

Ghosts, Poltergeists, Parasites, Parallel Worlds & GOD¹

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“Are you an experiencer?” That’s a question I received for many years, especially on the lecture circuit. At first, assuming that this relatively new term included only those who had experienced the alien abduction phenomenon, I always said “no.” One day at the 2015 Exeter UFO Festival in New Hampshire, I was corrected by fellow speaker Kathleen Marden. “What do you mean? You’ve written entire books about a lifetime of experiences!”

It’s true that I’ve never been abducted by aliens – at least not that I know of. But as I mark 50 years of paranormal research in 2020, I have experienced poltergeists, ghosts, cryptids, demons, aliens, and entities that I don’t have names for. I’ve had language difficulties communicating with intelligences both human and non-human, some of whom were terrified of me because they apparently thought I was a ghost. And I quickly came to believe that none of the above are what theology, folklore or Hollywood say they are.

The root of my paranormal interest may be traced to a childhood event that cannot be surpassed for horror, my first real encounter with death. In 1961, at the age of seven, I was witness to my father’s suicide. I was in second grade at a strict Roman Catholic School, where I was taught that if you ate a cheeseburger on Friday, missed mass on Sunday or committed suicide, it was straight to hell with you! My father was a wonderful, gentle man, forced by a heart condition to stay home and take care of me while my mother worked, an unheard-of situation in a working-class, Ozzie and Harriet town like East Hartford, Connecticut, in that era.

So, it was the question “Where is my father” – really a fascination with the relationship between God and “the dead” -- that started me off in paranormal research in 1970. To thicken the plot even further, I had entered St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut, in 1967 at the age of 14 to begin studies for the Roman Catholic priesthood. It wasn’t long before I began finding shocking, unexpected and mind-expanding answers to that and similar questions, and those answers didn’t come from my seminary professors.

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The Village of Voices

It was a July 1970 article in *The Hartford Courant* that gave me the first destination on what would become a lifelong paranormal adventure. The article described an abandoned village in Windham County, Connecticut, that had been long-known locally as a scene of frequent ghostly activity. Reports reached all the way back to the Revolutionary War period. I lived only 40 miles from the site, so I contacted the elderly local historian featured in the article, and the adventure began. What happened to me and (depending on the trip) four to six other witnesses there would inflame my passion for the paranormal, while making me question everything I thought I knew about it. The “Lost Village” or “Village of Voices,” as it was known locally, was in the rural town of Pomfret, a community of rolling hills, farms and about 4,000 people. The Lost Village traced its origins to about 1780. Founded by members of the Randall and Higginbotham families, people with Welsh roots, it had once been a small cluster of houses surrounding a mill that made spinning wheels. According to Harry A. Chase, the local historian featured in the newspaper article and the man who would be our guide, the settlement had actually been named “Bara Hack,” in the Cymric language of Wales: “The Place Where We Break Bread.” What the population was, no-one can be sure, as census records from that period don’t indicate what part of Pomfret people lived in. The Higginbothams and Randalls, along with their immediate descendants, are buried in a little cemetery above what had been the village, now covered with second-growth forest. After the first burials took place in the cemetery in the early 1800s, locals claimed that at dusk, ghosts could be seen there “reclining in the branches of a certain elm tree.”

In nearly a year of research before visiting Bara Hack, I developed a theory I wanted to test: Could ghosts, known in every culture throughout human history, be “souls in purgatory?” Could “earthbound spirits” be awaiting salvation? Mind you, I’d barely heard a mention of purgatory, an old Roman Catholic idea, in my seminary studies thus far. In fact, I was to learn that it’s barely mentioned at all in seminary studies at any level. But that’s where I started. I and five other seminary students headed for Pomfret on August 27, 1971. We met Harry Chase, who offered us a long lecture about the history of Pomfret and the Lost Village of Bara Hack, finally displaying some of the weird photos that had been mentioned in the newspaper article. They appeared to show grayish streaks and blobs of light moving among the trees. One showed two friends of Harry’s sitting on some stone steps. There were two splashes of light (today’s ghost hunters probably would call them “orbs”), one near each person in the photo. But that wasn’t the strangest thing. Near the lights, the people’s legs were invisible or transparent, and the stone behind them was visible. Were the strange lights actually ghosts? If so, why did the camera see right through the legs of two living people? What did one have to do with the other? It was the first in a flood of questions that would change the way I thought about virtually everything.

At last, it was time to meet Bara Hack. It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, but all of us immediately noticed two things, along with the heat. There was an overwhelming sense of what I interpreted at the time as sadness, and there was utter silence. There were no birds and no insects. We were about halfway along the trail to the remains of Bara Hack when we all heard it. A shout off to our right, perhaps 30 feet away; hard to tell in the woods. This was a relatively open woodland, but we could see no-one. I shouted "hello," but there was no answer, just deathly quiet. We all looked at each other. As the group moved on, there were more noises, not far away. A dog barking, sounds of metal striking metal, a cow mooing, people talking. We even heard geese and what sounded like chickens. Further investigation revealed that the nearest people were at a nearly unoccupied 4-H Club camp almost a half-mile away. Meanwhile, echoes of what seemed like other people's daily lives continued off and on until we arrived at what had been the heart of Bara Hack, a few cellar holes, stone walls and a path that led off to the right and down to Nightingale Brook, where the mill once stood. The heat, the silence and the sense of sadness remained heavy. The otherworldly sounds had quieted, only to return later as our group split up to map the area: Domestic animals, a snatch of conversation amid the trees, voices of children, an occasional sound of farm life.

Years after my first visits to Bara Hack, I was amazed to discover another, far earlier, account of peculiar happenings there, this one from the early 20th century as the woods finished reclaiming the settlement. This was in a little-known but charming book by naturalist Odell Shepard, a professor at Hartford's Trinity College, whose "*The Harvest of a Quiet Eye*" (1927) describes the author's visit to what was already known as the Village of Voices. Shepard wrote:

"Here had been their houses, represented today by a few gaping cellar holes out of which tall trees were growing; but here is the Village of Voices. For the place is peopled still . . . Although there is no human habitation for a long distance round about and no one goes there except the few who go to listen, yet there is always a hum and stir of human life....

