Moberly Area Community College

Phi Theta Kappa – Alpha Tau Chapter

Ghost Story Collection

2024

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INTRODUCTION

This is, simply, a collection of ghost stories, diverse in source, region, and tone, put together by the members of Moberly Area Community College's Phi Theta Kappa chapter, Alpha Tau, in 2024 as part of the national Honors In Action® program.

The project was a fantastic opportunity, as Phi Theta Kappa intends, for our members to learn how to research and to do so in a subject area intriguing to them. Ghost stories are inevitably intriguing by their nature (or *super-nature*), as we amateur researchers found out.

The Honors In Action® program, in addition to encouraging the development of research skills, tries to get students to figure out how to make the research useful to others to "initiate real-world problem-solving…", as the Honors in Action® handbook says (Phi Theta Kappa, 2024, p. 4).

This general idea of the Honors in Action® program is where this little collection sprang from. We of Alpha Tau decided that the best way to make our work helpful to others would be to share the stories that we had collected. True to the 2024-2025 Honors In Action® theme "The Power of Stories", and to the sub-theme we chose, "Preservation of Stories" (Phi Theta Kappa, 2024, pp. 18-19), we know that a story shared is not only an exercise in oration or written rhetoric; it's shared experiences, emotions, trials, and tribulations: a *life* shared. This sharing connects communities and cultures.

Here in this collection, we are connecting a multiplicity of communities, as these stories include the ghosts of north-central Missouri (where Moberly Area Community College is based), of Nigeria (where some of our students are from), of California, of New Mexico, and of Jewish legend, among others. We obtained them from personal experience; collected them from

interviews we did with community members and family members; found them in locally-published books and newspaper articles.

Some of those stories didn't even make it into this collection, but our expanded understanding of the process of research, communication, and interviews is in itself knowledge that our members will be able to use, as the Honors in Action® handbook mentions, and share with their Phi Theta Kappa peers in the future, having an effect even more lasting, perhaps, than this little collection will provide to its readers.

We hope you enjoy it!

To learn more about Phi Theta Kappa, the Honors In Action® Program, or Moberly Area Community College, you can follow the links below:

Phi Theta Kappa: https://www.ptk.org/

Honors in Action®: https://www.ptk.org/benefits/campus-involvement/undergraduate-research/

Moberly Area Community College: https://www.macc.edu/

Reference:

Phi Theta Kappa. (2024). *The power of stories*: *Honors program guide*. PTK Connect. https://connect.ptk.org/web_files/advisor/static_files/staticPagesImages/HonorsinActionResources/2024HonorsProgramGuide.pdf.

Adaora Nwozor

Ghost stories could be a personal experience, could be told to you or could be passed down. My ghost story is that of my mummy who passed away 6 years ago in 2018. I am the only girl in my family, but I have six brothers. Being the only girl made me close to my parents, but when I married, I became super close to my mother. When my mum became sick, she came to live with me, and spent the latter years of her life with me. In December of 2017, we had a family reunion, and all my siblings came back to the village. I brought my mum along, but after this short break, I had to go back to work. Some of my siblings asked that I let her stay a little longer in the village with them, but within that time unfortunately, I lost her to the cold hands of death. My ghost story is that, in my country of origin in western Africa, it is my right to inherit all my mum's belongings, and I could do anything I wanted with all her belongings. I did not want anything from my mummy's remaining belongings because most of her possessions were already in my possession, but whenever I enter her room, I feel her presence, and whenever I sit on her bed, I just feel and see her shadow and she will just stare at me and say, "I am ok and you are going to be ok." This happens whenever I go into her room. However, where it becomes interesting is that whenever I am stuck in a problem or find myself in a difficult situation, I just say MUMMY IF YOU ARE THERE, TELL ME IT'S OK , and in an instant I will feel her just appear. She will say that it's going be ok. I kept that relationship with her, but lately as I discussed it with my husband, he said I should let her go.

