

A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH
PUBLISHED BY THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC., EDITED BY W. G. ROLL

POLTERGEIST TOPIC OF P.A. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Dr. Hans Bender, President of the Parapsychological Association for 1969, devoted his Presidential Address to "New Developments in Poltergeist Research." Dr. Bender, who is head of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene at Freiburg University, West Germany, read his paper at the twelfth annual convention of the Association, held at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel in New York City, September 4-6, 1969. This issue of THETA is devoted to a summary of Dr. Bender's paper and of other P.A. addresses on field studies of physical psi effects.

In the course of 20 years, 23 cases of alleged poltergeist occurrences were brought to the attention of the Institut. Some were explained normally. In ten of the remaining cases the Freiburg team visited the scenes after the activities had ceased; in five, they were still taking place.

In 13 cases the disturbances took place in the vicinity of one or more persons whom Bender therefore assumed to be the agent. In eight, this was an adolescent or early post-adolescent; in four, it seemed to encompass mother and child; in one, it was a 54-year-old painter; and in one, there seemed to be no living agent, the case conforming to the pattern of the classical haunted house. In this last case, visual and acoustical phenomena as well as movements of objects were observed in a small castle in Bavaria over a period of 60 years. Bender summarized the following cases (two, which are mentioned in THETA 24, are not described here).

The Vachendorf Case: The 14-year-old daughter of an elderly couple seemed to be the agent since nothing happened when she was absent. On one occasion, the family's two beds were bombarded by stones, tools, and other objects. After the mother had returned the tools to the box, closed it, and had sat down on it, they were

ejected from the closed box. In another instance a wooden shoe from a closed glass cupboard hit the father on the head.

The Neusatz Case: In a village farmhouse occupied by a mother and her 30-year-old weak-minded son, linen was cut up, clothes torn, and the living room curtains disappeared several times. The Freiburg investigators put up a film camera with a trigger device, but nothing happened during the two weeks the device was in place.

The Neudorf Case: A 13-year-old was the apparent agent. Once his father, his elder brother, and the latter's wife saw several nails, which were kept in a locked cupboard in the basement, fall to the floor in an upstairs room while the boy and his mother were lying in bed in the room. The nails were seen when they were about eight inches below the ceiling. Other witnesses reported seeing objects move out of a wall at great speed; they were warm to the touch. Psychological tests of the boy indicated high inner tensions, frustration, and aggression.

The Nicklheim Case: In the course of four months, a family consisting of a couple and their 13-year-old daughter complained of unexplained knocks on windows and doors, stones thrown against the outside of the house, and knickknacks and toilet articles flying about indoors, sometimes around corners. Once a visitor placed some bottles on the kitchen table in the hope that they would appear outside, as they did on previous occasions. He and the family went out, first closing all windows and doors. Shortly afterwards two of the bottles appeared in the air and fell to the ground. The Freiburg investigators placed objects frequently affected inside a glass box controlled by electronic devices and attached to cameras. An object fell over inside the box, but none left it.

As an explanation of poltergeist effects, Bender speculated that the agent may organize energy in "higher space." This would allow "fourfold freedom of movement" and account for the apparent penetration of matter by matter. He noted that the German physicist, Ernst Mach, said that the appearance and disappearance of objects would be evidence for a higher dimensionality of space.

STUDY OF A HAUNTED HOUSE

William T. Joines and John L. Artley

The Psychical Research Foundation learned about a supposedly haunted house in northern Florida from Dr. Thelma Moss (see THETA 15). The house belongs to a 73-year-old retired seaman who will be called Mr. Cole. It has always been occupied by him or members of his family. Apparitions and unusual sounds have reportedly been experienced since 1946. However, Mr. Cole did not hear or see anything unusual until about three years ago when he saw two apparitions on the same day. Since then about a dozen different apparitions have been seen by him and visitors. Four of the apparitions are of people he recognizes. Since June, 1968, Mr. Cole has kept a record of the names and addresses of witnesses.

The first visit to the house by one of us was in October, 1968, when W.T.J. spent three days there. Mr. Cole's record showed that about 100 persons had witnessed unusual occurrences. W.T.J. interviewed five from this group and found their accounts to be in general agreement with Mr. Cole's.