"They hear the laughter of children at play...the voices of mothers who have long been dust calling their children into the homes that are now mere holes in the ground. They hear vague snatches of song...and the rumble of heavy wagons along an obliterated road. It is as though sounds were able in this place to get round that incomprehensible corner, to pierce that mysterious soundproof wall that we call Time."

Fast forward to 1971 and our first expedition. For what few paranormal researchers existed, there were as yet no ion detectors, no digital electromagnetic field (EMF) meters, no thermal cameras, and certainly no smart phones. All we had were two Kodak® Instamatic 126 cameras, two 35mm Nikons®, a cassette tape recorder, two sets of portable two-way radios, notebooks and some flashlights. Down the cart path, to the left

and up a hill, Harry Chase showed us the small, stone-walled cemetery where the people of Bara Hack buried their dead, among them the founders of the village, and nearly all of them Randalls and Higginbothams. The cemetery itself proved to have its own oddities. We found, after returning home and having our film developed, that it was difficult to take an in-focus photo in the cemetery. All the trees within the stone wall were dead.

More was happening on that hot August day at Bara Hack than just weird sounds and the explorations of a group of increasingly stunned students. Something was happening to me. I was beginning to feel things. I was beginning to have certainties. It was disturbing and very unexpected, especially from the viewpoint of my seminary training, but I knew there were people all around us. Not ghosts. People. And I knew at least some of these people. I was certain of it. It was one of the deepest human connections I've ever felt, and I couldn't explain it to myself. The whole experience had a strange, visceral kind of cosmic beauty, but at the same time it was deeply unnerving in a way that simply "hunting" ghosts never could be.

I said nothing to my companions about this. In fact, I felt nothing of death in this place. Only life. And I certainly didn't feel any lost souls or any hint of purgatory. I felt as though I was one of these people. I also wondered if I was losing it. But there was that sense of sadness we'd felt on the way in. I wondered if it wasn't more poignancy than sadness, or maybe even memory. When we heard a certain vague male voice among the trees, I felt utterly sure: a Randall. Another voice: a Higginbotham. Still another: someone named Stoddard, then ... Calvin Palmer?

I was astounded some years later, in the wake of some genealogical research, to find that I am related to the Randalls. In fact, one of the founders of Bara Hack, Jonathan Randall, was a not-so-distant cousin. And that was the beginning of a question that would accompany me down the years, all the way to one of my own sons, who is now my co-author and all-around "partner in the paranormal." Do blood relatives have the same "psychic" reactions to paranormal situations? And even more importantly: Do blood relations maintain psychic connections, and even their bonds of love, beyond death? Are we connected like this with ancestors who died long before we were born? Even if so, why the connection with those people at Bara Hack, whom I'd never heard of?"

After taking Harry Chase home and having supper at a local restaurant, we made their way back to Bara Hack to see what we could see after dark. The sun was setting as we returned to the cellar holes above Nightingale Brook. The katydids were buzzing eerily in the trees, almost the first natural sound we had heard there all day. Our plan was to head for the cemetery, cameras in hand. But then another sound became apparent – off to the side and down by the brook. Mixed with the mad drone of the insects was the unmistakable laughter of a large group of children. They sounded so natural that we at first thought there really were children, but as we sprinted down the slope toward what appeared to be the source, we picked up something that wasn't natural at all. The laughter

was moving up and down the other side of the brook, which was about 12 feet wide at that point. It wasn't as if the invisible children were running. It was as if they were in a car traveling up and down the brook at about 60 miles an hour, back and forth.

This was my first encounter with the spatial oddities that often accompany paranormal experiences. Meanwhile, my friend Gary Deschene had the presence of mind to turn on the tape recorder. We were amazed to find later that the laughter hadn't recorded, even though everyone heard it. Today, devotees of electronic voice phenomena (EVP) find this fascinating, as they're used to sounds recorded by various media that are inaudible to the naked ear. I was utterly certain that I knew at least some of these children. I knew they were real kids, not ghosts. I knew they were from somewhere or somewhere else, and I knew they were completely oblivious to our presence. With a chill, I realized that I was standing on the very stone steps where Harry's friends were sitting when their legs had vanished in that weird photo. Years later, I would read Odell Shepard's words with a shudder: "They hear the laughter of children at play...." As the children's laughter faded, I was struck by the sheer physicality of all this. Could these really be spirits? The rest of the evening proved uneventful, and we left at about 9:30 p.m. I say 'uneventful' because we had long since grown accustomed to the background noise of cattle, dogs and people, which started up again at dusk. And I'd grown used to feeling an unaccountable part of all this.

The next morning, like good seminarians, we attended mass at Most Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Pomfret, had breakfast, then returned to Bara Hack for much of the day. We planned to spend that evening at the cemetery. Beyond Harry Chase's descriptions of streaks and balls of light among the trees, we had no idea what to expect. We climbed the small hill above the cellar holes at about 7:30 p.m., and took up positions around the cemetery as dusk descended. We didn't have long to wait before things started to happen. Although we were stationed at different places around the cemetery's perimeter, everyone later reported seeing the same things, and at the same times. I was on the main steps at the cemetery entrance, and I felt the presence of many people coming and going. Throughout the three-hour vigil, everyone reported bluish streaks or whitish balls of light moving through the trees. For over seven minutes – I timed it – we watched a bearded face suspended in the air over the cemetery's western wall. Sometimes it would move, as though a man were sitting there, studying something. But we couldn't see his body.

In an elm tree over the northern wall, we clearly saw a baby-like figure reclining on a branch. When our pictures from the previous afternoon were developed, there it was. Years later, I would discover another book, "*Folklore and Firesides of Pomfret, Hampton and Vicinity*" by local author Susan J. Griggs, and it would send another chill through me: "These (locals) were quite superstitious, believing that ghosts sat at night in a certain elm tree near the cemetery...." Exhausted, we reluctantly withdrew at about 10:30 p.m.

Back in 1971, I knew little about quantum physics and nothing about theories of the multiverse. All I had was my still-early theological training, high school science, and the opinions of my early mentors in paranormal studies. So, my general conclusion about this first expedition to Bara Hack was that the voices and other paranormal sounds were the result of some sort of psychic residuum, heard by all of us at once by telepathic means. How else could we explain the fact that the sounds wouldn't record? Rationally, we wanted to explain the other, visual phenomena by some similar process.