To this day, I still see her around, but most especially when things are difficult. I call her, and I see her shadow. If it's my imagination, I am not certain, but before now, I felt her presence with chills. Now as time passed, I don't feel it as much. The one experience that stands out is that after she died, I personally cleaned her room, disposing of some items that I thought were

unnecessary with nothing of note being found. Later when my daughter was going to university, we were really broke, so I went to the village to ask for some money from some family members. I slept in her room that night, and in the morning, I asked my daughter to come help me fix something in her room because she was planning on taking one of my mom's cupboards to school. While we were working, we found about ₦5,000 just sitting there, inside the cupboard. This is a room that nobody has access to because I alone have the key, and I cleaned it myself after she died. To this day, I still speak to her when I am stressed, and I still see her in the form of a shadow or feel her breath or smell her fragrance when she is around.

Christine Vanpool

No matter where you may reside or be in life, paranormal activity seems to transgress from anywhere. Even in the middle of nowhere. In early November, 1993, in a vacant and desolate area of Santa Fe New Mexico, United States of America, Christine Vanpool was participating in an archaeological dig for a private firm, the SWAC (Southwest Archaeological Consultants), during a contracted exchange of land for mining with the Navajo nation. Here she worked alongside a Zuni Man (from the Native American Pueblo tribe), about seven Navajo (Navajo Native American) excavators, and five Anglo American workers on a kiva (a subterraneous religious structure used for religious rituals), digging up five-centimeter levels of frozen dirt to gather P-3 Pueblo archaeological data.

With a two-pound clipboard equipped with a compass, scale, extra pens, her paperwork bound with a single commercial rubber band, for many days and little money, she hacked the then frozen earth full of perhaps undiscovered historical discoveries. For hours, she would slam the earth roughly to dislodge and shovel out dirt, gingerly place it in large buckets, and let them

sit in a pile along the rim of the kiva pit to thaw out in the morning and afternoon sun. After this challenging physical labor, she would then sieve the dirt to look for small artifacts or bone fragments and studiously record notes on the collection. At this time, they had been gradually finding small bone fragments in the excavation, but still hadn't analyzed them to identify their source; only they suspected that they may have been coming up on a burial.

Upon knowing this, can Christine's story be truly understood, despite how absolutely confusing and awesome it was? Like any other morning, Christine awoke in her hotel room; the goal of the day being to again dig in a kiva on the side of a hill with her Zuni partner to uncover more dirt-entrenched data, with Navajo excavators working on the other side. Similar to the days prior, it was very cold outside, and thus she came to work dressed in many layers. But as she and her partner dug in this kiva, the layers were shed gradually, like a snake shedding its skin as continually hitting the frozen earth with her pick axe was working up a great sweat. Around 7:30 AM however, she stood up on a large bucket in this pit, which they had been utilizing somewhat as a ladder. Not far from the kiva, she saw a large dust devil start to head for her clipboard, which was sitting behind the piles of dirt waiting to be thawed and screened next to the rim of the pit.

Now this was very unusual. Dust devils tend to form in areas of strong surface heating, typically under clear skies, warm weather, and light winds, when the ground can warm the air to temperatures well above the temperatures above the ground. They can occur any time during the year, though often occur in the summer when the sun is most intense. Conditions unlike those today. Seeing this, Christine tried to scrabble out of the pit to save her clipboard; yet the dust devil beat her to it. Swiftly it picked up her clipboard compacted with all her supplies three to four feet up in the air, rotated a few feet near the rim of the pit, and dropped her clipboard;

everything still intact. Stunned, she went to reach for the clipboard, only the dust devil again swooped in, picked up the clipboard, and lifted it up even higher in the air, this time about seven or eight feet, before rotating again a few feet towards the left of the pit rim, and dropping the clipboard on the ground; unharmed. One would think that was the end; but no. The dust devil repeated this two more times, with each time her clipboard being lifted higher and higher. Until the very last time, as Christine had managed to just barely get out of the pit, she looked up underneath the dust devil to see something truly stunning. She saw what appeared to be a fist, hitting her clipboard to slam it down, with the single commercial rubber band on the board finally falling, and causing her papers to burst out into the air. Like butterflies, her papers then started to fly eastward toward Albuquerque, New Mexico as the clipboard slammed onto the frozen ground.

