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1500 Words
Disposable Manuscript
Member: Ariz. Authors Assoc.

Talking with a Ghost

"Listening effectively to others can be the most fundamental and powerful communication tool of all. When someone is willing to stop talking or thinking and begin truly listening to others, all of their interactions become easier, and communication problems are all but eliminated."

- Ken Johnson -

Imagine for a moment beginning your daily routine by stuffing ear plugs in your ears, putting on a blindfold, strapping on a tape recorder and hitting the record button. Then, somewhat at random during the day, you ask questions hoping that answers just might be recorded for you to hear later that night after you take the ear plugs out and listen to the

recording. Seems like a pretty silly scenario doesn't it? Yet, that is almost exactly the present situation in regard to Electronic Voice Phenomena.

The basic philosophy of Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) is that spirits or ghosts can somehow affect electronic recording instruments in a way that allows their voices to be recorded. It appears that this phenomena was born in 1959, when a Swedish artist and filmmaker, Friedrich Jorgenson recorded the faint voice of his dead mother while trying to record bird songs in the Swedish countryside. However, as pointed out repeatedly by EVP researchers, the voices are never directly heard by the person making the recording as the recordings are being made. That is, somehow the ghosts, spirits or whatever they are manage to have their voices stored on the recording media (tape or digital) even though no sounds were actually being heard at the time. While this seems a little contradictory it is not all that implausible.

When I first moved to Phoenix I lived right next to an Air National Guard facility. My apartment was literally right across the street. One day as I was listening to my stereo receiver at a relatively high volume I was treated to a distinct but brief bzzzt sound. I thought that was rather odd, but then it repeated a few seconds later. Thinking my stereo was acting up I tried another channel only to be treated to the same bzzzt

sound for about a second every 15 seconds. I was perplexed for a time as to what might be causing this. Then I opened the drapes covering my patio door and noticed the radar dish at the Air National Guard facility. Sure enough, every time it swung around in my direction the stereo went bzzzt. Yes there was a very definite bzzzt sound coming out of my stereo, but there truly was no bzzzt "sound" going into any microphone anywhere. The "sound" was created as a result of a fast pulsing electromagnetic signal coming from the radar dish that was directly interacting with the electrical circuits in my stereo.

EVPs may be similar to my stereo radar experience. EVPs are possibly electromagnetic signals that are simply picked up by the recording electronics and transferred to the tape or digital recording media. In the October 30, 1920, issue of Scientific American, Thomas Alva Edison is quoted as saying:

"If our personality survives, then it is strictly logical and scientific to assume that it retains memory, intellect and other faculties and knowledge that we acquire on this Earth. Therefore, if personality exists after what we call death, it is reasonable to conclude that those who leave this Earth would like to communicate with those they have left here... I am

inclined to believe that our personality hereafter will be able to affect matter. If this reasoning be correct, then, if we can evolve an instrument so delicate as to be affected or moved or manipulated... by our personality as it survives in the next life, such an instrument, when made available, ought to record something."

Edison was not the only researcher with such ideas. It is reported that both Marconi and Tesla had similar views of what might be possible in regard to communicating with the dearly departed. Yet to this day Electronic Voice Phenomena is little more than the hit and miss process described earlier.

For over fifty years, tape delayed broadcasting of live events has been a relatively standard practice with the notable exception of a certain recent Super Bowl half time broadcast. In fact, back in 1952 radio station WKAP, Allentown, Pennsylvania, introduced a tape delay system consisting of an external playback head which was spaced far enough away from the record head to allow for a 5 second delay. In this manner recorded audio could actually be played back from the recorder before the tape was wound onto the take-up reel. This avoided the problems associated with the fact that the FCC would not allow live telephone conversations to be broadcast directly over

the air. The reason for this rule became apparent during that infamous Super Bowl XXXVIII half time broadcast.

These days there are a variety of delay mechanisms available to the broadcast industry, but essentially they all work on a very similar principle. Now the information is recorded onto some type of digital media. This is generally a hard disk drive or Random Access Memory (RAM). The recorded data is then played back a short interval after it is recorded in a manner not terribly unlike the tape delay described earlier. This is the same principle that is used by the Tivo system to allow pausing a live broadcast and then continuing to watch after having un-paused it. A "poor man's" audio version of Tivo can be made with a simple free-ware mp3 recorder combined with a suitable mp3 player program on a computer. By starting the player a few seconds after starting the recorder, the player will be playing back audio that was recorded only seconds earlier while the recorder continues to record.

In some cases, EVP only becomes sufficiently audible after significant filtering and signal processing to allow the EVP to be understood. However, it is not all that rare to have EVPs be understandably audible without doing anything more than simply listening to the raw recording. There are many internet sites that give examples of easily understood EVPs. So, this leaves open a distinct possibility. If something akin to a broadcast

delay system was used to record EVPs a researcher could actually hear the EVPs in near-real-time. A researcher could ask for a name of the EVP source, a few seconds later hear the name in response and then ask for a clarification or ask a follow-up question. This may turn out to result in some interesting results. Imagine being able to ask an EVP who it is, then ask why it is there, and follow up with what it wants all while being able to hear the answers on the spot. Conversation. What a concept!

In the TV show "Ghost Whisperer" the spirits tend to become rather persistent in trying to make contact once they discover the main character, Melinda Gordon, can see and hear them. Apparently, they have become rather used to being ignored although they don't like it, and they rather quickly notice when someone makes eye contact with them or they notice they are actually being heard. Along this line of thought, is it possible that, if spirits realize that an EVP researcher can understand them in real-time, they might indeed become rather persistent and develop the ability to communicate more effectively and clearly rather than in brief snippets of just a few words? Might they actually flock to the researcher in an effort to make themselves understood?

Edison was not very impressed by the methods in use back in 1920 when he further said:

"Certain of the methods now in use are so crude, so childish, so unscientific, that it is amazing how so many rational human beings can take any stock in them. If we ever do succeed in establishing communication with personalities which have left this present life, it certainly won't be through any of the childish contraptions which seem so silly to the scientist."

Essentially the same can still be said today despite 86 years of scientific advancement.