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## History can be haunting

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Augusta, Kan. — Lori DeWinkler spends a lot of time in cemeteries. She is a frequent visitor to Butler County's eternal resting places. DeWinkler finds them fascinating for a number of reasons - she notes that there is plenty of history connected with cemeteries that goes beyond the monuments within them.

She has a normal life -- in Rose Hill with her husband, Fred and they are parents to a grown son. She's been a Mary Kay consultant for a number of years, but it's her work in genealogy that led her down some other interesting career paths.

"I was helping people with genealogy and I would visit the cemeteries where their ancestors were buried, taking photos of headstones and recording information. I researched and collected stories," she laughed and added, "I was at the History Center in El Dorado so much, they suggested that I become a volunteer. So I did."

At a genealogy class that she attended, she learned about "grave witching." Witching, dowsing, or divining is a method used to find underground objects. In this case, unmarked graves. There are many different variations on how witching is performed. The most common way is with two bent rods of metal held at chest level perpendicular. When the person walks over a grave, the rods fly apart or cross, depending on whether it is a male or female.

Nobody really knows how or why grave witching works, but many cemetery workers use it to locate unmarked graves. Some say it has to do with the electromagnetic pull between what's in the ground and the wires. And some think it has to have something to do with the magnetic field given off by our bodies that remains with the body even after death.

"It's not all that mysterious. I just chalk it up to there being a 'break' in the ground," she added, "People have been water dowsing forever."

DeWinkler spent lots of time on researching stories of death and murders in El Dorado and was instrumental in organizing the town's first Creepy, Crawly Trolley Tour, which is now held each October.

Tour guide

DeWinkler's historical interest and talent in story telling has found her branching out to other areas. She has been part of a group of paranormal investigators and has led "ghost" tours in Wichita.

As a tour guide, DeWinkler only presents the historical backgrounds of a place or person with no fabrications.

"I give them the background -- the facts. If someone has reported unusual or unexplained occurrences, then I report that, but I don't make up details," she explains.

DeWinkler is a skeptic. Although she is aware of unexplained phenomena, she doesn't put any stock into the use of ouija boards, psychics or seances.

"Ouija boards are made by Parker Brothers -- hello?? -- nothing mystical about that. And if psychics were real, why would they have to ask so many questions?"

She's more drawn to the "Who dun it? and How did they get away with it?" side of mysteries, not whether ghosts exist.

That doesn't mean she hasn't had a couple of personal experiences with the unexplained.

At an investigation at Wichita's Cowtown, she stood in a farmhouse and asked if anyone was present. A few notes were quickly heard from an organ and a quick strum from a guitar, which were part of the furnishings in the house. A Cowtown staff member told her sometime later that the organ in the house had never worked before then nor since. Another time at a different location, a EMF detector recorded a voice uttering her name.

She was part of the group that investigated the Augusta Military Museum last year when unidentified voices were picked up on EMF (electromagnetic fields) detectors.

She admits that those occurrences did rattle her a bit, but she's not easily frightened.

Paranormal investigations

A new door has opened for DeWinkler. She and another colleague, Darin Peterson, operate Moonlit Ghost Hunts, an idea inspired by an interest in things unexplained, and desire to have a better understanding of the science behind paranormal investigating.

"People like to investigate places. They want the experience. We provide that," she said.

Moonlit Ghost Hunts gives guests access to the most current equipment in the field, taking them to a location known to have paranormal activity, and giving them a chance to have a hands on experience of investigating so that the participants can be the one to determine if the location is haunted.

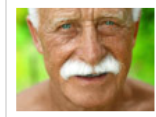



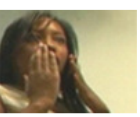

The experience is not a ghost tour or haunted house; you are not a tag along on a ghost hunt. It is an opportunity to have an "experience" of doing something you currently only see on television.

Last weekend an investigation took place at an abandoned building in Augusta that has been the location of strange and unexplained reports for a number of years. DeWinkler and Peterson led a group of 10 people through the investigation process.







Don't miss what happened during the investigation-- read the conclusion in Thursday's Gazette.

*Anyone contacting Moonlit Ghost Hunts at [www.moonlitghosthunts.com](http://www.moonlitghosthunts.com), or calling 316-285-9086, and mention that they read Lori's story in the Gazette, will receive a special discount on a paranormal investigation.*

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