

Who (or Where) Do You Really Call?

Originally published in ESP, HAUNTINGS AND POLTERGEISTS: A Parapsychologist's Handbook by Loyd Auerbach (Warner Books, 1986). Updated fall 2003.

Before getting to the list, here's a bit more info to consider, whether you're trying to reach a parapsychologist or thinking about calling yourself one.

One of the basic problems for people who have experiences such as the ones detailed in this book is that they rarely know who they can talk to about those experiences. In addition, when they may need help with getting through an experience, or in having any psychic disturbances halted, they don't really know where they can find parapsychologists to help them, to investigate, or to counsel them.

Along with the problem of not knowing who to call is the issue of who and what organizations are both reputable and effective in helping people deal with psi experiences. To date, there is no psychic hot line for people to call, though parapsychologists in a few places hope to get one (or more) started, provided the proper funding becomes available. People may hear of parapsychologists and parapsychological organizations through media accounts of parapsychology and through searching the Internet. Unfortunately, the media is not consistent when it comes to checking out the claimed background of experts, and the Internet provides lots of opportunity for people to misrepresent phenomena, their expertise, their credentials and their organizations. For example, a claim of a Ph.D. in Parapsychology is *extremely* suspicious, and one should not only ask where the degree came from, but "what was your dissertation about?"

People can call themselves parapsychologists without having any licensing or credentials, given that none are really available. You, as the person needing the help or information that a real parapsychologist can give, must be careful about who you do call for aid or information, since there are many more people claiming to be parapsychologists than there are full or associate members of the Parapsychological Association. Then again, not all who are qualified to be parapsychologists (based on knowledge, expertise and what they're doing to study psi phenomena) are members of that organization.

When encountering or seeking out a "parapsychologist," make sure you ask him/her questions like the following:

- 1) How do you define parapsychology? Make sure that the answer is more or less in agreement with what you've learned through this book and some of the other recommended materials, and that the person's definition of "parapsychology" doesn't encompass things like UFOs, Bigfoot, Atlantis and other things that have little to do with psychic experience.
- 2) Why do you call yourself a parapsychologist? Answers like "I'm a practicing psychic" or "I've been chasing ghosts for years" or "I'm a practicing witch or astrologer or numerologist..." or "I've been interested in the field for years" are not acceptable. Just because you have psychic

abilities doesn't make one a parapsychologist, any more than having a mind makes someone a psychologist. If the person mentions doing research, inquire as to what that research is, and how it stacks up against scientific research into the paranormal.

- 3) Are you affiliated with any research or academic organization? Most, but not all people really in the field of parapsychology are at the least associate members of the Parapsychological Association, and many work in accredited universities or colleges. Or they're at least *known* to other parapsychologists and to the major organizations. Simply being a member of organizations like the American Society for Psychical Research does not automatically make one a "parapsychologist," by the way, since anyone can join.
- 4) What is your educational or professional background? This is a tough one to really pin down, as I have met many people with no formal education in parapsychology who have taken it upon themselves to really learn. They have read voraciously in the field's literature, and know their stuff. However, these same people *don't* misrepresent their degrees. As mentioned above, a claim of an advanced degree in Parapsychology ought to be met with skepticism.

The only accredited Master's degree program in parapsychology in the country (in fact, in the whole Western hemisphere) was at John F. Kennedy University until the late 1980s when it closed. Rosebridge Graduate School of Integrative Psychology did offer a Psy.D. program in the 1990s (also no longer in existence). Anyone with "certificates" in parapsychology could have easily gotten their "certificate" or "degree" from a psychic development school or mail order or online diploma mill (I get at least a couple of emailed advertisements about buying an advanced degree every month).

There are a few distance learning courses of study, but most of these are not oriented toward scientific parapsychology, and I know of at least one that offers a Ph.D. with no accreditation, and with no significant research and writing requirement (in fact, they seem to apologize for making students write a very few short papers – hardly Ph.D. qualifications).

The American Institute of Parapsychology is trying to work up a distance learning certificate program, as are others directly in the field. By the way, the one exception to the "no Ph.D.s in Parapsychology from American universities" statement is Jeffrey Mishlove, who was able to get a Ph.D. in Parapsychology from a special program at University of California at Berkeley. And my colleague Pamela Heath earned a Psy.D. in Parapsychology from Rosebridge before it closed its doors. Most parapsychologists have their educational background in mainstream fields like psychology, anthropology, physics, etc.