Later in 1971 and into 1972, further expeditions to the Village of Voices brought more experiences to me and to others. I refer readers to the complete account in "***Behind the Paranormal: Everything You Know is Wrong***" by Paul Eno and Ben Eno (Schiffer Books, 2016). For purposes of this book, however, my final encounter on that trip deserves mention.

On Sunday, October 31, 1971 (no irony was intended by the date), having spent the previous two days in another eventful visit, we remained deeply moved by the uncanny feeling of personal solidarity with the inhabitants of this remarkable place, whatever their form of existence. So, on that gray, chilly afternoon, we again gathered at Bara' Hack's little cemetery, this time to simply pray. I brought a book of rather generic prayers, and we read some of them together as we sat on the ancient stone steps at the entrance. Maybe it was a coincidence, but the praying lifted our spirits and, we felt, those of our invisible companions. Out came the sun. All sorts of birds suddenly started to sing where we'd never heard so much as a chirp before, odd in New England on the very verge of November.

As we left the cemetery with lighter hearts, ambling down the path toward the cellar holes, we heard a sound that would be burned into our memories, and it point-of-no-return convinced me that the old ideas about ghosts being dead people were wrong. It was the simple rumbling of an old wooden wagon and the shouts of a team driver proceeding through the woods to our right in a dense and completely impassable section. We could hear the deep rattle of the wheels, the hoof beats of draft horses or oxen, and as this wagon passed invisibly not 30 feet away, we heard the crack of a whip and a man clearly shout, "Hyaaaa!"

All of us heard this. But my own heart told me more than my ears did. It was one of the Randalls. I knew it as certainly as I knew my own name. Finally, the sounds of the wagon faded off to our left. Years later, more of Odell Shepard's words would hit me between the eyes. "They hear...the rumble of heavy wagons along an obliterated road. It is as though sounds were able in this place to get round that incomprehensible corner, to pierce that mysterious soundproof wall that we call Time."

In those early years, I still advocated the theory of “residual hauntings,” a point of view that still ranks high with pop-paranormal devotees. Much of what we experienced at Bara Hack, especially the everyday voices and sounds from what to us is the past, and especially the ghostly wagon driver, could be interpreted as residual hauntings: Events somehow recorded on the environment and played back to the group because our brains were properly in tune. Or something like that.

Today, hundreds of cases later, that theory just isn’t good enough. A residual haunting recorded on what? Trees? They weren’t even there in 1800 or so. Rocks? They were dug up and moved constantly over the village’s occupied years, and it would take a fantastic amount of iron oxide to even begin to speculate about rocks recording sound, let alone video. Even the soil in a given place constantly changes. And how would any of this explain the fact that I have changed or eliminated several reputed residual hauntings over the years by interacting with them?

While I suppose that residual hauntings are theoretically possible through some as yet undiscovered science, I believe it’s more of a we-can’t-think-of-anything-better explanation. Hand-in-hand with the residual haunting theory is that of the “intelligent haunting” to explain contact wherein the experiencer and the entity are aware of each other. But an intelligent haunting caused by what? How could a human being without a body still be a complete human being, with all thoughts, memories and knowledge intact? How could such a half-being have the power to manipulate time and space in the physical world, let alone coordinate and interact not only with us but with other half-beings?

Overall: If we were dealing with spirits of the dead, why did we hear the wagon, the cattle and the crack of the whip? Are there “ghosts” of wooden wheels, oxen, horses and whips? Why did we hear the people of the village apparently going about their daily routines rather than moaning, shrieking or rattling chains in some kind of purgatory?

Once again: Not good enough. With nearly 50 years of hindsight, I believe that my friends and I walked right into a legendary “thin place” (to use a First Nations term), an area where any shaman would say that the boundaries between worlds are very thin. Going them one better, I would say that these boundaries at Bara Hack only thinly separated a number of parallel, entirely physical, worlds, only one of which was our conscious reality. In the simultaneous past/present that is Bara Hack, the Higginbothams, Randalls and all the rest, continue their daily routines in a number of intersecting parallel worlds that are probably part of our own “world family,” a term my son Ben and I had to coin simply to talk about this concept. In a world family, there are worlds where it might be our past, present or future, but where the laws of physics and inhabitants are similar or nearly the same.

As Albert Einstein suggested in 1952, time has no objective reality. It's a function of our consciousness. Taken as a whole, and if our point of view on quantum reality is correct, every instant in the life of Bara Hack and every one of its people is still going on in one or more of these parallel worlds. Because the boundaries (or "branes") were so thin, we actually saw and heard it happening. Perhaps the fact that the place was deserted in our conscious world made it that much easier to hear and see what was happening across the boundaries.

As Einstein wrote to the family of lifelong friend Michele Besso upon the latter's death: "...for us physicists believe the separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, although a convincing one." The implication: We, along with the Higginbothams, Randalls and the rest, still live and carry on many different parallel lives, most as physical beings in one form or another. So much for purgatory.

Poltergeists attack

A few years after the Bara Hack experience, I walked right into what has been called the most observed and best documented poltergeist outbreak in history: The Bridgeport, Connecticut, case of 1974. Today, I'm the only surviving major eyewitness. The most dramatic of these events took place in and around a tiny, three-room bungalow on Lindley Street in Bridgeport in November of that year. Since 1960, this had been the modest home of Gerard and Laura Goodin, a quiet couple in their 40s. "Gerry" worked a blue-collar job at the nearby Harvey Hubbell Co., and Laura was a housewife. They gave birth to a son, who died in 1967, later adopting a three-year-old Canadian Indian girl named Marcia (pronounced Mar-SEE-a), a beautiful, black-haired tot who was intelligent, clever and imaginative. This is where the dinner bell started to ring for what I would today call a "parasite" feeding frenzy. The full story is in "***Behind the Paranormal: Everything You Know is Wrong***" but here are the basics of what happened to me.

Phenomena, mostly knocking, began several years before the explosion, as you might call it, of the days leading up to November 24, 1974, when I arrived on scene with my friends, the celebrated but controversial Ed and Lorraine Warren, and a young Roman Catholic priest, Fr. William Charbonneau. The previous day, the Goodins had driven the 60 miles to New York City to shop and have lunch. At about 5 pm, they returned home to find that the portable television in Marcy's room, just off the kitchen, had somehow moved from its shelf to her bed, where it lay face down. Gerry later told police that he'd no sooner placed the television back on its shelf than dishes rose from the sink and started flying around the kitchen.