W.T.J. and J.L.A. visited the house again in December, 1968, spending four days there. We interviewed witnesses and noted on a floor plan of the house where apparitions had been seen.

In order to determine whether a person ignorant of the stories connected with the house, but supposedly sensitive to psychical impressions, might have similar experiences as other visitors, it was decided to seek the cooperation of a medium. We obtained the assistance of Mr. Douglas Johnson, who has collaborated in the

work of the P.R.F. on earlier occasions (see THETA 13, 19, 22, 26). Miss Donna Cohen, who was also ignorant of the history of the house, assisted in the investigation. This part of the investigation was made possible through a grant from the Parapsychology Foundation.

In the course of the two days we spent at the house, Mr. Johnson made three tours through it, always with a tape recorder. On the first, he was accompanied by Miss Cohen; during the second, she stayed in one room while Mr. Johnson examined the others. At both times they were alone in the house. On the third tour, he was accompanied by the three of us and Mr. Cole. Many of Mr. Johnson's statements could not be confirmed but none were in conflict with previous testimonies.

According to Mr. Johnson, a man named William, a blood relative of Mr. Cole, once lived in the house. He was described as a short man with a stubby beard, and Mr. Johnson felt he had some contact with the sea and something to do with music. Associated with this man, Mr. Johnson sensed heavy footsteps coming down the stairs. This description agreed with an earlier account by Mr. Cole of his father. Several witnesses had mentioned hearing footsteps on the stairs.

Mr. Johnson also had the impression of a crying teen-age girl whom he judged to be unhappy and afraid. A number of persons claimed they saw such a figure. In an upstairs bedroom, Mr. Johnson said he saw a grey-haired lady wearing old-fashioned clothes and a shawl. He received the impression of a pleasant personality and of the initial "M." This description matched Mr. Cole's account of an old lady he had known as a child, whose name was Agatha Murphy.

While alone in one of the rooms, Mr. Johnson said he heard voices and heavy breathing. He also felt a sensation of cold and saw a mass of light form in one corner. W.T.J. slept in this room on his first visit to the house. He woke up during the night and saw a light in a corner of the room, which he could not account for. In another room, also while alone, Mr. Johnson said he saw two oval patches of brownish light. J.L.A. saw an oval patch

of light in the same room during his previous visit.

Mr. Johnson said that the house was built on the same site as another one. Mr. Cole also mentioned this during a previous visit.

While Miss Cohen was downstairs and Mr. Johnson upstairs, she heard the sound of moving furniture in an empty part of the house. Mr. Cole had said that such sounds often came from that area.

The unusual sounds heard by Mr. Johnson were picked up by the tape recorder and were therefore physical. None of the apparitional experiences were shared by us during this visit. The study reinforces the need for sensitive instruments to determine whether physical energies are responsible for the effects.

THE OLIVE HILL POLTERGEIST

W. G. Roll and John P. Stump

In the middle of November, 1968, the first of a series of RSPK incidents (recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis) took place in the home of an elderly couple in a small town in the Cumberland mountains of Kentucky. Before the end of December, the incidents amounted to more than 200 movements and breakages of the contents and furnishings of three homes: the house where the occurrences began, a second house to which the couple moved to escape them, and a third one belonging to the family of one of their sons.

An investigation was made by the Psychical Research Foundation in December. J.P.S. arrived December 12 and W.G.R. two days later. We both witnessed occurrences under conditions where trickery and other known explanations seemed to be excluded. On one occasion J.P.S. was in the kitchen of the home of the couple looking at them and their 12-year-old grandson, all standing next to the stove, when three bottles on the adjacent sink cabinet moved about two feet and fell into the sink in view of J.P.S. and without any visible interference from any of the three members of the family. On another occasion, when J.P.S. was facing the TV, a bowl and cloth doily fell behind the set followed, in slow motion, by some plastic flowers which had been in the bowl; at the same time, a clock moved four feet

from the set in the opposite direction, landing close to J.P.S. The grandson was in front of the TV with his back toward it and in full view of J.P.S.