After this peculiar occurrence, Christine slowly picked up her clipboard, mightily disappointed that her notes were lost in the desert. She then turned to her Zuni partner, who was washed over with white; his face was drained of blood and his eyes looked like larger saucers as his pupils expanded so wide. He was so scared that he stood there petrified and frozen. After a minute or so of this trance, he quickly told her he was going to leave for lunch, even though it was only about seven-thirty in the morning. As quick as the wind, he left her near that pit as if he was being pushed for time. Christine felt shocked by his reaction, but on a mission, picked up her jacket and put it on once more, as the cold of that early morning enveloped her. And she continued digging and taking notes on the site. She waited all day for her partner to return; but he never did.

At the end of the day Christine retired to her hotel and desperately tried to put together the notes she had lost. As she scoured over her notes, she recollected her thoughts on the

experience. She remembered especially how scared her partner was; how petrified he was and his strange disappearance. The more and more she pondered it, the more it scared her, and that night it plagued her thoughts.

The next morning, Christine received a call from another company for a position in Albuquerque. Although she was already working on this project, she felt almost strangely warned by the dust devil event, and decided to leave it behind for this new job. She left quickly to Albuquerque, the snow piling heavily on the site as if to cover what happened. But when fast forwarding to a decade later, can this unusual event become even more clear? At a meeting for the Society of America Archaeology, Christine conventionally met the director for SWAC, Sherry, or her past boss on the kiva project. Curious as to what happened with the project, Sherry asks Christine about it, and Christine tells her about the dust devil event. Upon hearing this, Sherry tells Christine how after that event no Navajo person would work with their company again and she consequently had to lose the contract with Navajo nation because she believed that they were afraid to come back to the project as the ghosts there would kill them if they did. They were still able to complete the dig without them however, and found unusually a deer burial at the kiva. All that commotion and work for a buried deer.

Retold above is the story of a pesky and unusual dust devil that took away Christine's notes and scared her colleague for good. Sounds quite unusual to other ghost stories that often retell of flickering lights, howls, screams, and illuminating figures. Was it truly anything else other than simply a strange weather occurrence? According to Christine, it might have been.

Firstly, while dust devils are not unusual for the area, it was again unusual weather for a dust devil, as it was completely cold outside and it is very unusual to see dust devils in the winter. Additionally for Christine, who grew up with the Apache people in southern New

Mexico, after seeing the event and after hearing from Sherry, she believes that the dust devil might have been a "*Chindi",* or the Apache word for ghost, instead of an unusual dust devil. According to Christine, the Apache and Navajo, and really most Baskan speakers, believe that the human has two souls, with part of the soul being good and going into the afterlife, and the other soul being malicious remaining in death and essentially stuck in the world as a dust devil.

These Chindis look for relatives to bring into death with them consequently and experience the same misery. Thus, the Navanjo and Apache usually avoid death as they believe lingering souls can cause problems. This extended beyond simply avoiding bodies, but also by treating recently deceased members very carefully. For example, in Navajo culture if someone died in a hogan, or a traditionally round structure, their family would drill a hole in it's backside, grab the body, then weave it through the mountains in a very confusing pattern so that it would be hard for the Chindi to follow them. Then, they would also bury the body out there, and weave through the mountains back in a different confusing pattern so that these ghosts couldn't follow them home. They did whatever they could to avoid the Chindis before, during, and after the burial. Furthermore, if the body had even been in the hogan too long, they would burn the whole structure and get rid of all the dead person's personal possessions as they did not want the Chindi to be living and tormenting the residents of that previous hogan. From these extreme burials and believing that even speaking the dead member's name could call a chindi, these tribes had a rigid and strict death avoidance. If they had heard there was even a sighting of dust devils, or chindis in their case, they would do everything in their power to avoid them. Hence, why Christine and Sherry likely concluded this reason for the ending of their contract for the SWAC; especially with how animated and brazen that dust devil seemed. To her, it seemed so lively and driven; as

if it had a great volition towards those who would encounter it. As the Navajo might have also believed, she believes that this Chindi did not want them at this kiva.