There were traditional Roman Catholic religious articles in every room, and many began to jump off the walls and crash to the floor. Gerry said that as soon as he replaced them, most hurtled away again. Then the horrified family watched the 350-pound refrigerator rise about six inches off the floor, then saw the television console in the kitchen keel over. That night, the walls rocked with poundings. The sounds "went from wall to wall and room to room, then stopped about midnight," Gerry later told me.

"At 8 a.m. Sunday (November 24th) I got up when I heard a racket in the next room. I went in and saw a table turn over. Then another table just lifted up and fell. Chairs just picked themselves up and started going every which way. And there was nobody in the room but me!"

Just before 8:30 a.m. that day, the phone rang at the home of Harold and Mary Hofmann, friends who lived eight blocks away. "Help us!" shouted Laura Goodin. "Strange things are happening!" Hofmann was stunned when he walked into the Goodin house. "The place was a mess," he later told a reporter.

"Tables were overturned and knives, forks and dishes lay all over the floor. The big console TV was lying on its side. While I put it back in place, a small portable TV began rocking back and forth by itself. No one else was even in the room!"

Not long afterward, John Holsworth, another neighbor, was outside his house and noticed the Goodins on their porch. When they spotted him, they called and waved. Holsworth happened to be an off-duty police officer. He ran across the street and entered the house, where he watched in astonishment as the refrigerator lifted slowly off the floor, turned at right angles and then set down again. *"Then the big TV just seemed to float into the air and crash to the floor,"* he said later.

For several hours, the Goodins and their friends stood helpless, trying to work out what was happening. Holsworth searched high and low for wires and other devices that could be causing the ruckus but found nothing. *"Things were going on in one room and then the next, as if whatever it was was moving from room to room,"* Gerry told me. *"The knife holder over the kitchen sink flew off the wall toward me. I caught it."*

There is some debate over whether Hofmann or a celebrated local psychic, Mary Pascarella, a friend of mine, was the first to call Ed and Lorraine Warren, who lived in the nearby town of Monroe. The Warrens promised to drive over and check things out. At the same time, the frustrated Holsworth decided to call in some of his on-duty comrades. What the officers saw went into their official reports, some of which are reproduced in my 1998 and 2016 books. The floating refrigerator incident took place several times during the case, once while I was standing in the kitchen with three firefighters and three police officers. Late that morning, home from Wadham's Hall Seminary for Thanksgiving vacation and oblivious as to what I was getting into, I was driving the 60 miles from my

home in East Hartford to the Warrens' house for what I expected would be a quiet dinner with my friends.

I'd been working with Ed and Lorraine off and on for two years, ever since Lorraine read an article I wrote about my ghosts-being-souls-in-purgatory theory, which she thought was a fabulous idea. I arrived a Maison Warren at about 12:30 p.m., just as they were returning from their morning in Bridgeport to meet Rev. William "Fr. Bill" Charbonneau and take him to Lindley Street for the visit recorded by Officer Joseph Tomek in his official report. Well, I never got my dinner. Ed and I left for the Goodin house, while Lorraine and Fr. Bill followed as soon as the priest arrived. On the way to Bridgeport, some 10 miles away, Ed told me about another incident: One of Laura Goodin's toes had been broken by a falling television set.

As Ed and I turned into Lindley Street, what we saw was unbelievable. The road was jammed with traffic, a huge crowd was gathering on both sides of the street, and police officers were lined up in front of the tiny bungalow. Several officers escorted us inside, where chaos reigned. The place was packed with police, firefighters and neighbors. Clothing, furniture and oddments were strewn everywhere. Immediately after we arrived, Laura, complete with broken toe, returned from the emergency room at St. Vincent's Hospital. As soon as the graying, heavy-set woman entered the house, hobbling on a cane, Ed Warren introduced me. Laura grabbed my arm and pointed to a toy baby carriage parked near the living-room television. She said "the thing" had piled articles of Marcia's clothing and toys into it and then rolled it there. "Why us?" she asked in a desperate voice.

Passing down the short hallway into the kitchen, Ed noticed that the bathroom was extremely cluttered. Throughout the rest of that day and Monday, objects were continually spilling and falling in the tiny bathroom, and the bathtub was constantly filled with a variety of objects. The kitchen was worse. I found Gerry Goodin sitting at the table with his head in his hands. The stumpy, tired-looking man extended a hand without changing his expression of helpless resignation. Told I would find Marcy in the cellar, I descended the stairs and found her talking with two enormous police officers, one a sergeant. The girl was sitting on a stool in the corner, cuddling her orange and white cat, Sam. From the way the men were talking to her, it was clear they already suspected she was causing all the trouble. After they left, I had a long talk with Marcy. Here was an intense, introverted and imaginative child who said the cat was her only friend. In school, she was the victim of bullying. In fact, she'd been kept home from school for the previous six weeks because a boy there had kicked her and hurt her back, although the injury was minor. Marcy didn't seem frightened of what was going on in the house.

Gerry and Laura told me Marcy was a normal, obedient and loving daughter with a vivid imagination and artistic talent. In fact, I have some of her artwork on display in my home library to this day. Family friends, however, portrayed a very different girl: moody, deceitful and disrespectful. "She does sneaky things when her mother's not around," one neighbor said, suggesting that parental overprotection was responsible. "Her mother never lets her go out to play. She's always in the house."

Back in the cellar, another police officer came down and prodded Marcy with questions about whether Sam the cat could really talk. *What?* The girl immediately pulled back into her shell. Apparently, the officers who hadn't seen the "suspicious activity," as the official police reports dubbed it, were skeptical. And the "talking cat" question was a major sideshow in the whole Bridgeport poltergeist affair. Sam featured in many a headline and newscast that week. It was perfectly clear to me that Marcy would sometimes hold Sam the cat closely and do some rather decent ventriloquism. The eminently patient feline had been in the veterinary clinic for an operation several months before, according to Gerry. When Sam returned home, the Goodins and even some of their neighbors insisted that he could talk.

