE BISSMAN BUILDING

By Kathy Boiarski



Kathy

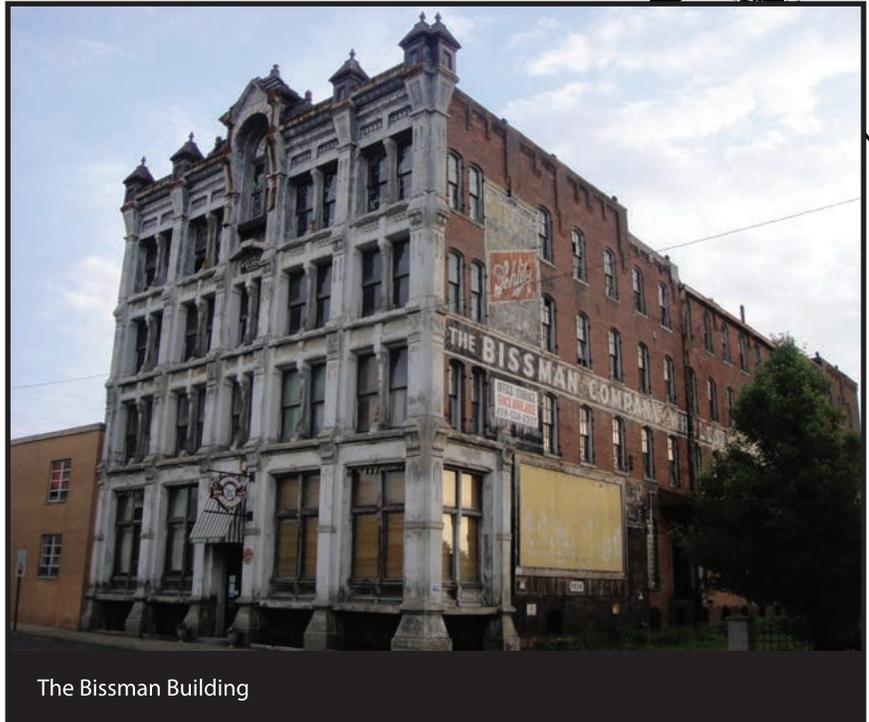
On the evening of June 8th, members of The Ghosts of Ohio and a few special guests took on the task of investigating the Bissman Building in Mansfield, Ohio, on a private hunt. The evening started with a very informative tour of

the building that lasted about an hour. The group was given both historical information and supposed paranormal happenings as well. Those in the group who didn't want to be tainted by hearing the paranormal incidences were given the option of waiting on the next floor until that portion was over. It was a really nice consideration given by the tour guide.

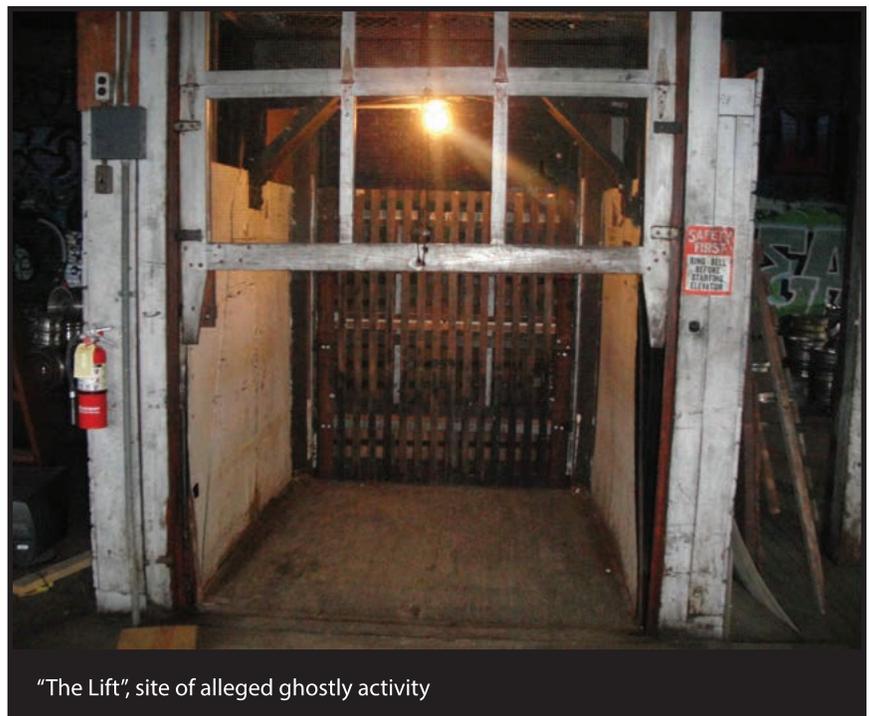
If you've never been, the Bissman Building is a huge warehouse (60,000 square feet) that has four floors to explore. Most are very open with only one or two smaller rooms at one end or the other. It was built in 1886 and used as a grocery warehouse. Even though it no longer functions as a grocery warehouse, it has remained in the Bissman family.