As for her Zuni colleague, his reaction to the event only further supports her theory. A neighboring tribe to the Navajo, Christine acknowledges that the Zuni, while different, still believed that paranormal activity like a dust devil could be a sign of witchcraft and disease, and that they are sources of bad spirits that can make you sick. Or in other words, they believed things like these dust devils were certainly not good. While in her colleague's case, she did not see him again, she assumes that due to his cultural beliefs and his reaction towards the dust devil on their site that he likely found a medicine person and sweat lodge and performed a cleansing ritual to rid himself of everything the spirit might have placed on him so that he did not become ill. Not only that, but she believed those aside from him with similar beliefs likely moved as far away from the project as they could, and would not dare touch it again.

Although unlike other ghost stories, Christine relays her experience in Northwest New Mexico in the cold desert with her Zuni colleague. Today it still leaves her stunned and chilled, and those around her the same. She has relayed the story to her colleagues, who recommended she even publish it (which she did in her book with her husband Todd Vanpool in Anthropological Studies of Spirits). Even today, she finds herself telling this story to her students as an Anthropology professor, and gladly shares it around the family dinner table or to friends. Like so many others when something extraordinary has happened, she lets those who are curious become familiar with her experience and story; one of many paranormal situations occurring in this peculiar world. Things beyond imagination and often explanation.

Submitted by Elliotte Abernathy

Vanpool, C. S., & Vanpool, T. L. (2023). Anthropological Study of Spirits. SPRINGER INTERNATIONAL PU.

AJ Rivera

Ghost Stories of my Family

Have you ever had experience with a presence? Have you ever heard of something called a ghost story? Ghost stories are stories that might be considered haunted or spooky but not all of them are like this. There are ghost stories that are personal and friendly like having someone who was close to you. Sometimes you can have a vision of someone who has crossed the bridge like a family member. Let me tell you about stories from my family.

It was the night before I was born. My mom and dad were just having a usual Sunday evening. After that, they went to sleep. My dad had a dream with his mother, who passed away three years before I was born. She was on the street holding hands with a little boy. She was looking for my dad so she could give this boy to him. That little boy was me. It was a sign that my dad was about to have me as his son. Then, my mom woke him up as she thought that she was in labor. It was time to go to the hospital. I was born that night around 10 pm. This time it was a message from my grandma Luisa to her son.

Here's another one. My mom had something similar another time before I was born. She and my dad were building a crib for me to sleep. At one point, my mom had a little something called a vision. My mom saw my dad's mother looking at dad building the crib. It was almost as if she were checking up on what my dad was doing, making sure that everything was as it should be. He didn't see her … but my mom did. Then again, it was a message that I was coming. She

passed away before I was born but somehow, they sensed her right before I was about to be born. This other time it was a message from my grandma Luisa to my mom.

The other one is from my cousin Aranxa: “I have many stories that I’ve experienced with the beyond. But the ones that stand out to me would be those of ancestral and natural background. In several instances, I’ve dreamt of talking animals including owls, foxes, cats and snakes, just to name a few. None of them were going to harm me and all gave me good advice or guided me through my dream. Each dream that I’ve had with them, I can touch them and feel the warmth of their fur or scales. In other instances, I’ve seen people in the corner of my eye, I assume some are family members guiding me or previous residents in the places that I visit. All welcoming and non-threatening. I sometimes can see them clearly at night, the height, the texture of their hair, and the body language they express. Many of the things I experience and see seem very natural and always guide me back to nature in my mind. I never feel threatened and I always thank the animals and people that guide me in my journeys, both in my dreams and in life.”

Lastly, let me tell you about my cousin Charlene. She had a dream where she was celebrating her birthday with her family. Her dad (Carlos) was cooking delicious food and they were having a party. After that, her father told Charlene that he was very proud of her. But that’s not all. Charlene had another dream before her youngest son Andre was born. She saw her father taking care of a baby. That baby was Andre. He sat down with him and rocked him before he went to sleep. When Andre woke up, he fed him and played with him. Carlos was my uncle and he passed away 10 years ago. Although he has been gone for a while, somehow, Charlene was able to sense his presence. Andre’s middle name is Manuel in honor of Tio Carlos’ middle name, which is Emmanuel.

