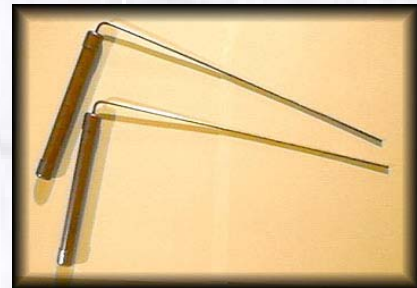


The Softer Side of Ghost Hunting By Stephanie Davisson

As a people, Americans tend to value new technology very highly. If it's new it must be better and ghost hunters are no exception to that. We're always looking for the next new gadget that will help us identify and quantify haunting activity. When that new tool comes along, we put aside what had always worked great in the past in favor of the new and shiny, however sometimes the simplest method is the best method.

Taking a low-tech approach may get better results than some new and marginally tested device. A few low-tech methods to think about are dowsing rods, pendulums, spirit communication boards, trigger objects and just plain quiet time.

Dowsing Rods have been used for energy detection for over 4,000 years. Dowsing rods can be made of many materials but the most common today is made of copper because its conductive properties make it extremely sensitive. The theory behind their use is that rods held over an energy source will vibrate or cross. Because popular belief holds that spirits are comprised of energy, it makes sense for ghost hunters to utilize a tool that detects energy to identify "hot spots". Dowsing rods are often poo-poo'd by techies because they can easily be manipulated by the operator. This can be minimized by the addition of a sleeve. A sleeve is a wooden or metallic covering for the short arm of the dowsing rod that is secured at the bottom. This prevents the user from making contact directly with the dowsing rod, which moves freely within the sleeve.



Pendulum dowsing has been in operation nearly as long as rod dowsing and evidence has been found that pendulums were common in ancient Roman society by physicians and priests. While most common pendulums consist of a crystal suspended on a short chain, pendulums can be made of almost any household object. All you need is some kind of weight, called a bobber, and a chain or string. As with rods, dowsing pendulums conduct the energy that flows around it causing it to swing. This again requires a human element but that can be mitigated by suspending the pendulum from a platform and allowing it to swing freely. When using the platform, it is important that it be placed on a secure level surface so that no stray vibrations can be transmitted through the platform. That means that you need to be aware of anything in the environment that will cause vibrations. This includes heating/cooling systems, electrical appliances, as well as traffic outside the building.

Spirit Communication is the goal of many investigations and ghost hunters will use a variety of methods to discover who and what ghosts are. If we believe that a haunting has some intelligence and may be able to communicate with us, it is up to the ghost hunter to provide the means for that communication to take place. Spirit communication boards such as the Ouija Board have taken on a negative connotation over time. And any ghost hunter thinking of employing such devices should take the clients sensibilities into consideration. As side from the original Ouija Board there are many spirit communication boards on the market that can be utilized may have a place in the ghost hunter's tool kit. Be award of the limitations of spirit communication devices of all kinds. Boards with word and letters require spirits to be able to spell in a recognizable language, but what if you encounter a spirit who doesn't speak English or has only a rudimentary education? There are many boards on the market that also include pictures and symbols. These have been found effective in some cases. Creating your own custom board is simple enough once you decide on the words or symbols you want to use. Simply cut pictures and words out of magazines and glue them to the board. Boards can be as simple as cardboard or as elaborate as painted glass or Plexiglas.



Because spirit communication boards require human interaction, removing the human element is recommended. The Advanced Ghost Hunters of Seattle Tacoma (AGHOST) has had some success with a device they invented called the PK Board. This board removes the human element altogether. The board has a spinner that spirits can manipulate using PK energy to move a pointer from letter to letter spelling out words in a message.

Trigger objects can also be used to encourage spirits to interact with the living.

Enticing a spirit to move a trigger object may promote communication and allow the investigator to document phenomena. The most common objects used are scrabble



tiles, toys, photographs, or mementos. When using a trigger object the ghost hunter should be conscious to place the object in an area that will remain undisturbed during the investigation. In addition their position should be documented and they should be continuously monitored and recorded by video recording. Investigators may invite the spirits to interact with the objects and even coach it to move the object to a specific position or in a specific way.

And while all that spirit communication is going on, we should never forget to take a few minutes for quiet time. It's easy to get drawn into the frenetic pace of an investigation and forget that when attempting communication the most important thing we can do is

to allow the spirit to respond. I have found that during many investigations the background conversation of the investigators make detecting spirit voices on audio playback next to impossible.

I believe that all investigations should include some time for investigators and clients to just sit quietly. This can be done in conjunction with a question and answer period. Teams may wish to assign two members to sit quietly alone in the location, without interference and noise from the remaining team members. Using audio recording or video taping the combination of low-tech and high-tech may yield some interesting results.

Ghost hunting has a rich and varied history. As investigators we should respect the techniques of our forerunners as we strive for new methods to document phenomena. There's an old saying, "Everything old is new again." Maybe we should remember that as we move forward into the future of ghost hunting.

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