After the tour, we had the distinct pleasure of meeting the current owner, Ben Bissman. He shared his personal family history regarding the building and several entertaining stories. His charm and warm friendliness definitely added an additional layer of fun and interest to the evening.

After a quick rest and refueling (Monster drinks, soda, snacks, etc.), we were given the option of deciding which floor we wanted to go to first. We split up into groups of our own choosing and took off for our first of four 45-minute sessions. We decided to go "old school" for this investigation and only use handheld devices (K II, EMF detectors, digital recorders, etc.) and even had the options of dowsing rods, a pendulum, and a marionette!



The Bissman Building

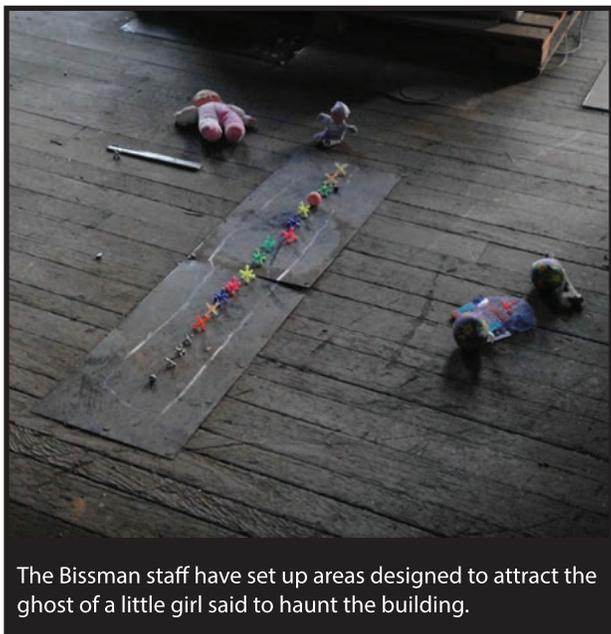


"The Lift", site of alleged ghostly activity

(continued on page 6.)

THE GHOSTS OF OHIO SPEND THE NIGHT AT THE BISSMAN BUILDING (CONT.)

Other than the open warehouse floors, there was also a very large garage where Ben Bissman keeps an assortment of older vintage cars, bicycles, and other vehicles. This area was available to us to investigate and one of the more unexplainable events for my group happened while we were in the garage area. It actually happened to my special guest, John Crago. Here's how he describes what



The Bissman staff have set up areas designed to attract the ghost of a little girl said to haunt the building.

occurred. "It was a largely uneventful night except for a cell phone malfunction in the garage area. I was taking pictures with the phone and had just seen the battery was at 49% when it died. I tried turning it back on four or five times while we were in the garage. Each attempt resulted in the dead battery symbol being displayed. Once we left the garage, the phone started back up again and the battery was at 49%. I had no other trouble with it the rest of the evening."

The Ghosts of Ohio members that were at the building haven't had a chance to get back together since the investigation to compare notes from the evening, but we'll definitely let you know if anything interesting turns up from the night. If you would like to check out the Bissman Building, visit their website at www.BissmanBuilding.com for more information.



Part of the team takes a much-needed break at 2:00 am

COMING IN THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER

The Ghosts of Ohio's ongoing experiments
with EM Pumps

A Visit To Elizabeth's Grave

Recap of The Ghosts of Ohio Jamboree

EXPERIMENTING WITH THE EM PUMP

By James Willis



James

One of the more intriguing pieces of equipment that has recently become part of the ghost hunting field is what is known as the EM Pump.

Essentially, the pump is a device

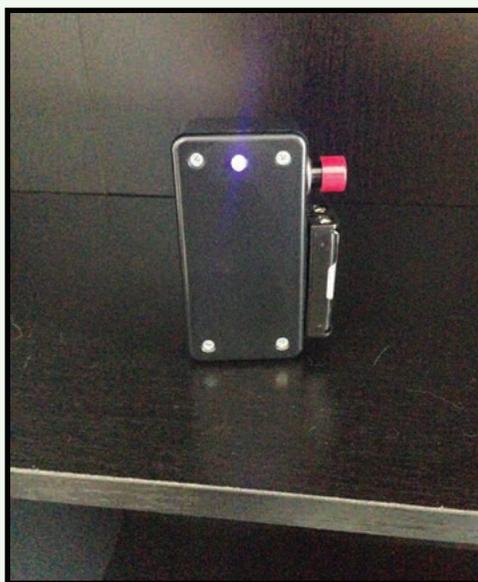
that puts out an electromagnetic field.

The theory is that by introducing a whole mess of electromagnetic energy into an environment that you are giving the ghosts something to latch onto and use in order to manifest or otherwise communicate with you. In essence, you're giving the ghosts something to feed off of so they can do their stuff.

