

# A Ghostly Experience

By Dawn Bilder

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVE DIASPARRA (2)

At 9 p.m. May 31, 2008, three men arrived in the Pennsylvania ghost town of Fallbrook. All that remains of the 1800s coal town are a few decayed foundations and the abandoned Fallbrook Cemetery. The temperature was sixty-five degrees, the sky partly cloudy, and the wind blew in from the west at twelve miles per hour.

Inside the cemetery the air was still and heavy, despite the slightly breezy night. And, except for bats, there was a conspicuous absence of wildlife. The men felt watched and uneasy. They saw mist moving quickly around them and through the area.

All three men immediately turned around when they heard what sounded like footsteps running toward them through the grass. They thought someone else was in the cemetery, but there was no one to be seen, no one visible in the unobstructed thirty or so yards around them. There was no other sound. Just before they left, it grew noticeably colder, and they could see their breath as though it were below freezing. They checked their temperature reading. It was fifty-nine.

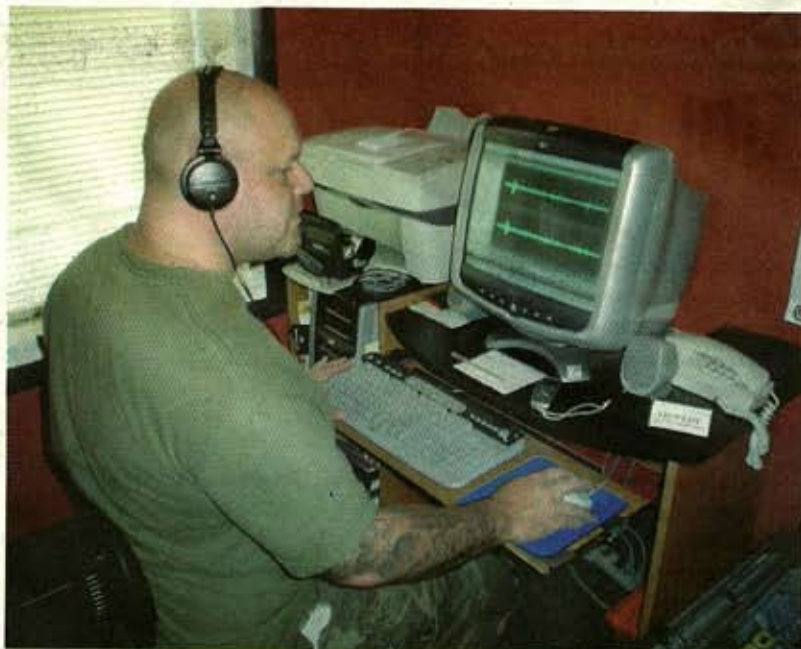
Even for ghost hunters, this was all very creepy.

Steve Diasparra, who operates GHOST (Ghost Hunters of Southern Tioga) of PA, which investigates paranormal activity in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, and his associates listened to the audio they recorded in the cemetery that night. "It sounded," Diasparra says, "like a cocktail party, like fifteen-to-twenty people talking at once."

But Diasparra is a scientist and a skeptic. He performs his investigations for free, and the first thing he does is try to find an explanation other than paranormal activity. "When people call me and are genuinely afraid," says Diasparra, "I know they are experiencing something, but it might just be something outside of their experience. For example, a couple might call because they moved into a house, and they hear a banging against their wall at night. When I investigate, I might find a loose pipe behind the wall causing the sound."

Sometimes, however, things cannot be explained. "For thousands of years," Diasparra says, "people have been experiencing something." He wants to provide a service. People who approach me are usually scared, and I want to help them understand what's happening to them. And, of course, it also allows me to satisfy my own curiosity about the paranormal."

Perhaps as a sign of his skepticism, he runs a free haunted house every Halloween. Last year's theme was "Pirate Zombies," and this year the theme is "Evil Circus," featuring Diasparra as the evil ringmaster, evil clowns, and "many other great surprises." Diasparra spends months gathering wood, foam, cloth, and other building materials from garage sales or "wherever I can scrounge it from" and turning his large yard and garage into a fun treat for kids. "Usually," says Diasparra, "we get hundreds of kids."



The haunted house, located on Third Street in Mansfield, is open October 31 during the town's official two-hour trick-or-treat from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. Look for the thirteen-foot evil clown in the front yard. For more information, visit [www.halloween-haunted-house.com](http://www.halloween-haunted-house.com).

And, if you find yourself in a haunted house and it's not October, contact Diasparra at 570-724-0928 or visit his website at [www.ghostpa.com](http://www.ghostpa.com), where you can read about the Fallbrook Cemetery investigation (including a video of the strange mist and the audio recordings) and other case files. You can also learn more about his scientific process and philosophy and find out how to become a paranormal investigator yourself.

Happy Halloween!

Above: Diasparra haunted house from last year was pirate themed. Middle: Diasparra listening to audio from one of his ghost hunts.