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Ghost hunters investigate Franklin County's Old Jail

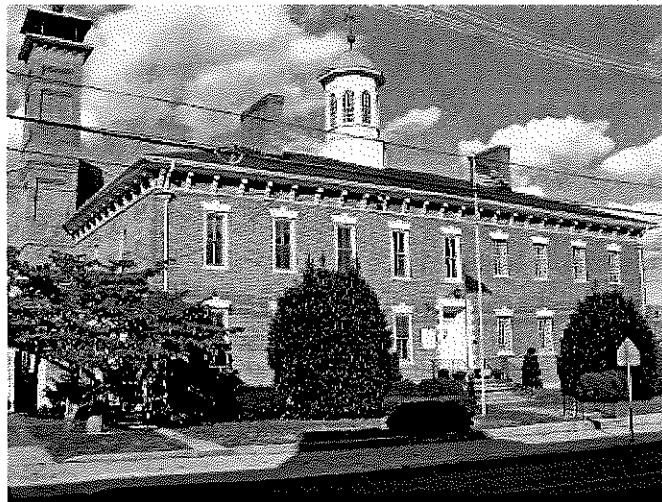
"This is when I spent the night as a reporter with local ghost hunters in a 'haunted' jail in Chambersburg, Pa."

By ROSCOE BARNES III

Staff writer

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Franklin County Old Jail
Chambersburg, Pa.

In a dark dusty room in the dungeon of the old Franklin County Jail, Jim Wyrick called out to something he could not see.

"What's your name, spirit?" he asked.

A robotic voice answered through his Ovilus, a hand-held paranormal device, and said, "Thaddeaus."

"What year is it?" asked Wyrick.

"90," the entity responded.

"1890?" Wyrick asked.

No response.

Wyrick, who lives in Chambersburg, is a local ghost hunter who travels the country to investigate hauntings, spirits, and paranormal phenomena. He and two of his team members, Dave Haynie and Chris Gaimari, both of York, spent the night at the old jail Thursday to conduct a study.

Psychic and retired FBI agent

Their work was preceded by a tour and spirited talks given by Athena Varounis, retired Fcomagent, and Deborah M. Heinecker, psychic, of Vesuvius Investigative Consultants. As partners, the two women work cold cases, homicides, missing persons, arsons, corporate issues, paranormal phenomena and ghosts.

"I'm just a conduit," said Heinecker. "When I do anything, I ask God to tell me what he wants me to know. That's when things start flowing. I don't have any gifts. I don't have any power."

According to her website, Heinecker made national news in the summer of 1991 when she assisted the Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department in finding their missing canine.

Before then, Heinecker had been a businesswoman, with a background in accounting and computers.

"Although Deborah had requested anonymity, the media announced that a 'psychic' had found the missing canine," her website states. "An article in The Washington Post brought hundreds of telephone calls and letters requesting her assistance in everything from missing persons cases to lost property."

Heinecker "picked up" a number of things while visiting the old jail. Sometime ago, when she was down in the basement, she found it hard to enter one of the rooms. Later, when she found the strength to enter, she felt overcome with sadness. She saw a black man in shackles, who was very distraught. She imagined he had been a runaway slave who was caught and thrown into jail.

Wyrick capturing voices

Early Friday morning, a little past midnight, Wyrick entered the same room and tapped into the energy. He asked questions and received answers through an Ovilus, a hand-held paranormal device that take the Electro Magnetic Force and converts it into speech patterns. The sound is robotic.

Wyrick and his team use electronic digital recorders to pick up extra voice phenomena. Wyrick said they didn't have a "real dramatic night," although they did capture a few voices.

When he visited Cell 18, where a suicide had taken place, Wyrick said he heard a clear voice that said, "I'm Frank." A historian is doing research to identify the person, he said.

"There was nothing really dramatic that took place," he said. "The thing that seemed to be most effective was to go into a cell and be quiet all by yourself, and become one with the cell."

Throughout the night, Wyrick used his divining rods which reportedly picked up energy and led him to an area that was known as Dead Man's Walk.

Wyrick and his crew packed up at 5:30 and went to the John Brown House. They made recordings and will take a couple of weeks to review the data. On a personal level, Wyrick said he was disappointed that the entity with whom he communicated did not establish dialogue with him.

Heinecker's physic abilities

Whereas Wyrick and his team used technology to capture data from the various entities, Heinecker picks it up through her physic abilities. So far she has worked with 54 murder cases. In each of the cases, she came up with information that was helpful to the police, she said.

There was a time, a few years ago, when she could not walk into a computer room without the computers malfunctioning, she said.

When Heinecker and Varounis are working a case, Varounis will go to the scene first to gather background. She doesn't share this with Heinecker, who likes to work with a clean slate.

"I don't want to know anything about the case," she said. "The entities seem to like me. I'm respectful."

Heinecker said that whether she visits the scene of a crime or the police station, she allows herself to feel where the person got shot or was beaten.

On one occasion she had pain in her side for three days. The pain was related to someone who had been injured in the side, Varounis said.

"When I get a nausous feeling in a certain spot, someone has died there," Heinecker said.

She believes that all people leave an "energy stamp" that can be seen or detected by someone who is sensitive or psychic. In her own case, she picks up smells, sounds, images and words.

Once when she visited an old house in Waynesboro , she kept hearing the buzzing sound of bees. Nobody else could hear it. She learned later that the man who had lived there was a bee keeper.

Three types of hauntings

According to Anthony Lawson of Pennsylvania Paranormal Investigations, there are three types of hauntings. The first is called residual. It's when you see the same ghost or hear the same sound over and over, like a recording that continues to repeat itself.

It's a case where the entities may not know that they are dead, he said.

The second type of haunting is known as intelligent, he said: "The spirit knows it is dead and it tries to make contact with you. This is every ghost hunter's dream."

Lawson, who volunteers for the historical society, said he wasn't sure about the name for the third type of haunting. He said it usually involves a spirit at an old home that begins activity when the home is remodeled or torn down: "They don't come out to scare people, but they might be disturbed by the activity. Actually, they might be afraid of (the living)."

Varounis and Heinecker were assisted by Michael J. Albert, preservation specialist for Historic Preservation Services, Chambersburg .

After their presentation, the women signed copies of their books. Varounis is the author of Franklin County Ghosts (Schiffer Publishing, 2009), and Heinecker is the author of The Reluctant Psychic (Xlibris, 2000).

Information on the Franklin County Historical Society- Kittochtinny is available at
<http://pafch.tripod.com>. For details on Vesuvius Investigative Consultants, visit <http://www.vesuvius-investigations.com>

Roscoe Barnes III can be reached at 262-4762 or rbarnes@publicopinionnews.com.