Sounds great, right? Just plop one of these in the middle of the room, turn on your digital camera, and get ready to capture some great evidence. But of course, here at The Ghosts of Ohio, we're never willing to take things at face value, especially something that claims it can attract ghosts on a whim. So we wanted to start by not only taking a closer look at how the pump works, but how it's made.

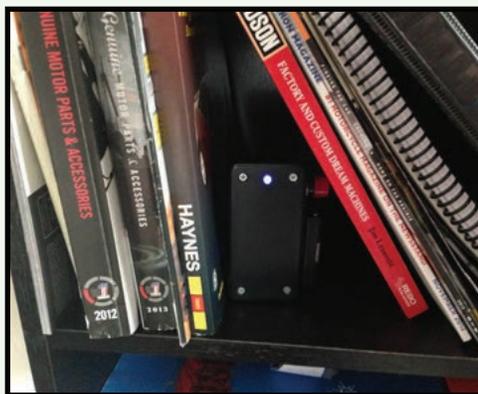
For that, we turned to Ghosts of Ohio member Sean, who built an EM Pump from scratch. By doing this as opposed to buying one premade, we're able to know exactly what all the internal components are. In the past, we've purchased "homemade" equipment online and upon deconstructing it, found it was filled with all sorts of things that could make the device's lights flash, cause it to blurt out "ghostly phrases," and even appear to shut down inexplicably. In short, by building your own device, you know what it's made of, so you'll know what's normal and "abnormal" behavior.

When Sean was done building the pump and we turned it on, it did basically what it said it would: put out EM. Boy, did it ever! In fact, after it had been running for only a minute, it was pegging out an EMF meter that was held a good two feet away



from it, meaning the level was above 199.9 milligauss (Mg). As a comparison, the recommended safety levels are between .5 and 2.5 Mg.

That's what really got us thinking. Ghosts aside, if an EM pump is pushing out levels that are over 100 times the recommended safety level, what sort of affect could that have on the humans standing around it.



Studies have been done in the past that have shown that people with sensitivity to EM fields can experience all sorts of side effects whenever they enter a field, a few of which that could be mistaken for ghost activity (feeling of being watched, tingling sensations in your hands and feet, lightheadedness). So we decided that before we started field testing our EM

pump, we needed to conduct a series of experiments to see if any of our members were sensitive to high levels of EM. That way, when we took the device into the field and team members started saying they "felt something," we could be sure that the feelings weren't being caused by the device.

The first experiment we did was to allow team members to enter a room one at a time. They were allowed to walk around the room on their own, trying to see if they felt anything strange. To be honest, there was nothing in the room that should have caused any feelings as the location was not known to be haunted. So in reality, team members were just getting a "feel" of the room.

After everyone had the opportunity to walk through the room, they went to another floor while I hid the EM pump in the room and then turned it on. After a few minutes, team members were once again allowed to enter the room, one at a time, and see if they felt anything different from the first time they walked through. When everyone had come through a second time, I brought everyone back in and asked them to stand where they felt something. If they didn't feel anything, I had them stand in the middle of the room. Then, I showed them where the EM pump was hidden.

The results were surprising. Two team members ended up standing right next to where the pump was. Almost everyone else was within a few feet of the device. When asked, most said that they did indeed feel something that led them to stand in a specific spot, even if they described it as just a "gut feeling." Granted, this was just one experiment, but it really got us thinking as to what other things we could do with the EM pump to help us not only determine what the device was capable of, but also about how adding such a device to our arsenal could impact investigations as a whole.

We'll keep you posted!

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!

Black Mary Ann (Cleveland/Cuyahoga county)

Buffington Island (Portland/Meigs county)

Buckeye Belle (Beverly/Washington county)

New London Road Jogger (Hamilton/Butler county)

Watkins Road Bridge (Columbus/Franklin county)

HERE COME THE GHOSTS!

As we're getting this ready for release, the first official day of summer has already come and gone. And boy, can you sure tell! It's so hot outside that cool autumn breezes would probably be the last thing on your mind. But The Ghosts of Ohio is already gearing up for a busy fall season. Here's one of the confirmed places you can come out and see us (with more on the way):

October 19, 2013 **Delaware Ghost Walk**

Also, as part of the hoopla surrounding the September 1, 2013, release of his latest book, *The Big Book Of Ohio Ghost Stories*, The Ghosts of Ohio's founder and director, James A. Willis, will be appearing at a select few locations. He'll even be speaking at some of them! More details as they become available, but for now, mark your calendars!

September 29, 2013 **Oxford, Ohio, presentation**

October 12, 2013 **Dublin, Ohio, presentation**

November 2, 2013 **Buckeye Book Fair**

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>.

Interact with The Ghosts of Ohio

In addition to our website, here are a couple of places where you can find The Ghosts of Ohio lurking online:



MYSPACE

www.myspace.com/ghostsofohio



FACEBOOK

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/Columbus-OH/The-Ghosts-of-Ohio/60704381381?ref=mf>



TWITTER

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