There are interesting facts about these encounters. Some spirits took on a youthful appearance, instead of the age they were when they passed away. Other spirits take the form of animals. All the spirits were Hispanic. While some were from Puerto Rico, other ones were from Venezuela. Both the dreams and the visions only had one spirit present. The spirits had inferable genders, some were female and others were male. These dreams and the vision affected only one person at the time. There were no important historical events prior to the encounters, but some of them had a life changing event since it was the birth of a child. The persons' affected opinions before the encounters were a welcoming one. They didn't think that the encounters were scary at all. The vision took about 2-3 minutes, but the dreams are hard to measure in time. Yes, they all felt reassured that their loved ones were taking care of them. Nothing during the encounter was physically destroyed or altered permanently/temporarily. The spirits have interacted with the persons affected at least a couple of times. My interviewees have had less experiences since both the dreams and the vision. It seems that if the spirits solved any unfinished business, then they can rest eternally. No recording of the encounters was done. However, the persons affected told their respective spouses. No, these stories have not been shared with anyone else since the persons affected felt that it was a special message. The spirits' behaviors were very loving, like taking care of their children and grandchildren. When I heard about these stories, I was pleasantly surprised. In my case, I felt like I met my grandma Luisa even before I met my parents. We all feel more taken care of from our loved ones on the other side. By telling these stories, I feel peaceful.

These stories that I told you are very surreal in a beautiful kind of way. It shows that we can even interact with those who are in heaven. Have you had something like this? If so, let me

know what was your experience of having a presence. Having these kinds of experiences are wonderful! We are all interconnected in this extraordinary universe!

Submitted by AJ Rivera

This is a Boarding High School Ghost story.

The Story of Madam Koikoi.

There was once a teacher who always wore blood red high heels and her lip-gloss always matched the color of her shoes. As she walks through the halls, her shoes always make the sound “koi koi koi” (that's where her nickname came from). So many students didn't like her because she was a harsh teacher and she disciplined too strictly. One day she flogged a student and the student got badly injured. Her parents came to school and the teacher was laid off. On her way home, she got into an accident and died. She vowed to take revenge on the girl, the students and the school. So each night during night prep or after, she roams the halls looking for unsuspecting students to be her next victim. Rumors have it that she is still wearing her blood red shoes, her matching lip gloss and her blood covered dress. And you can sometimes hear her walking during pitch black nights and her shoes going “KOI KOI KOI”

This story is passed down from session to session and to each new session of school in Nigerian boarding schools. There are different variations of this story and one can be found on Netflix as “The Origin: Madam KOI KOI.”

Submitted by Gift Nwozor

Another Variation of the story of Madam Koi Koi

I have another ghost story. This story is a boarding house story that every student in boarding school experiences in my country. It's about the story of a woman known as MADAM KOI KOI. The story goes that she is trapped in that boarding school. This MADAM KOI KOI received her name from the students because she wore high heeled shoes always and whenever she comes around at night to come check on the students her shoes make this sound KOI KOI KOI KOI so the students gave her the name MADAM KOI KOI. Story has it that she was a mean person who looked for every means to punish the students. One day the student planned to get even with her, but they meant no harm and just wanted to pay her back in her own coin. Unfortunately, the students' plan that very day took her life and her spirit remained in the dormitory. Now every night, the students will always hear her come around even up until this day. I attended a boarding school and heard about her story; likewise, my daughter who also went to a boarding school has heard a version of this story. This happened in a female boarding school in Nigeria, West Africa. Every boarding school has their own version of the story, but it still remains that Madam Koi Koi's spirit is trapped in every female boarding school up till today. The stories also claim that some people have also seen her physically.

Submitted by Adaora Nwozor

Ghost Story

Told by Anonymous on December 7th, 2024:

When the narrator had just turned 18, they were living in Southern California and had been visiting their grandmother on weekends. It was early in December that their grandmother

had become very ill and unfortunately her illness was further complicated by her continued consumption of vodka.

It was during this time that the narrator had gone to bed and was woken up during the evening by her grandfather who had been deceased for several years. Their grandfather told them they must visit their grandmother and have her admitted into the hospital. The narrator told their grandfather that she had to work that day and didn't think it was a good idea; however, the grandfather was adamant that they did not delay the visit and to take time to visit their grandmother the next day to have her admitted into the hospital.