While at the clinic, Gerry told me, "The damn thing must have swallowed a myna bird!" He swore that Sam would come to the top of the cellar stairs and demand in colorful language to be let out. Sometimes he "swore like a sailor," Gerry asserted. At other times, Sam would somehow pound on the door and shout, "Open this door, you dirty Frenchman, you dirty rat!"

I spent the better part of three days watching Marcy, and I wasn't born yesterday. I saw nothing to indicate that Sam was anything but an ordinary cat. Still, the media made much of him, and I'll never forget the sight of reporters from the three major television networks, who came in from New York City, standing around Sam with microphones that Monday, begging him to say something. But what about the adults' assertions that Sam could talk? I've rarely seen it, but there are cases where what I soon came to call "parasites" can appear as animals, and auditory phenomena aren't unknown.

Meanwhile, the tale of the Bridgeport poltergeist was spreading far and wide across the globe. By Sunday afternoon, police estimated the crowd near the house to be over 500 and growing. Traffic in the area was at a standstill. Police left the house at about 2:45 p.m., although a few remained outside for crowd control. Reporters began arriving at 4 p.m. and roamed freely through the house, talking with the Goodins, the Warrens, Fr. Bill and me. I asked them not to use my last name, for fear of my church superiors, most of whom didn't like my paranormal research. Of course, as soon as they heard or read about "Paul the seminary student," they knew it was me. How Fr. Bill got away with being involved with this stuff, I don't know.

The Warrens, the priest and I decided to leave at about 4 pm to get something to eat and to plan our strategy, which would consist primarily of convincing Roman Catholic Bishop of Bridgeport Walter W. Curtis to allow an exorcism of the house. First, however, Fr. Bill blessed the house, using an ordinary ritual, not an exorcism. The Warrens accompanied the priest from room to room as he prayed and sprinkled holy water. I stayed in the living room with the family. As we were about to leave, there was a crash from Marcy's bedroom. The big dresser flew across the room, smashing into the closet door on the other side. Everyone was in the living room when it happened.

The crowd outside stared and whispered as we left the house. No doubt they'd expected Fr. Bill to come flying out a window as happened in the then-new film *The Exorcist*. Back at the Warrens' house, the three of us (Fr. Bill had an appointment elsewhere) tried to put things together. At the time, the Warrens and I shared the same theology, so we agreed that it was all about demons. With Fr. Bill returned, we all headed back to Lindley Street at about 8 p.m. that evening (Sunday) to find that the crowds had swelled to several thousand. The story was now out on the news wires of the Associated Press, United Press International and Reuters, as well as the major broadcast networks.

At about 9, we were drinking coffee in the kitchen when Lorraine suddenly cried out in pain. As I watched, a blister slowly appeared on the top of her left hand. The hand, in plain sight all the time, had certainly not come in contact with any heat source. And no-one was smoking. Fearing the rare but terrifying phenomenon of "spontaneous human combustion," Ed tried to persuade his wife to leave the house. She refused. The whole incident was caught on tape because there happened to be radio reporter in the kitchen, recording an interview with Ed. One can hear my youthful voice in the background: "There's a blister forming!" The cassette tape is in the possession of William J. Hall, a Bridgeport native and author of the only complete book on the case, "***The World's Most Haunted House: The True Story of the Bridgeport Poltergeist on Lindley Street***" (New Page Books, 2015).

An hour and a half later, Marcy was in her room, showing Fr. Bill a charm bracelet. Suddenly the big dresser, which had been set back in place against the wall, again flew across the room. No one was near it. The predominance of activity in this room led me to believe that Marcy was the focal point of what I today would call the parasite or parasites, which tend to feed off one person at a time. Everyone gathered in the kitchen at about 11 p.m. I was standing next to the television console, and Marcy was by my side when Gerry suddenly pointed to the TV. The flowers in a small vase on top of it were moving silently, as if fluttering in a breeze. Gerry said that whenever the flowers moved like that, the television was going to fall over. Sure enough, the TV went over with a crash, face down, hitting my left leg and knocking Marcy and me across the kitchen. Feeling the force of the crash, I was astonished that the television was undamaged. The screen should have been in smithereens all over the floor. But my leg

sported a minor gash for several weeks, a battle scar from my bout with the Bridgeport poltergeist.

Later, at nearly 2 a.m., Fr. Bill blessed the house again, and things remained calm for the rest of the night. At four o'clock on the morning of Monday, November 25th, the four of us returned to Monroe to get some sleep. Fr. Bill stretched out on the living-room couch, while Lorraine and I lingered in the kitchen, drinking tea. Lorraine had just voiced her hope that the Lindley Street incident was ended, when we both felt a presence. Whether connected with the Lindley Street case or not, something invisible, inaudible and malign was in the kitchen with us. Lorraine and I held hands across the table and prayed. Whatever it was soon left, but from then on, she was as unsure as I that this poltergeist would be so quickly banished.

At exactly 8 a.m., the telephone rang. Fr. Bill had left to celebrate morning mass at his parish, but the Warrens and I were asleep. Lorraine answered the phone and heard our fears confirmed: Laura Goodin frantically reported that everything had started all over again, and that the destruction was worse than ever. When we got back to Lindley Street, we found the interior of the house a shambles and the place jammed with police and reporters, including network journalists. Laura was wearing a crucifix on a black ribbon around her neck.

After hearing a full report on the events of the early morning (which were similar to those of Sunday morning), we started tossing out the reporters and curiosity seekers who'd wandered boldly into the house. It took until noon to get people sorted out and ejected. I was with Marcy the whole time. That afternoon we tried once again to get some cooperation from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport, to no avail. Msgr. John J. Toomey, vicar general of the diocese, later issued a written statement saying, among other things, that church officials attributed the events to "purely natural causes," as if they were in any position to know. In desperation, I called a Russian Orthodox priest I knew and asked if he would be willing to come and pray an exorcism. He said yes, but only as a last resort, since the Goodins should have recourse to their own church first. Thus, as the day passed and pressure increased from both the family and the police to do something to end the nightmare, we four investigators found ourselves in the proverbial "Catch-22" situation.

