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Exploring the paranormal ESP Weekend brings out believers

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By Jennifer Jackson



Author Larry Flaxman signs a copy of "The Deja Vu Enigma" for Joshua Maupin, right, after Flaxman's keynote address Friday at ESP weekend at the Crescent Hotel. Maupin, 15, attended with his parents, Cindy and Thomas Maupin of Heber Springs, who live in a house with paranormal activity.

Since he was 10 years old, Joshua Maupin has experienced paranormal activity. The radio turns on by itself. Doors open and close. There is the sudden smell of cigar smoke; at

other times, gardenias or roses. Guests ask who is bouncing a ball upstairs. Children giggle in corners. A shadow once appeared at the top of the stairs, and another time, a cold mist filled a doorway.

"We have an entity in our house," said Thomas Maupin. "We actually think we have two -- an older man and a young child."

Now 15, Joshua and his parents, Thomas and Cindy, came from Heber Springs to hear Larry Flaxman, a paranormal investigator, at ESP (Eureka Springs Paranormal) at the Crescent Hotel last weekend. Their motive: not to hunt ghosts, but to understand better the ones they live with on a day-to-day basis.

"We wanted to get Larry's view of it," Thomas said.

Flaxman is the founder of ARPAST, the Arkansas Paranormal and Anomalous Studies Team and the author of books on subjects ranging from the scientific basis of time travel to the universal concept of the trinity. ARPAST takes a science-based approach to paranormal investigation, Flaxman said. He considers his team's role to be that of environmental investigator, debunker and skeptic, plus a psychological one. One of the two most important factors in any investigation, he said, is the psychology of the reporter, or person who experienced the paranormal activity. The other is the motives and expectations of the investigator.

"Don't just hunt ghosts," he told the audience Friday night. "Don't go just to get scared or

to capture an apparition. Hunt your own part in their manifestation. We may have more to do with it than we think."

April Fales, one of the ARPAST team members who led midnight forays through the hotel, said the Crescent is in the top 10 places in Arkansas with paranormal activity. Cliff Plegge and Lori Crabtree agree. The couple, who came from Little Rock for ESP weekend, said they always have experiences when they stay at the hotel. Their first time, they reserved a room across the hall from Number 218, said to be haunted by Michael, an Irish stonemason who fell to this death during the building's construction. The couple had just checked in and were sitting in their room when Plegge said, "If you're here, Michael, let us know" and someone started knocking on the door. When Plegge opened it, there was nobody there, and nobody in either direction in the hall, he said. Crabtree took photographs of the room before and after the incident.

"In the after photo, there was an orb over the door," she said.

The next time they stayed in Room 218. Before going to bed, they shut and locked the French doors to the balcony. When they awoke the next morning, the doors were open. They found out later that opening the doors is something Michael loves to do, Plegge said.

Another couple, Karen and Kent Ashcroft of Arkadelphia, said they have never seen a ghost, but heard one in a cemetery in Gurdon, Ark. Last Friday, Karen, taking her turn sitting alone in the cooler of the morgue in the basement, felt someone touching her hair. After she exited, Kent took his turn. While he was sitting inside, Glen Couvillion, who was standing in the corridor outside the morgue, saw a shadow pass in front of a shelf of bottles on a counter next to the cooler door.

"It's the second time I've seen a shadow person," Couvillion said.

Flaxman picked up a voice in the morgue using an advanced EVP (electronic voice phenomenon) device identifying himself as "Howard," according to Ken Scott. Scott, from Nixa, Mo., came to ESP weekend with spouse Shirley Scott. During their previous stays at the Crescent, the television in their room came on by itself, Ken said, and when

he unplugged it, it came back on. They also were sitting on the hotel's back porch late at night and saw a candle light up on a table in the empty dining room. The Scotts are familiar with ghosts -- they once lived in house in Windsor, Mo., where shadow people walked up and down the hall, leaving footprints in the carpeting. They would smell flowers in the middle of winter, and they'd hear their son, then in a crib, laughing in the middle of the night and go into his room, to find him standing at one end of the crib interacting with someone.

"Animals and young children are more perceptive of paranormal activity," Flaxman said.

The other main speaker at ESP was Maha Vajra, who talked on the psychology of ghosts, who may be trapped in the emotional plane by frustrations they experienced during their lives.

"The attachment is what keeps ghosts chained to physical reality," he said.

The Maupins, who have picked up EVPs through sensors, theorize that the entities are trying to reach them from the other side. But the house, which they moved into five years ago, was built in 1997, and as far they know, nothing traumatic happened there. When Thomas suggested having the ghosts exorcised, a teddy bear flew through the air at him. And the family parrot would miss the attention: he tucks his head and acts like he is being petted by an invisible hand.


"To us it's real," Thomas said. "Once you get used to it, it's an everyday thing."

Flaxman said the best approach to paranormal activity is to see it as a path to understanding man's connection to the universe in whatever way it manifests itself. The bottom line, as far as ghost-hunters are concerned:

"The Crescent Hotel is haunted," Flaxman said. "Paranormal experience is real."

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Ghosts huh.. Why doesn't anyone believe in unicorns or goblins? Because that would be CRAZY!

But if it boosts the local economy, Who am I to judge.. At least they are having fun chasing spooks and lens flares!

-- Posted by **chimps** on Fri, Jan 11, 2013, at 7:12 PM

Next week, Flat Earth Society!!

-- Posted by **Atlas Shrugged** on Sat, Jan 12, 2013, at 1:19 AM

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