The incidents spread to the boy's own home while we were there. On one occasion, a bottle of perfume moved about four feet from a dresser in the bedroom to the floor while W.G.R. was facing the dresser and was the person closest to it, the boy being in another room. On another occasion, when W.G.R. had followed the boy into the kitchen, the kitchen table jumped up into the air, rotated about 45 degrees and settled on the backs of the chairs which were standing around it. W.G.R. watched the boy, who stood next to the table, and saw no way in which he could have caused the incident normally. No one else was in the kitchen.

Of the 187 recorded incidents in the second home of the grandparents and the boy's home, the latter was present during 163. There were no incidents while we were present when the boy was not in the vicinity, but the family reported that 22 occurrences had taken place when he was away. The grandparents were also at home during most of the disturbances but this was probably because they rarely left the house rather than because they were the agents. When all three members of the family were at home and when their distances from the origins of the disturbances could be determined, the boy was closest to 68, while his grandmother and grandfather were closest to 30 and 22 of the incidents, respectively.

As in previous investigations, analyses were made of the directions and lengths of movements of objects in relation to the apparent agent. There were no significant differences in the origin or direction of movement in relation to the boy's position. However, as in some previous studies, ten of the objects moved along curved paths, and there were eight instances where pieces of furniture rotated.

The most striking patterning and one which has regularly been found in previous poltergeist cases, was a marked attenuation effect. Ninety-four of the occurrences originated 1-5 feet from the boy; at a distance of 6-10 feet, there were 12; and between 11-15 feet, only one. A mathe-

mathematical study was made of the decline by Dr. John L. Artley. As in previous studies it was found that this fitted the exponential decay function (see THETA 24). Also, as in previous studies, the average distance objects moved was shorter for objects close to him than those farther way.

The case conformed in all respects to the typical poltergeist and it seemed easiest to suppose that the boy was the RSPK agent. However, this view was not shared by the family. The grandmother believed the incidents represented visitations from deceased friends or relatives as punishment for evil deeds, while the boy's mother felt the occurrences were caused by a demon. The family belonged to Jehovah's Witnesses and were reinforced in their belief by members of their church. Because the eruption of the phenomena at the boy's home coincided with our arrival, the parents believed we had brought the demon from the grandparents' home. In the hope that it would depart if we did, the parents asked us to leave. This was on December 18 and the family from then on closed their doors to all except fellow members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Detailed information is therefore lacking about later occurrences.

FIELD STUDIES

John L. Artley and William T. Joines

Recent experience with haunting and poltergeist cases has underscored the need for a systematic approach to parapsychological phenomena in natural settings. There is often a delay in learning about such occurrences which results in diluted observational situations due to the intrusion of news media or a natural decrease of phenomena. It is also likely that many cases are never reported. We recommend that a central agency be created to which

the phenomena may be reported and we suggest that procedures be developed for the collection of definitive data.

A successful investigation requires good personal relations with the people involved in the case to ensure their cooperation as well as reliable methods of observation. In order to meet these demands, a division of labor is proposed. Upon learning about a promising case, an investigator is dispatched. He attempts to establish good relations with the people on the scene and administers a questionnaire, supplementing this with interviews, observations, and maps of the area.

If the case warrants further study, a second investigator follows with a mobile laboratory housed in a small truck and containing a wide variety of electronic detection instruments. There should be video tape units with remotely controlled television cameras. These could be set up, along with audio tape recorders, in different areas and left to record for long periods of time. One investigator at a control panel in the truck can monitor several units at once. There should also be accelerometers and velocity meters to measure the flights of paranormally displaced objects, and instruments for measuring physiological functions in persons associated with the phenomena, such as poltergeist agents. Haunting cases where unusual visual effects are experienced suggest the use of detection equipment sensitive to radiation at the borderline of visible light and to the invisible (infrared and ultraviolet) parts of the spectrum. Other instruments are needed to analyze the acoustic effects. We estimate the cost of such a laboratory to be close to \$400,000.

In addition to providing reliable information, a mobile laboratory will be invaluable in freeing the investigator for qualitative observations while the hard data are automatically recorded.

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