Around 1 p.m., I left the house and waded through the still-growing crowd, which I was told was close to 10,000 people. I headed for a convenience store to buy some snacks for everyone. People in the crowd, evidently thinking I was Fr. Bill, either stared in awe or tried to ask questions, which I evaded. I bought candy for everyone and was back in the house by 1:30. The Warrens then left to talk with some reporters at their home. This left the Goodins, Marcy's babysitter (a neighbor), *Bridgeport Post* reporter John Sopko and me in the house. Marcy, the babysitter and I began to play a board game while the others chatted. Suddenly an acrid smell, like ozone mixed with sulfur, drifted

through the house. It came from the kitchen. Instantly, Gerry was up and dashed into the kitchen, in plain sight every moment. "Oh, oh," he said. "It's going to start again!" Our skin jumped with that unmistakable electrical tingle that's burned into the mind of anyone who has ever contacted what I now believe is a world boundary or "brane," as a physicist might call it. A whitish, gauzy cloud began to form in the kitchen, and Gerry was back in the living room at once. I immediately sat everyone down and took out a prayer book I had with me, starting to chant the first thing I came upon. This happened to be an ancient "akathist" or hymn in praise of Jesus Christ. In a touching scene, Marcy came over and joined me in the simple hymn. Laura started to cry. The malign presence quickly dissipated.

The Russian Orthodox prayer book I used was responsible for an interesting sidebar to the Bridgeport poltergeist story. It was small and black with a three-barred Russian cross on the cover, a symbol unfamiliar to most people in America. Inside, the prayers were printed in English on the left and Church Slavonic (in the Cyrillic alphabet) on the right. Apparently, some reporter or police officer looked at this book and became convinced that it was a sinister occult tome written in Sanskrit and owned by Marcy. This added to the myth that she was interested in the paranormal and caused some or all of the phenomena.

The Warrens returned about 3:30 p.m. During the next few hours, as everyone waited vainly for a call from the diocese, we sat in the kitchen and listened to the radio. We were joined by two police officers. Nearly every radio station was talking about the house on Lindley Street. One officer rudely hinted that a hoax was the only explanation. His tone changed when the kitchen was suddenly engulfed with the smell of sulfur and ozone once again, this time coming from Marcy's room. But nothing else happened right then.

We sent out for food, then the Warrens left again to return home to make a number of long-distance phone calls to other paranormal investigators and influential clergy. Only the Goodins and I were in the house at about 7:10 p.m., when I suddenly got the feeling that something was very wrong. Gerry also felt it and went into the kitchen. The gauzy formation and the malign presence soon returned, now seeming much stronger. I had the clear impression that it was exactly four times stronger. In fact, I was certain that entities were "arriving." They weren't entirely invisible either, and there were four, indistinct shapes coming from the kitchen in a line. They were each about four and a half feet high and had rounded tops, with no discernable head or shoulders.

Gerry saw these figures also, and followed one as it moved from the kitchen. As they entered the living room one by one, Laura started to cry, while Marcy clung to me in fear. I started the akathist prayer again. Then, to the amazement of everyone, especially me, Gerry began chanting, in a beautiful bass voice, a prayer in flawless Latin that sounded to me like part of the old Roman Catholic funeral mass. Gerry later told me that

he'd never studied Latin, but remembered some of the language from his days as an altar boy. I've never heard of any altar boy who absorbed that much proper vocabulary and pronunciation just by kneeling at the foot of the altar. I had to study Latin for five years to get that far into it.

Meanwhile, the "forces" grew stronger. I put Marcy behind me on a stool next to the front door. One of the almost-invisible things approached me and stopped. That's when I made my mistake: I began to feel angry toward this being, power center or whatever it was, that seemed to be after this innocent child. As my emotion grew, the entity simply fed on the psychic energy I was releasing and grew stronger.

To me, the most terrifying encounters in early paranormal research were not always the phenomena themselves. They were the experiences that shattered my cherished belief systems, which was all I had to hang on to. So, what happened next was a mind-wrenching shock. As this thing moved to get around me to get to Marcy, I instinctively pushed toward it. It resisted as though it was entirely material. In fact, I felt a skeletal structure as if this were a solid being. These "demons" were supposed to be spirits. In fact, it took years for me to come to grips with this experience, let alone to finally explain it in terms of parallel worlds. I never even reported it to the Warrens.

While I stood there dazed, the entity got around me and threw Marcy across the living room. She ran back to me, crying. Finally, as the gauzy cloud inundated the whole interior of the house and as I tired, I ordered everyone outside. They needed no prodding. Luckily for us, the police had cleared away the crowds and blocked off both ends of Lindley Street. People at each end of the street saw the Goodins and me leave the house, and muttering broke out. It was about 8 p.m. and quite dark and cold, with a light sleet falling. Several neighbors stared helplessly from their front yards. I could hear a voice in the crowd preaching something about this all being a "sign of the end."

I said the Lord's Prayer with the Goodins, then left them shivering on the front walk as I ran to a nearby house to find a telephone. Apparently, I wasn't alone. A dog came leaping out of someone's backyard, barking fiercely. It got to within two feet of me, yelped, then dove behind some bushes. When I came to the house, a wide-eyed little boy answered the door. "Mommy," he called, "the priest wants to use the phone!" Even here, everyone seemed to think I was Fr. Bill. The people were sympathetic, but as I stepped toward the phone, something rang the doorbell and knocked three times. "Mommy, there's nobody there!" the boy cried.

The Warrens left their home as soon as I called, but it took them nearly an hour and a half to get back through the suburbs to Lindley Street, thanks to the traffic and crowds. By the time they finally arrived at about 9:15, we had re-entered the house. Things were quiet. When we turned on the radio, a newscaster was speculating about why we had left the house. Two reporters from WNAB Radio in Bridgeport arrived at about

9:30. As I recounted the evening's events to those who hadn't been there, a mirror in Marcy's room fell and the kitchen table turned over twice. On three different occasions, three knocks sounded at the back door. No one was there. The drapes in the living room kept falling to the floor, and the portable television there turned around every few minutes. At one point, Marcy was sitting in the kitchen and her chair began to rise. Since I was standing behind her, I grabbed the chair and pushed it back down. It clearly felt like something was letting go as I pushed on the chair back down.

We decided that an exorcism of the house had to be performed one way or the other. Shortly after midnight, the Warrens and I, bleary-eyed and hungry, left the house, planning to return that afternoon (Tuesday, November 26th) at about 1:30 p.m. Marcy kissed me and made me promise to come back. "How can we ever thank you?" Laura said as she hugged the Warrens and me.