This is not to say, by the way, that some select people who are not parapsychologists by strict definition cannot be of help. There are several people out there who, although not necessarily members of the Parapsychological Association, are very knowledgeable, competent, and ethical. Again, you should, however, get in touch with a reputable organization or laboratory to check such a person out before working with him or her. Don't be afraid to hurt someone's feelings. I'd rather someone check me out thoroughly than simply assume I and everyone else claiming to be a "professional" paranormal investigator or parapsychologist is genuine. That shows good common sense.

Just don't run out and hire a "ghostbuster" or "exorcist" without really checking to see that they are truly what they say they are, and without really understanding what your other options are. All too often I have heard that such people come in and immediately find the ghost (or demon, sometimes), then charge an arm and a leg to get "rid of it," never having really explored whether there may be other explanations or psychological causes for the events.

One other thing to consider is that there are more and more ghost-hunting groups cropping up all over the world. Many call themselves "professionals" or "certified," yet have little or no real field experience in understanding what's going on or (especially) with helping people deal with the phenomena. They are most interested in (and excited by) getting whatever they can with cameras, audiotape (EVP) and other technology.

Some call themselves professionals because they claim they work full time doing investigations. This is possible, provided one is supported by other money such as membership dues for an organization or website, or seminar and lecture work, or by offering ghost tours. As someone in this field since 1979, I can say no one is supported by *field work* alone.

Being a "professional" is not so much about working full time as it is know what one is doing, and behaving in a professional and ethical manner. Most of the folks out there may be well-meaning, but have shown little professionalism. To that end, the Paranormal Research Organization was formed in 2002 (more info on that group below).

Here's a short essay by one of the associates of the group, providing an apt metaphor for your consideration.

The Amateur and the Professional

Kathy Rehm, 2003 (used with permission)

What makes us want to go into that "creepy" old place down by the edge of town that has stood empty for years?

Do we really want to be scared or wish that we could see a ghost and live to tell the tale?

For the majority of folks going to haunted places it is the expectation that "something really creepy" might happen to them. Or that they will see or witness some phenomenon that they can't explain but will be able to tell their friends about. We can compare going to a haunted place to going to an amusement or theme park with the new high tech roller coasters or simulator rides.

The individuals who line up for hours to ride on one of the newer roller coaster rides have an expectation of a thrill. They are waiting for the experience of that excitement.

In similar fashion, the amateur ghost hunter has the expectation of a thrill when going ghost hunting. Bringing their camcorders or cameras adds to the expectation of the thrill if they get a something odd on video or on a picture.

The professional paranormal investigator on the other hand wants to understand what is causing the phenomena.

The typical individual riding a roller coaster isn't interested in the physics or flight dynamics that went into a design that has them experiencing mild G forces during the ride. They are looking for their expectation of the experience to be fulfilled.

The professional paranormal investigator is looking to understand the dynamics of what is causing the phenomena. What environmental factors and human factors cause the events. And while there can be some excitement in this type of work, it is not expected and is somewhat rare. It is field research being done to validate that under certain conditions, a paranormal event occurred or there is a explanation that causes an event to seem as if it is a paranormal occurrence.

The irony is that the paranormal investigator needs the event to occur while all the equipment designed to capture the environmental factors is working. While one can use the experiences of the riders of the roller coasters to get some sense of how the coaster affects them, the professional investigator can learn more if he/she went on the ride. So, just like the customers waiting for the cars of the ride to start the incline to fling them into experiencing the ride, the professional investigator needs the event to occur for some of their technology to be of any use. But it's both *that* the event is analyzed (and *how* it's analyzed) that separates the amateur ghost hunter from the professional investigator.

And of course the professional investigator can in the course of analysis have the same type of thrill as going to that "creepy old place " at the edge of town. But the professional investigator has come with background of the human experiences of the place and equipment to record the environmental factors. Does a professional investigator want the thrill of the ride? Only if it can contribute to the knowledge of what is causing the paranormal event. But somehow on a long night's stake out at that "creepy old place at the edge of town, maybe we can hear the professional paranormal investigator whisper "strap yourselves in folks, it going to be a bumpy night"



The following list provides you some of the best resources on Parapsychology, both in and out of the laboratory.

American Institute of Parapsychology

<http://www.afterlife-psychical.org>

Non-profit member organization supporting education and research into psychic phenomena and survival after death. Local chapter program and national conference. Offers paranormal investigation services, especially to people who need help in dealing with unwanted psychic phenomena. AIP subscribes to both scientific and intuitive methods of investigation. Offers home study course and certification exams.