The next day the narrator struggled with going to see their grandmother, but finally decided to trust in what happened the previous night. When they arrived at their grandmother's house, they found their grandmother in the bedroom with windows open, and their grandmother covered only in a thin sheet. They tried to rouse their grandmother, but she would not wake up.

The narrator left the room wondering why their grandfather would send them to find their grandmother dead, after a bit of a fall apart, they decided their grandmother couldn't be dead and went to the kitchen and warmed up chicken-soup. They went back to the bedroom and with some effort they were able to wake up their grandmother. However, her grandmother's eyes rolled back and forth and she couldn't speak. The narrator told her grandmother about the visit from her grandfather and explained that he wanted them to call the ambulance and have her admitted into the hospital. At first her grandmother shook her head no, indicating she did not want to go to the hospital, but after the narrator re-explained the visit from their grandfather once again, the grandmother nodded her head slightly and pointed with a shaky finger at the phone at her bedside.

The narrator called 911. When the paramedics arrived, they were concerned about the temperature in the room and condition of the patient. One of the medics berated the narrator for waiting so long to call the ambulance. The other medic stepped in and stopped the complaining medic. The second medic realized and explained that not only was the narrator young, but was not living with the patient and had only stopped in to visit that night.

The narrator's grandmother spent a month in the hospital and was in a lot of pain. She passed away in January. During this time, the individuals who had been responsible for their grandmother's care berated the narrator for calling the ambulance stating that not only were the medical bills going to be sky high, but her grandmother was in pain because of her stating that their grandmother would have passed away quietly if they hadn't interfered that night by calling the ambulance.

The narrator had become very depressed. They visited their grandmother every day, and were oftentimes with their grandmother when other family members would visit. The other family members would often say things that tended to be hurtful and some of the family had even become hostile.

Then finally, there was the day the narrator thought they could no longer take the hostility and guilt, and chose that one day not to visit. That night their grandmother appeared to them. Their grandmother assured them that they did the right thing and to let the guilt go. The narrator asked their grandmother to remember to speak to other relatives before leaving. Their grandmother said that everyone was fine and she was there to let them know that they had nothing to feel bad or guilty for - they had done the right thing by having her admitted to the hospital. Once their grandmother finished their message of assurance, their grandmother kissed the narrator on their forehead, cheeks, and chin.

The narrator knew that her grandmother had died and went to let her mom and dad know; however, when she got to their bedroom the phone rang and her dad answered the phone, it was the hospital letting him know his mother had died. The narrator's mother asked her dad if they should let the narrator know their grandmother had died, but the narrator's dad said, (though he didn't remember saying it) that "they already knew."

The narrator tried to tell a few members of the family what had happened, but realized it was better to say nothing since they didn't seem to believe them; however, they decided to tell their half-brother when he came to visit, and they were having a very deep conversation about him feeling like there were times he didn't feel connected to that side of the family. The narrator told him about seeing grandmother that night and how she had kissed them before leaving. The narrator's brother teared up and abruptly left the room. Later, when the narrator had talked with their brother about him being upset and leaving, thinking it was something they did and wanting to apologize, the brother stated that he had gone and visited their grandmother the day she passed and when he had left he kissed her on her forehead, cheeks, and chin. He stated that when the narrator described the visit and told him about the goodbye kisses, it was an acknowledgment of his connection to that side of the family that he felt disconnected from.

Some might call this a ghost story; some may say a visit from a spirit or an angel. The narrator isn't sure, but knows this apparition from the other side gave them the strength to let go of the guilt that was dragging them into a deep depression.

Interview with Matthew Fetterly, research associate at the Boone County Historical Society, writer, and secretary of CoMo Preservation in Columbia, Missouri:

In our interview, Matthew Fetterly expounded a bit about a particular historic Columbia, Missouri house which is the setting of one of his ghost stories. This is the Maplewood House, built, he said, in the 1870s-1880s and owned by the Lenoir family; daughter Lavinia Lenoir, a Christian College (now Columbia College) graduate, and her husband Frank Nifong were some of the last to live in it. Both Lenoir and Nifong are venerable Columbia Missouri surnames.