As if to say farewell, the coffee table jumped across the living room as we walked out the front door. After another few hours on the Warrens' living-room couch, I decided to go home to East Hartford to rest, shower and talk with the priest at my Roman Catholic parish. The Warrens had to go to Hartford on business. We agreed to meet back at the Goodin house at 2 p.m. As my 1968 Ford Fairlane sped east on Interstate 84, I tuned the radio to WCBS in New York, and I couldn't believe my ears. The newscaster was saying the Bridgeport police had declared the poltergeist a hoax perpetrated by Marcy! Every station I could get said the same thing.

The Warrens heard about this only after they got to Hartford. But when they arrived back home in Monroe, the chaos really began. Phone calls to Bridgeport police headquarters produced no answers, and even the Goodins' phone was answered by a police officer. The Goodins refused to speak with the Warrens. When they went back to Lindley Street, a police officer refused them entry, so they went to a friend's home in the city to listen to the radio and try more phone calls.

I arrived at Lindley Street at 2:30 p.m. and stood aghast on the front steps as Laura Goodin ordered a police officer to throw me off the property. I finally met the Warrens back at their home at about 5 p.m. This is what happened: The police had entered the Goodin house within minutes of our departure the previous night. Tougher minds at headquarters had decided that this ghostly ruckus had to end once and for all so order could be restored in that part of the city. Veteran police interrogators grilled Marcy. Ultimately, according to police reports, she "confessed" to being the culprit. Police Superintendent Joseph A. Walsh announced Tuesday morning that the Bridgeport poltergeist was a child's hoax.

The Warrens' phone didn't stop ringing all that evening. Calls came in from reporters as far away as Australia and western Canada. One caller, from the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, claimed that Fr. Bill Charbonneau was now denying that he had witnessed phenomena in the house. This, of course, was untrue. Another caller said that Marcy had been taken to the Fairfield Hills Hospital near Bridgeport and was under psychiatric observation. These were only the first of many rumors that circulated in the media for months.

At 7 p.m., Ed Warren and I were guests on the three-hour *Tiny Markel Show*, a call-in program on WNAB radio. Virtually all callers agreed that the sudden police declaration of a hoax was hard to swallow, no matter what the explanation for the Lindley Street happenings might be. Inane accusations were hurled at us from Lindley Street and police headquarters during the rest of November and early December. Believe it or not, these included:

- The candy I bought on Monday afternoon was "drugged" and somehow caused the phenomena or caused Marcy to cause the phenomena,
- Ed Warren caused the events from his own home by witchcraft,
- All the witnesses were put under some sort of "spell."

How any of these goofy charges were easier to believe than the truth is beyond me to this day. The silliest accusation of all was that a 10-year-old could fool large numbers of reliable, highly trained observers for days by tossing around huge objects in a tiny house without being seen. To the best of my knowledge, not one witness, including the police officers who were there, ever retracted a story. In fact, some of the police officers, now long retired, agreed to be interviewed in 2014 for Hall's book on the case.

Thus ended my part on the Bridgeport poltergeist case, but the word was that the poltergeist activity was far from over. Laura told a friend that her husband had to plant their Christmas tree in concrete because it kept moving. Reportedly, some of the furniture had to be wired down.

By January 1975, an investigative team from what was then the Duke University Parapsychology Laboratory worked out a deal with the family and the police to go to the house and conduct a thorough investigation of its own. The deal was that no findings would be released until one year from the date of their investigation. Those involved were Jerry Solfvin and Keith Harary (later associated with the graduate parapsychology program at John F. Kennedy University in San Francisco), along with Boyce Batey, a lecturer and Connecticut resident affiliated with the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship.

Dr. Solfvin later told me that the Goodins vehemently denied any hoax and insisted that Marcy had nothing to do with the events, adding that "The case was never published by us for a variety of reasons. In fact, we never even wrote an 'in-house' report on it."

Late in January 1975, the Goodins were persuaded to appear on a local radio show, where they denied the hoax allegation and reports that Marcy was undergoing psychiatric treatment. They also said that paranormal events continued in the house. In early February, a "For Sale" sign appeared in front of the house on Lindley Street. It took time, but the place finally sold, and the Goodins vanished from the public eye. As far as I could determine at the time, nothing paranormal happened at the address after the Goodins left.

Forty years later, in preparation for his book, Hall became the first to bring together all the surviving eyewitness testimony, interviews and facts of the case. I was given a section to talk about my modern interpretation of the 1974 events, which involved parallel-world intersect points and "overwashes," along with parasite intrusion to feed on the negative energy in the Goodin Family.

In accord with our current theories about no paranormal event standing in isolation, leading to what we now refer to as "flap areas," I suggested that Hall look for concurrent reports of bizarre events at nearby homes in Bridgeport during that period. In talks with then-residents of the area, he found plenty. These included disturbances in homes, though not as serious as at the Goodin house, and a spike in UFO reports.

Even after all these years, I remember the very clear impression of neutrality when facing the entities alone that night (November 25th) in the Goodin house. They conveyed a feeling of neither good nor evil. They seemed lifeless in any human sense. The best description I can think of is "alien," totally other. At the time, the Warrens, Fr. Charbonneau and I had opinions based on our religious beliefs. My view today is starkly different.

The Neighbors

Over the decades, I have encountered ghosts whom I'm convinced were actual, physical people living in parallel worlds where they never died; ghosts who were afraid of me because they thought I was a ghost; people who saw ghosts of themselves; and witnesses to buildings and even whole towns that were there one day and gone the next. There have been non-human beings who either used a language I had never heard before, or couldn't communicate verbally at all.

I soon came to think of these beings as “neighbors”: humans and non-humans from parallel worlds, some of which have quite different laws of physics. Some of these neighbors are parasites who mean us no good. Others are afraid of us because their paradigm is as narrow as ours. But many are neutral or benign. Most are just going about their business in their own realities. Interestingly, especially in light of the Special Theory of Relativity, the temporal factors all seem simultaneous, and the spatial relationships can be very odd during communication with these neighbors.

I don’t like doing it, especially since I vehemently discourage people from any sort of mediumistic communication because of the parasite danger, but over the years I evolved a meditation/communication method to speak with a few of these neighbors.

