Face to face encounter. The reason I Investigate.

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Growing up I always had an interest in the paranormal. I think it mostly came from all the sci-fi and horror shows and movies I used to watch with my dad. My favorite movies either scared the hell out of me, or had to do with some kind of science. Anything like that that translated to a real-life account was just that much more interesting to hear about. Aliens, ghosts, ancient mysteries, and Bigfoot were all definitely things that I researched at the public library after I got my very first library card at the age of 10.

But along with my interest of the paranormal was a fear of it. While I can only recall a few honest moments I might question with my adult mind, nothing ever really happened to me. However, as a child I was still exposed to things that I probably should not have been. Outside of inappropriate movies that my dad would let me watch, I overheard adult stories that I instantly regretted. My parents also had an interest in the “true” paranormal and had both had experiences in their lives. Since I was one of those rare children that actually listened to the things that came out of an adults mouth I overheard and retained many overheard conversations I probably should not have. I was exposed early on to a lot of ideas about spirits, demons, possession, haunting and the like very early on and it shaped the way I thought about those things for many years. To the point I had horrible nightmares, and a strong belief that there were demonic things out there that could hurt us.

Keep in mind this in no way affected my desire to watch horror movies and science fiction. I still loved being exposed to that stuff. And I should also mention, my parents were not irresponsible. I was a crafty child. In fact until this blog my parents probably had no idea the effect their conversations has. Yes, I watched horror movies way before most parents let their kids, but my dad always explained things. He always let me know it was just a movie and nothing to let scare me. Seeing the exorcist did not bother me. Seeing Aliens gave me a night of bad dreams, but a lifetime of cool ideas to write about. It was the things they didn't know I was listening to that caused me problems but ultimately a curiosity.

It was around my teenage years I had finally decided ghosts probably weren't real, and that the things my parents had experienced might have a different explanation than what they thought they saw. At the very least I had a very firm belief that if things like that exist it's probably nowhere near where I lived or myself because in spite of all my fear, not a damn thing had really ever happened to me to suggest otherwise. Only two incidents can I recall with my own memory and they could really go either way for an explanation...

One time I was home alone, as you almost always are when these things happen. I was in my room working on a sketch (at the time I was aspiring to be a comic book writer), and just as clear as day I heard someone shout my name. Almost as if they were standing in my bedroom door way. I thought maybe one of my parents had called for me but after checking the whole house I was left with the unnerving conclusion that I was home alone and hadn't even realized it. Deciding from that pint on that I was not a fan of dead silence in the house anymore, I turned on my radio.

The second incident that sticks out in my memory was much later after I stopped believing in such foolish things. At this point in my life I was going to be a musician of sorts, and I was reading an article about Pink Floyd in Guitar World. I could clearly hear my dad in the living room watching something on TV and it was exactly 2:59am. Laying on my side in the bed my head was propped up by my elbow and I was flipping pages. I remember the time so well because I was feeling tired and I looked up to look at the time on my alarm clock. I even remember thinking “Damn, it's the witching hour.” as always goes through my head when I see it's 3:00am. Almost as if on cue, when the time changed to 3:00am I felt my elbow get jerked out from under my head and pulled out towards the edge of the bed. I quickly scrambled to an upright position and frantically looked around trying to make sense of it. By 3:02am I had convinced myself that I must have just dozed off for a second and my head had fallen off my hand.

Let's fast forward about 16 or 17 years to December, 2014. I've maintained an interest in the topic, I like watching (making fun) of the ghost shows, I enjoy playing Vampire: The Masquerade, and I have a head full of ideas about what is real and not real. I think you can be a believer and a scientist at the same time. I believe the paranormal is probably a thing; I do not believe a single account that I have heard up to this point. I'm polite mind you, but in the back of my brain I think most people are just very quick to jump to conclusions about things that have happened to them. I've been on a few ghost tours, I've even stayed in some haunted houses and nothing ever happened. Ever. So you can imagine the reaction I had when a co-worker told me that the warehouse my company just started leasing was haunted. At first I laughed, but then I realized I was the only one.

When people tell you a ghost story there are one three three that will typically be conveyed. One, is humor. Most people who tell a story will just be screwing with you and trying to get a rise. A story is just a story, no more no less. The second common thing you will see is curiosity. The story you are being told is much like the two I told above. The teller isn't sure what it is, could have an explanation. It's strange, but nothing more. The third thing I have seen conveyed, is fear. Up to that point I had never had anyone tell em a story and be afraid. But now that I have begun this line of work, it's becoming more common. Most people who are afraid keep it to themselves. They don't know who to trust and often feel like they will be judged. It made me reflect back to my childhood years and how I reacted to being afraid. I did not want to share those unfounded fears and look foolish. Even when I was older and had my two experiences that I wrote off, I still kept that to myself until just last year. People have a need to feel credible. I suddenly realized that this employee was trusting me with something, and even if I didn't believe it I needed to show them some respect. What he shared was not a big deal. He told me that while he was putting product away he had heard some foot steps, someone humming, and a door would periodically slam shut and come open on its own. Trying not to roll my eyes, I brushed it off.

