



AUTUMN DRISCOLL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Donna Kent, founder of The Cosmic Society of Paranormal Investigation and author of "Ghost Stories and Legends of Southwestern Connecticut," poses in the doorway of Seymour's Carousel Gardens, an historic Victorian mansion and one-time restaurant known for paranormal activity.

Who you gonna call?

By Scott Gargan
CORRESPONDENT

On a recent cold, drizzly night, in the upstairs dining room of Naugatuck's Milestone Inn, a group of ghost hunters gathered in hopes of channeling the spirits of the historic restaurant, a centuries-old building reputed for its mysterious hauntings.

"Our focus tonight is to see if there are any spirits who want to communicate with us or give us a nonharmful sign," said Donna Kent, seated at the head of a

candlelit table. "We want to open a doorway to the spirits that may be residents of the Milestone Inn."

With video cameras and audio recorders rolling, members of the group went around the table, asking questions of the purported presence. What year is it for you? Do you need help moving on? Do you have any connections to the Revolutionary War?

"Can you let us know if you are here?" asked Brendan Logan, an Orange resident. "We would appreciate any sign of your presence."

The Cosmic Society of Paranormal Investigation, as the group calls itself, has been tracking ghosts for 15 years. And though it may sound like a fringe community, the CSPI isn't alone. Since the establishment of the New England Society for Psychic Research by Ed and Lorraine Warren in 1952, several

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Connecticut's ghost hunters

- The Cosmic Society of Paranormal Investigation, www.cosmicsociety.com
- Smoking Gun Research Agency, www.sgra-media.org
- Paranormal Research Society of New England, www.prsne.com
- Connecticut Paranormal Research Society, www.cprs.info
- New England Society for Psychic Research, www.warrens.net

Tours and lectures

■ Haunted Southwestern Connecticut Tour led by Donna Kent Saturday at 2:45 p.m. \$110; includes dinner. Call 1-866-656-0207 or visit www.connectionsgroutours.com.

■ The Samhain Bash, hosted by the Smoking Guns Research Agency and Talisman, Saturday 11 p.m. at Talisman, 150 Main St., Monroe. 203-261-0047.

■ John Zaffis, founder of the Paranormal Research Society

■ Halloween lecture hosted by the Connecticut Paranormal Research Society Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the American Legion Hall Post 71, 337 Main St., West Haven. \$10 suggested donation. ghosts@cprs.info.

Ghost hunters are on case

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groups have cropped up in southwestern Connecticut, signaling a ballooning interest in the realm of the paranormal.

Armed with night-shot cameras, electromagnetic field detectors, voice recorders and infrared thermometers, they scour public places and private residences, listening for voices and footsteps and looking for orbs and apparitions — all signs of spirits that have yet to depart our world.

Kent, founder of the CSPI and author of "Ghost Stories and Legends of Southwestern Connecticut," claims to have helped dozens of families purge their homes of ghosts ranging from the pesky to the demonic.

"It's been a lifelong fascination," said Kent, a

Norwalk native now residing in Shelton. "We help spirits cross over to the other side and find their rightful place ... I think it works out for everybody. It's pretty damn exciting."

John Nowinski, who launched the Smoking Guns Research Agency as a student at Staples High School in Westport, has always been fascinated by the region's "historical hauntings" — Native Americans, colonial soldiers and "ghost ships" sighted off the coast of Long Island Sound.

"We have such a rich and varied history here," said Nowinski. "So much has happened and things have changed so rapidly. There are a lot of lingering presences."

On their last visit to the Milestone, the CSPI had

collected anecdotes from restaurant staff who had seen and heard unusual phenomena — lights flicking on and off by themselves, sounds of chopping from an empty kitchen. Then there was the tree limb that fell unexpectedly on the building after their August visit. But the group has yet to obtain firsthand evidence, and like any seasoned paranormal investigator, Kent remained cautious.

"I have heard stories, but we can't say if (the Milestone) is validly haunted," she said. "I'm not disputing the evidence, but we need to do a more thorough investigation first."

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