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Ghost hunting in Arkansas is alive and well and those professionals participating in the search for paranormal activity have been inundated with requests for investigations over the past year.

“It’s just been non-stop,” said Larry Flaxman of Little Rock, the founder and president of the Arkansas Paranormal and Anomalous Studies Team (ARPAST), the only such organization in Arkansas affiliated with TAPS, the Rhode Island-based Atlantic Paranormal Society and originators of the hugely popular television program, “Ghost Hunters.”

Flaxman reports that, according to a 2005 Gallup Poll, more than one-third of Americans believe in ghosts — a word often used to explain things not readily explainable, such as objects suddenly appearing or disappearing, mists, apparitions or orbs, strange noises or odors ... anything seen, heard or felt which has no immediate rational explanation.

Although there have been some interesting investigations during the past few months, Flaxman said, there’s been nothing really spectacular. Finding little evidence of the paranormal after long hours of analyzing the data collected, he added, is common, perhaps because ARPAST approaches investigations from a purely scientific point of view. The team, he said, attempts to understand just what *causes* the phenomena, whether it’s a “spirit,” or something else.

Much of the phenomena reported and then analyzed by ARPAST is gathered, Flaxman said, through such devices as EMF (Electro-Magnetic Field) equipment. High EMF readings, some believe, indicate the presence of a spirit.

“But, we usually find that the high readings come from something perfectly normal, such as unshielded copper wiring, breaker boxes or simply old wiring, which can cause severe headaches or sometimes hallucinations,” Flaxman said.

Asked if he’d ever seen a ghost, Flaxman offered this answer: “First of all, we do not know if ‘ghosts’ exist as nothing has ever been unilaterally proven. However, many of our members have experienced events that could not be immediately explained by conventional science. Whether that constitutes a ‘ghost’ or not, we do not know.”

He has, Flaxman said, begun to shift away from the generally accepted definition of “ghost.”

“I am beginning to see more of a link between physiology and paranormal events. In other words, the phenomena may be caused by external/natural events in the environment and actual changes in the brain which make you feel like things are really happening. Many people certainly believe they see or hear unusual things,” he said. “Who’s to say that a schizophrenic person is not seeing what they think they’re seeing?”

Is he disappointed with the thought that there may be reasonable, physiological explanations for ghosts?

“No, not at all. It’s simply a whole new realm to discover. I still definitely believe in ghosts, but the question is, what *are* ghosts, exactly?”

Members of ARPAST, he said, are attempting to answer that question by raising awareness regarding the reality of ghost hunting — the scientific research into the paranormal.

Detailed information on the business of ARPAST and answers to frequently asked questions about their investigations is available by logging on to their web site at www.arpast.org.

The Arkansas Paranormal and Anomalous Studies Team (ARPAST) has investigated hundreds of supposedly “haunted” sites in Arkansas, with requests for investigations streaming in on a regular basis.

In Southeast Arkansas, several “legends” have been brought to the team’s attention and have — or may be — investigated. They are:

North Grant County

Ico Cemetery - with reports of lights, gravestones being relocated, a feeling of being chased from the cemetery and ghost cars following people back to the highway;

Old Redfield Road - with reports about everything and anything, from ghosts wandering the road, apparitions in the cemetery and flashlights and radios going dead with no explanation;

Prague Cemetery - with reports of voices, lights and faces in the trees, ghost trains barreling through the cemetery and the rumor of a girl tied to the now non-existent train track.

North Pine Bluff

Hudson Cemetery - with reports of Old Widow Hudson seen walking around as a ghostly apparition at night in the cemetery. It is said that she haunts the place after killing her family and then committing suicide.

North Sheridan

Courthouse Square - It is reported that in the late 1800s, there were numerous people hanged on the courthouse lawn. There are reports of apparitions in the courthouse windows, as well as disembodied footsteps echoing throughout the halls.

(From ARPAST and The Shadowlands Web sites)