Two weeks later my cynicism would change completely. While working at the warehouse I kept hearing a banging noise in the back area where we were not yet storing anything. I checked a few times but nothing. I even laughed when I saw the door the other employee had mentioned because it was now blocked off with a chair so it could not swing open anymore. I also noticed while working there that the lights in the building gave off a very high electrical hum which I knew could be causing me to hear things. It was the next day when I was there again doing inventory when I heard the distinct sound of the rear door being opened and closed. My first thought was a driver had showed up to pick up some product. But upon turning around, there was nobody there. I called out “Hey, what's up.” and was greeted back only by my echo. I looked outside the door to find no truck backed into the dock. Confused I started looking around. I thought maybe someone had wandered in thinking it was an empty warehouse and

was looking for a place to squat. Or, perhaps another employee was coming in just to try to locate something. I started walking the building trying to find this person because the sound was just so distinct. The last thing from my mind was a ghost at this point.

Following the sounds of what I thought were footsteps I walked all the way to the front to find nobody. I even walked up into the closed office area. Maybe someone was just exploring the property. As I cam back from the offices about to step into the warehouse, through the glass door I caught a glimpse of my stranger. Just the right shoulder as the door was closing behind them. They had ducked into a room I hadn't checked yet. Suddenly it made sense, they must have been looking for a water fountain or sink. I hadn't been in there yet, but I remembered that the door I just saw shut in front of me led to a break room. Following quickly and trying to think of something witty to say I opened the door to what I thought would reveal a break room and and elusive employee. All brain activity stopped when I found only a broom closet with no exits, and no people. I couldn't move, I couldn't process, and I may even have been shaking a little. I closed the door slowly, I backed away. It took me a good 15 minutes of sitting in my car before I could even think about going back inside. For a while I had thought about just leaving. The feeling was surreal and I immediately remembered what I had heard from the employee a few days before. In the end I realized that I had to lock the building up and shut off the power (which I was dreading more than going in) and I had left my favorite ball cap inside sitting on a pallet. After trying to make some witty posts on facebook I went back inside.

The feeling was different. Going back in made me feel better and I was able to relax to a degree. I quickly grabbed my hat, but before turning off all the lights and making a bee line to the door I decided I would take a bunch of pictures. If nothing else to prove to myself how silly everything was. But, at most to have something to post on facebook later to attest to the creepiness that was the warehouse. After taking all the shots I shut off the lights and ran as fast as I could to the door not looking back one time. I quickly glanced through the pictures and saw nothing, and even posted them on facebook with the story. Later at lunch I looked again. What I saw shook me to my core.

I hadn't seen it at first glance. In one picture I took I saw what I had been denying the whole time staring me in the face. A man in a doorway looking back at me where nobody had been standing. It was subtle, but undeniable. Even my most hardcore skeptic friends can't deny there is something in the picture that should not be there. Some people say I doctored the picture, and I can't prove otherwise nor do I try. It's not evidence that I submit as hard fact, it's evidence for myself. I know that I did not doctor the photo; I kept the original on my iPhone for the longest time with all the others until I had to finally delete them for space. This is the picture that changed my thinking, this was the proof I needed. It was a one in a million shot, and now I know how it feels to have someone roll their eyes at you. I went back a few more times with my phone. I never thought I would experience anything else, I knew it was a one in a million thing. But each time I went back I captured more. Audio and video were both caught on one of my last trips in that place. I think I went back two more times but nothing else ever seemed to happen after I shot video.

Personal experiences are not evidence. They are the inspiration that inspire you to look for answers. I was there. What happened was for me, and I'm thankful for it. It's put other things into perspective. I

don't really expect anyone outside of the people who know me personally to believe anything I have to say. I don't expect to prove anything scientifically that will change the world. But I do know that I can change the minds of a few, and develop my own understanding to a deeper and richer place. I don't write things off as quickly. I don't crack as many jokes when I watch Ghost Hunters. (In fact now I watch it for production tips for my own videos.) And strangely I'm even more critical of things that happen, but in a different way. I strive harder for the explanation. I don't want others to ever tell me about an experience and me feel that fear in their voice. I strive to make that fear turn into curiosity.

It was this event that changed the way I think. It was a hard change to except. The only way to process what I had just seen with my own two eyes was to look at it in two different lights. Either I could believe what just happened and admit that I believe in silly things like ghosts. Or, I could deny it and try to file it away in my brain as stuff I just don't want to think about ever again. Neither sat right with me, so I decided to prove it. And that should be the motivation behind anything we do. We don't have to accept the world for what it is. If you have an idea that's hard to swallow. Prove it.

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