In 1975, I encountered Gilbert, whom a medium told me was a ghost waiting for his wife to die in a hospital ward so he could “take her home.” Already convinced that the 19th century spiritualist ideas aren’t good enough, I meditated at the site and encountered a man who was indeed waiting for his wife – at the Canadian National Railway station in Prescott, Ontario. Gilbert was in a parallel world where the laws of physics and social attitudes made communication with neighbors (in the sense I use the word) common and accepted. At the end of the quite verbal conversation (though I never actually saw Gilbert), I even heard the sound of an approaching diesel locomotive. The train carried Mrs. Gilbert, whom her husband was indeed going to take home.

The Noble Bear

There are many other examples of this communication, but one in particular stands out. I never got an actual name, but I think of this being as “The Noble Bear.” In the winter of 1980–1981, I received a phone call from an erstwhile seminary classmate from western New York. “These people in Tonawanda are hearing heavy footsteps in their attic,” he declared. So off I drove—for over seven hours—to Tonawanda, a northern suburb of Buffalo, not far from Niagara Falls. The first thing that struck me was that the family was more intrigued than frightened about what was happening. The couple was in their mid-twenties and had twin toddlers, a formidable task in itself without having to deal with “bumps in the night.” As in most cases, the residents had it all figured out: It had to be the ghost of this or that ancestor, or such and such a person who had died in the house. I almost never find that to be the case.

In any event, there was a powerful presence in this attic, one that I’d never felt before. I settled in, and it took less than half an hour to hear from the presence. “Hic esten,” were the first discernible sounds I heard. The voice was low and commanding, but gentle. “Hic” is Latin for “here,” but “esten”? I won’t threaten the reader with a Latin lesson, but this probably meant “you,” meaning me. The case ending was wrong. It should have been “tu es” or just “es.”

I understood this as a direct statement to me: “You are here.” And it clearly wasn’t a question. The primary impression was of an energy I can only describe as nobility, honor, courage, and goodness, and it was beaming from this being in waves. It was definitely a male presence. Around him was a huge sense of space. That’s the best way I can describe it.

My very first thoughts: Could this be an angel, or a multiversal species responsible for our belief in angels? What did he mean by, “You are here”? There followed two challenging but deeply fascinating afternoons communicating with a being I could only describe as bear-like. It had an ursine energy that shamans have easily recognized when I described it in later years. I’m certainly not claiming this was a real bear, but it was very definitely a non-human person.

For the first time in these multiversal exchanges, there was a visual. I could just make out the outline of a huge, upright figure. Also, for the first time in these encounters, I managed to snap a picture.

Unlike my prior encounters of this kind, my ursine friend seemed to have the proper spatial relationship to me. He was right where his voice came from. But there was something wrong with the geometry. The more I saw him over time, the more he looked as though his head should be several feet above the slanting attic roof, but it wasn’t. It brought me an odd, out-of-place feeling. I never got his name because I couldn’t even begin to make it out. I don’t think he got my name either. He probably heard Paul as paulo, a word meaning “little,” even in his mutant Latin, I would think.

If I ferreted out his story and translated it correctly, I for the first time encountered a multiversal believer in a Supreme Being with strictly female energies. He referred to the Goddess (the word “Dea” was very clear) for the first time. And I got the impression that there was only one, because he said “Dea Summa Esa,” which I took as “Goddess the One Who Is” in his off-beat Latin. Even more riveting was his claim that She had sent him on a quest for a place called Renthisia, which I have never been able to find in any reference source, paranormal or otherwise.

Interestingly, he had been sent on this quest as a reward, not as a punishment. The reward was for acts of “carita et humilita.” Again, the wrong case endings, but the root words clearly translate as kindness (or love) and humility. Imagine a world where one is rewarded for humility, a virtue sorely lacking in our own. He had passed across or through many worlds on his quest—his words were “per terrae.” And he had no idea that he was in an attic in Tonawanda, New York. He thought he was on a road in a forest, talking with one of many “alii viatori,” which I understood as “other travelers” on the road. What was he going to do when he got to Renthisia? “Implera facta nova,” or so it sounded. I took that as “achieve new deeds.” Of kindness? Yes, but I somehow detected a sense that war or danger might be involved along the way, but we never got to that

before he moved on. I literally felt him moving away. All disturbances in the family's attic ceased.

Between that time and 1987, there were five beings, both human and nonhuman, with whom I simply couldn't communicate. Two were non-verbal and three others spoke languages of which I have never heard the like. All five seemed just as flummoxed as I was with the encounter, and one seemed terrified of me.

I could fill another book with the questions that arose. Were these ghosts? Aliens? Both? What meaning do those words have in the living, eternal, and dazzling diversity of the multiverse? Were they from "other planets"? What does that even mean? Would they have had anything to say about God or Goddess? Probably.

Everywhere I seem to touch in the multiverse is shot through with a sense of divine presence, but it's far beyond anything I learned about in the seminary. In fact, I believe that today's paranormal is tomorrow's science. And it's the first day of school.

Bio: Paul F. Eno is an award-winning New England journalist and an independent researcher of the paranormal since 1970. He holds a Bachelor of Philosophy degree from Wadham Hall Seminary College and went on to do graduate work in theology at St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary, and in the Master of Liberal Arts program at Trinity College (Hartford). A student for the priesthood from 1967-1977, Eno was expelled on the graduate level because the seminary faculty did not like his paranormal research. His early mentors included parapsychology pioneer Dr. Louisa Rhine, Fr. John J. Nicola S.J. (technical advisor for the film *THE EXORCIST*) and legendary, first-generation ghost hunters Ed & Lorraine Warren (of *The Conjuring* fame). His most recent book is *Dancing Past the Graveyard: Poltergeists, Parasites, Parallel Worlds and God* (Red Feather, 2019). Two previous titles were co-authored with his son and colleague Ben Eno (*Behind the Paranormal: Everything You Know is Wrong*, Schiffer Books, 2016; and *Behind the Paranormal 2: Bigfoot, Mothman and Monsters You Never Heard Of*, Barking Cat Books, 2017). Three of Paul's earlier books are still in print. The father-son pair have appeared on the Travel and History Channels, and have hosted the weekly AM/FM radio show "Behind the Paranormal with Paul & Ben Eno" for nearly 15 years.

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