American Society for Psychical Research
5 West 73rd Street
New York, NY 10023
(212)799-5050
<http://www.aspr.com>

The U.S.'s oldest membership society, which has an excellent library, sponsors public lectures and workshops, publishes a journal and newsletter, as well as other publications available, such as a limited list of courses in parapsychology offered around the world.

California Society for Psychical Study, Inc.
P.O. Box 844
Berkeley, CA 94704
<http://www.ca-sps.org>

(415) 249-9275 (c/o The Office of Paranormal Investigations)
The San Francisco Bay Area's oldest psychic organization, it publishes a monthly newsletter, *Iridis*, and offers lectures from September through June. The author is a past President,

IANDS: The International Association for Near-Death Studies
PO Box 502
East Windsor Hill, CT 06028 USA
(860) 644-5216
<http://www.iands.org>
email: office@iands.org

This membership organization conducts research on near-death experiences, including interviewing people who have had such experiences. Publishes a journal and newsletter, and has several local chapters around the country.

Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS)
101 San Antonio Road
Petaluma, CA 94952
(707) 775-3500
<http://www.ions.org>

Founded in 1973, IONS has a large international membership and promotes research and education in the area of human consciousness. Publishes a newsletter, bulletin, journal and other publications. In its new location for only a few years, IONS also offers retreats and workshops and conducts cutting edge psi research in their new lab.

The Office of Paranormal Investigations (OPI)
P.O. Box 875

Orinda, CA 94563-0875
(415) 249-9275

<http://www.mindreader.com>
esper@california.com

Established in 1989 by its director, Loyd Auerbach, the Office of Paranormal Investigations is a group that provides a number of services to the general public, the scientific, business, and legal communities, and the media. Investigations of apparitions, poltergeists and hauntings are conducted, as well as explorations of other psychic and anomalous experiences and phenomena (including, of course, psychic dreaming). Consulting and information services are available to researchers (in and outside of parapsychology) interested in expertise in magic and illusion to aid in experimental set-up and guard against fraud; to the business and legal communities and law enforcement with regard to the use of psychics and psychic belief systems; to media interested in learning more about psychic phenomena or seeking experts for interview or appearances on radio or television; to the entertainment industry interested in technical or scientific advisors for films or television programs; and to the general public interested in learning more about psychic experience, research, and investigation. Reasonable fees are charged for investigations and consulting services.

OPI conducts seminars, has a seminar and several lectures on videotape, and offers a number of audio-tapes, all available to the general public.

Paranormal Research Organization (P.R.O.)

<http://www.paranormal-research.org>

[Check website for addresses/contacts, or contact via the Office of Paranormal Investigations]

Founded by a group of professional and concerned amateur paranormal investigations and field researchers in 2002, P.R.O. is a guild of sorts that includes a variety of experienced and knowledgeable parapsychologists, paranormal investigators, counselors, and experts in other fields. The focus would be on those who have an interest in *understanding* what the phenomena and experiences are and what they represent to both human experience and the physical world, and who also conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner.

P.R.O.'s goals include creating a network of knowledgeable and ethical field researchers and investigators, providing a central repository (on the web) for researchers to share data, a website with information pages specifically designed for the general public and for the media, to publish materials for the interested public and provide educational materials and opportunities for those who are interested in increasing their knowledge and skills in paranormal investigations.

The website provides contact and bio information for its member investigators, specific FAQ pages for people needing background info, special pages for people with experiences, for the Media and for other researchers. By the time this book is out, P.R.O. also ought to be offering a subscription-only portion of the site, with special case reports and other articles.

Parapsychological Association, Inc.
PO Box 92209
Durham, NC 27708-2209

<http://www.parapsych.org/>

The only parapsychological organization affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Professional organization of researchers, scholars and investigators in the field of Parapsychology. Holds an annual conference and publishes proceedings.

Parapsychology Foundation
228 East 71st Street
New York, NY 10021
(212) 628-1550

<http://www.parapsychology.org>

Supports research in parapsychology, has an excellent library, offers research and student grants, and publishes proceedings of annual conferences. Note: Call or check the website for the current address of the Foundation. Indications as of the writing of this book are that the organization may be moving in late 2003/early 2004.