This couple never had children, a fact which Fetterly believes may have caused the lady some grief. After their deaths, he said, the house went through several hands before being restored and re-appointed in period-appropriate furnishings and becoming part of the Boone County Historical Society, hosting tours and acting as a focal point of the annual Heritage Festival in Nifong Park.

According to Fetterly, rumours of Lavinia Lenoir haunting her old home have been drifting around for a while. In his two years of work at the Historical Society, he's had two experiences in the Maplewood House.

Once, a door in the house inexplicably shut and locked. No one has as of yet been able to re-open it because, he says, there is no known key and the only type that would work is of such an old style that it'd be very hard to recreate. Peculiarly, this door could only be locked with that same key…

The second experience came when Mr. Fetterly was preparing the old house for the Heritage Festival in September 2023. Respecting the house and the possibility of its ghostly inhabitants, he was wont to always knock-on doors before moving from room to room, and to address Lavinia Lenoir as he wandered around. This particular time he said something out-loud

to the effect of “The Heritage Festival is tomorrow, Lavinia, is there anything around here you need me to fix before then?” Immediately as he finished speaking, a tremendous crash sounded from another room. Upon entry he discovered that the very-heavy (perhaps 10-pound) ornamental finial decorating the lowest-hanging part of the large chandelier in this room had fallen smack onto an old ceramic plate lying on a table, smashing the whole thing into tiny pieces. There’s a task! Perhaps Lady Lenoir had something for him to do after all.

The Dibbuk/Dybbuk Box

(Dr. Jason Haxton’s Experience, Research, and Publication)

Jason Haxton, Museum director at A.T. Still University pursued the Dibbuk box after hearing about it from his student employee. His employee’s roommate had purchased this box on eBay from Kevin Mannis of Portland, Oregon. Kevin Mannis purchased it from the family of the woman who created the Dibbuk box. This box is a wine cabinet that the woman had used as a prayer box. The woman who created it was a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. She kept it locked and told her family to never open it and requested that it be buried with her at the time of her death. However, it was against Jewish religion to bury the box with her so the family sold it at an estate auction. That is where Kevin Mannis purchased the box, and it was first opened. Mannis wanted to restore the wine cabinet so he opened the box and that started the chain of events that would lead to the prayer box becoming known as the Dibbuk box.

During the time Mannis owned the box, he and others of his family experienced paranormal events from being in contact with the box. They noticed a strong cat urine smell permeating from the box. They also shared the same nightmare. In the nightmare, Mannis (or whoever else was near the box) was fighting off something and would wake up in the morning

with bruises that matched the wounds they got from the nightmare. Repeated events like these caused Mannis to sell the box on eBay. Mannis wrote out his experiences with the box and added it to the description of the item for sale.

The roommate of Haxton's employee was the one who purchased the box from Mannis. After the roommate obtained ownership of the box, the roommate and the employee also experienced paranormal events. They had lightbulbs burning out constantly and electronics breaking for no reason. They also said that they smelled the strong cat urine odor and became ill. The employee told Dr. Haxton about the box and Dr. Haxton asked the employee if he could see it sometime. However, before Haxton could view the box for himself, the roommate moved away with the box and then later decided to sell it himself on eBay. The roommate said that the box had caused him to lose hair and had altered his mood. He didn't say much about the details; just that he no longer wanted to be the owner of this box.

Because Haxton is a museum director and specializes in old artifacts, Haxton was interested in the box and its background. Therefore, he purchased the box and spent from 2004-2011 researching the box's history. During this time he also experienced paranormal events associated with the Dibbuk Box and was able to answer the box's prayer. The prayer of the box was that the creator wanted to know why the Holocaust happened. Haxton was able to relate the Holocaust to the Model Eugenical Sterilization Law drafted by Harry Laughlin of Kirksville, Missouri. Hitler had taken Laughlin's law and created the Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring in Germany. In my interview with Dr. Haxton, he said that he thought Hitler believed that because the Jews were more faithful to their religion than their country that he would eradicate them and therefore purify Germany. Haxton kept a diary of his experiences and research outcomes and eventually turned it into a best-selling book published through Truman

State University Press. The book was so popular that it became the basis for the 2012 horror film, "The Possession." Haxton later donated the box to Zak Bagans' The Haunted Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2016. The Dibbuk box remains there to this day.

