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ARPAST investigates the 'unexplainable'

By Peg Kenyon / EDITOR / writethepatriot@yahoo.com
Friday, March 21, 2008 2:39 PM CDT

Mysterious sounds in the night, purported recordings of deceased spirits speaking from beyond the grave and thermal images of an apparent apparition spooked some people attending a library event in Jacksonville last Tuesday.

The program was presented by the Arkansas Paranormal and Anomalous Studies Team (ARPAST) at Esther D. Nixon Library on March 4.

ARPAST president Larry Flaxman presented a brief workshop in which he said one can make recordings of a ghost whispering words of advice. He said a person who asks questions in order to get a response from someone who is dead will sometimes get a personal response, instead.

An investigation was being conducted in Little Rock at a location that is now a bed and breakfast establishment. The place was once used as brothel, according to Flaxman, and purportedly held a past story with a tragic ending. Flaxman told about an irate husband who discovered his wife working as a prostitute and killed her in front of her 6-year-old son.

Flaxman punched the play button on his recorder and the voice that came out sounded like a little boy asking, "Will you play with me?"

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Other stories accompanied alleged recordings of voices from the deceased. One tape had a strange-sounding voice, perhaps saying the word "awful," Flaxman explained to the small group. Another recording of a



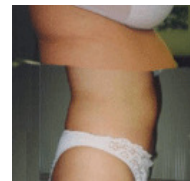
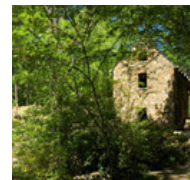
Larry Flaxman, ARPAST President, plays what he says are captured audio recordings of sounds made by dead people and displays a costly thermal imaging camera he hopes to use to reveal a ghost. (photo by Peg Kenyon)

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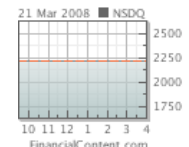


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more people become interested in signing up.

"We do investigations all over the country," Flaxman said.

According to an ARPAST pamphlet, its goal is not to prove or disprove the existence of spirits or ghosts. Its mission is to uncover and examine "statistical trends underlying the mechanics of reported phenomena and determine conditions required for repeatability" in accordance with established scientific methods.

A couple of times during Flaxman's lecture, some people left the room and others reacted with shock at some of the recordings being played.

Flaxman told how a person could possibly begin to record audio of electronic voice phenomena, also known as EVP. A tape recorder, an external microphone, a set of earphones and computer software to delete foreground noises could jump-start a person into another realm, he said. He also recommended using a tape recorder in an quiet environment.

"You don't need anything elaborate to capture it," Flaxman said.

Flaxman also told of the early beginnings that spawned EVP investigations.

"In 1959, Frederick Jurgenson was attempting to record birds," Flaxman said. "A male voice drowned out the birds he was trying to tape. At first, he thought it was a radio broadcast, but voices were calling out his name and his dog's name."

Flaxman said EVPs were placed in three categories. Class A is when most people will hear the same word or words; Class B is when headsets are used to discern the word or words; and Class C is a garbled recording.

There are two types of places where investigations are generally conducted: historic buildings or sites and private residences. Flaxman says he prefers historic settings for his investigations. But not everything reported to ARPAST is deemed worthy of a follow-up.

"There's a man that believes a werewolf is living in his shower," Flaxman said. "We get a lot of crackpots."

One of his favorite sites is a former tuberculosis sanitarium in

male voice reportedly from beyond the grave told an investigator at a former Hot Springs nursing home, "Be fair, Judy."

Prior to listening to those recordings, Flaxman gave a brief synopsis of ARPAST. Its statewide membership fluctuates between 120 to 150 members; he said that around Halloween,

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"You feel this overwhelming sadness there," he said. "And I'm not psychic, by any means."

More than 2,500 people might have died at that sanitarium, according to Flaxman. An investigation there involved about 50 people seeking to capture something on tape. He showed computerized thermal imaging videotape supposedly revealing the shape of a dead man with his arms folded. He claims that visual hung around for about 45 minutes.

Prior to showing those apparition images, Flaxman demonstrated how a thermal imaging camera could reveal heat sources left behind by a body. That camera costs about \$30,000, he says. One of the other investigators also claimed to see a little girl; Flaxman said he was not able to see her, so went to where the location the other investigator indicated.

"But I got the most incredible chill," he told attendees about his invisible encounter. "That cold spot was colder than a meat locker."

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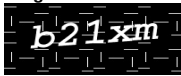
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