Rhine Research Center - Institute for Parapsychology
2741 Campus Walk Avenue
Building 500
Durham, North Carolina 27705
(919) 688-8241

<http://www.rhine.org>

This organization, originally started by J.B and Louisa Rhine, was originally The Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man. It conducts psi research mainly in the laboratory, and runs a summer study program in parapsychological research. Publishes the *Journal of Parapsychology*. Currently sponsoring paranormal investigations related events and beginning a distance learning program.

The Society for Psychical Research (SPR)
49, Marloes Road,
Kensington, London W8 6LA
Telephone/fax: 020 7937 8984

<http://www.spr.ac.uk/>

Oldest psychical research organization in the world (membership organization). Conducts lectures and research. Publishes a journal, proceedings and a newsletter.

Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE)

C/o Prof. Laurence W. Fredrick,
Dept. of Astronomy,
Univ. of Virginia,
Box 3818,
Charlottesville, VA 22903-0818
(804) 924-4905

Address for the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*: P.O. Box 5848, Stanford, CA
94309-5848; (650) 593-8581

<http://www.scientificexploration.org>

An organization of scientists formed for the study of scientific anomalies, including psychic phenomena, UFOs, cryptozoology, and cutting edge scientific ideas. Publishes a newsletter and a journal.

The Center for Psychological & Spiritual Health,
(founded as the Spiritual Emergence Network)
1782 Church Street
San Francisco, CA 94131
(415) 575-6299

<http://www.senatciis.org>

cpsh@ciis.org

This international organization is a referral network which is dedicated to an understanding of spiritual emergence, the promotion of public awareness, and the dissemination of relevant information for individuals, health care professionals and interested organizations. It provides an Information and Referral Service offering support and resources for individuals experiencing difficulties with their spiritual growth. Operates a counseling center in San Francisco.

Koestler Parapsychology Unit
Department of Psychology
University of Edinburgh
7, George Square,
Edinburgh EH8 9JZ
United Kingdom.
Telephone: +44 (0)131 650 3348

<http://moebius.psy.ed.ac.uk/>

From their website: The unit is part of the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. Our aim is to conduct systematic and responsible research into the capacity attributed to some individuals to interact with their environment by means other than the recognized sensorimotor channels.

(In other words, they study psi phenomena. Individuals earn advanced degrees, and specialize in parapsychological research).

A LIST OF INTERNET RESOURCES TO START WITH

Note: Go to www.mindreader.com/links to get the up-to-date links to organizations (and more links, including a few recommended sites by amateurs and enthusiasts).

Loyd Auerbach's website: <http://www.mindreader.com>

This site includes information and contact for the author, two separate pages on the site with informational articles and the author's articles from FATE magazine, the OPI home page (with even more info on apparitions, hauntings and poltergeists), listings of seminars and other events, and much more.

Paranormal Research Organization <http://www.paranormal-research.org>

Parapsychological Association <http://www.parapsych.org>

Rhine Research Center (Institute for Parapsychology) <http://www.rhine.org>

Parapsychology Foundation <http://www.parapsychology.org>

American Society for Psychical Research <http://www.aspr.com>

Society for Psychical Research <http://www.spr.ac.uk/>

Institute of Noetic Sciences <http://www.ions.org>

American Institute of Parapsychology <http://www.parapsychologyinstitute.org/>

California Society for Psychical Study <http://www.ca-sps.org>

Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research
<http://www.princeton.edu/~rdnelson/pear.html>

Global Consciousness Project
<http://noosphere.princeton.edu/>

International Consciousness Research Laboratories
<http://www.icrl.org/>

Society for Scientific Exploration <http://www.scientificexploration.org>

Boundary Institute (psi testing site) <http://www.gotpsi.org/bi/gotpsi.htm>

Franklin Pierce College's Intro to Parapsychology page (lots of very good links)
<http://www.fpc.edu/academic/behavior/psych/para.htm>

Exceptional Human Experience Network <http://www.ehe.org>

Anomalous Cognition/THE ANOMALIST <http://www.anomalist.com>

Vestigia Scientific Anomalies Research Team <http://www.vestigia.org>

Annette Martin <http://www.annette-martin.com>

Fate Magazine <http://www.fatemag.com>

The Alex Tanous Foundation <http://www.alextanous.org>

Parapsychology Sources on the Internet
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/~ejua35/parapsy.htm>

Sergio Frasca's parapsychology site and links:
<http://www.roma1.infn.it/rog/group/frasca/b/parap.html>