Submitted by Keasha Brown

Haxton, J., & Schwartz, H. (2011). *The Dibbuk Box*. Truman State University Press.

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While not directly used in our research, we came across and skimmed places like Facebook, Reddit, various ghost story blogs, and on You-Tube that have allowed more hesitant people to share ghost stories for fear they might seem delusional to others. These digital platforms allow almost anyone to tell their stories anonymously to others without the fear of hopefully a large repercussion. Consequently, this allows them to be shared widely and to be available for use in research (with the proper permission). In turn, we have also used this platform for the same purpose: to share the stories of others. In recognizing this need to share these diverse stories via a low-stakes medium (online), we chose to develop this collection, which serves as an example of filling this need. Now everybody can have access to these stories under the proper standards of publication of ghost stories to read, learn, and enjoy.

Once we decided on our project and began to conduct interviews, we got a whole new set of perspectives on ghost stories. On a more fundamental basis, we found that for a delicate and wildly subjective subject like "the power of stories", personal interviews are a great way to learn a lot. But the greatest conclusions we drew from the actual interviews were the different ways in which people regard ghost stories–supporting our preliminary research conclusions. For instance, in Christine Vanpool's story she made sure to thoroughly research and publish her story for anyone to access, and regarded the story as at least an aid to her beliefs and research on spirits and ghosts, and perhaps an example of the paranormal experiences of Baskan speaking tribes or the Navajo and Apache. Furthermore, in the anonymously collected story on December seventh, 2024, the afflicted individual regarded the story as a means to connect to her family over her grandmother and a way to release past grief and guilt that had been continually dragging them down. Finally, in Dr. Jason Haxton's experience, he was able to utilize the ghost story like Christine had. He used his experiences and background in research to study stories and events for

evidence of his theories regarding the Holocaust and Missouri's influence on it. He ultimately was able to answer the spirit's question and end the curse of the box. The story of the box became so popular that it even became a movie. The movie is called, "The Possession" and was released in 2012, further preserving this story. Each of the ghost stories we collected through interviews specifically were personal enough that the interviewees were comfortable and willing to share their view on their stories; something which pen and paper can't always accomplish, but a listening ear can.

In compiling this small collection, we were able to compare and contrast our ghost stories in a way that studying the common literature and theories hadn't allowed us. In examination of them it can be found that our research conclusions about the functions of ghost stories in society (as warnings/lessons, history, and memory) and their universality are fairly well-supported. For example, the anonymous story set in California, Adoara's story set in Nigeria, and AJ's mother's experience with his mother seeing her mother-in-law watching over her husband building a crib in Puerto Rico, both share the common thread of being about a maternal ancestor who reassures the narrator of the story in times of stress. Even though they occurred in far different places, they both also had a similar memory and almost familiar lesson for these individuals in how they reward loved ones of the past. Beyond the lesson of eternal maternal guidance experienced in the story above, not-so-friendly ghost experiences occurring across the globe signify this universality of lesson and global occurrence of ghost stories. For instance, in Madam Koi Koi's story set in Nigeria, the story served the purpose of warning generations of Nigerian students of her presence in the school, while Christine Vanpool's story in New Mexico, USA, exhibited also a warning or malicious volition by the ghost towards either scaring away workers on the kiva site. Both stories

serve as warnings to others of these ghost's intentions to whoever may come across them in these regions. They are two cultural and regionally different stories with a similar mission.

From our collection of stories and research, we have determined again this final research, interview, and collection-based conclusions. They serve to preserve the history of a culture or community, informally, and often to preserve the memory of more specific individuals like family members. Additionally, they relay those memories of history and family on to future generations, usually through lessons and/or warnings. Furthermore, they are a global phenomenon and often have a common cultural trait, probably because of the essential services they provide in memory preservation, cultural preservation, etc. Finally, we found that these ghost stories show how important the diverse mediums of documentation available (the World Wide Web, social media, as well as books, journals, TV shows, etc.) are to the preservation of ghost stories, especially in digital platforms for their anonymity factor and in personal interviews for their interpersonal effect and how they allow interviewers to more readily share their perspectives on the stories.