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Matthew Hetland and S.J. Christ stop at the grave of Julian Pacheco, who died at age 23 and who was buried at Potter's Field in 1936.

Talking to the undead

Investigators search for signs of spirits at Potter's Field

Potter's Field

BY MARIJA B. VADER
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Coolness settled over Potter's Field, the cemetery for poor folks who died in Grand Junction's 1800s and early 1900s, on a dark night before All Hallows' Eve.

The air did not move.

Lights from the Department of Energy compound across the street complimented light from a hazy full moon, inching its way over the bluff overlooking the cemetery.

Each of the dozen or so volunteers with MAPPS Paranormal had an assignment:

- Digitally record for sound, known as EVP, or electronic voice phenome-

na. Later, on playback, voices from the undead can appear on digital and tape recordings.

- Record the ambient air temperature. The undead can decrease and increase the temperature as a way to show they're around.

- Using infrared technology, videotape areas known to show spirits. Again, later on playback, unusual energy fields can show up. Four cameras were placed atop fence posts, recording.

- Listen and pay attention.

The volunteers were on a mission with MAPPS Paranormal, run by Cliff Christ, a retired policeman, and his wife, S.J., a retired firefighter. They

conducted an investigation at the Roice-Hurst Humane Society two weeks ago. That investigation revealed unusual phenomenon at the Clifton animal shelter.

About once monthly, MAPPS Paranormal records activity at Potter's Field. There, volunteers have found some interesting things, they said.

When a spirit manifests itself, it draws energy. When that happens, it gives off electromagnetic frequencies, so sometimes, this is how spirits communicate with investigators, Cliff Christ said. Sometimes, spirits will communicate through temperature change.

(over)

THE HAUNTED: 'Can you show us a sign of your presence?'

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Once, they said a spirit showed himself through the night-vision glasses.

"He was standing behind me. When I would pivot, it would pivot with me, trying to stay behind me," said S.J. Christ. "He was wearing a sheepskin jacket with a wool collar."

Saturday night, with assignments made and teams divided, paranormal investigators slowly fanned out across the small acreage of the cemetery.

They were careful to show respect to the dead buried here, careful to not disturb the crude wooden crosses and plastic and silk flowers — careful not to trip on Bertha's gravestone.

They waited to hear from the people buried there.

Potter's Field contains at least eight known burials, each documented behind a large sign announcing the cemetery.

There's Mrs. A.A. Middaugh, 1890-1913, and possibly her daughter, Mary Middaugh, 1908-1913.

There's the last recorded burial, Julian Pacheco, 1913-1936.

There's Baby Garland, with only one date, 1881, and there's 5-year-old Bertha Kaufman, who was buried in 1911.

Stuffed animals adorn some of the graves, placed there by people who believe these spirits should have something to play with.

Two law enforcement officers allegedly drowned together in the line of duty in 1883. They're buried there too, B. A. Scott, or Bob, and P.H. Gordon, or Patrick.

S.J. Christ's team, made of Jenny Key, Matthew Hetland and S.J., walked up to the corner, where the officers are believed to be buried in unmarked graves and where S.J. had her experience with the sheepskin-clad spirit.

Ghost-hunters began asking questions of the spirits, recording any answers digitally.

"Is there anyone here who would like to talk to us tonight?"

"Is there a reason why you're here?"

"Can you show us a sign of your presence?"

S.J. Christ measures the temperature. The thermometer was calibrated at 45 degrees Fahrenheit at the parking lot. When she turned it on at the grave site, it measured 39. After coaxing whom she believed to be the dead officer Patrick, the thermometer plummeted to 28.

The air in front of the small cluster of people suddenly felt cold; behind them, it felt warmer.

"I'm elated," S.J. Christ said. "It was nice talking to you, Patrick."

"I put my hand up and it would just be freezing," said Key.

The volunteers took a break, moving outside the cemetery fence to reporting findings. They also wanted

to find out who stopped and talked to Cliff Christ earlier in the evening.

Earlier, while investigators were inside the cemetery, a Department of Energy security guard in a car stopped and talked to Cliff Christ.

"He said, 'Hey, you! Get the F over here NOW,'" Cliff Christ said.

Cliff Christ told the security guard he was conducting a paranormal investigation. Mocking the group, the security guard replied, "Is this paranormal for you?" and flashed his flashlight under his chin, Cliff Christ said.

"I said I don't need to deal with this crap, and turned away," Cliff Christ said. "He leaned out the window and said, 'F-You!'"

"That was real professional ... This was a prime example of some of the ridicule we have to face."

After the equipment is collected, packed away and volunteers regrouped at the Christ household, this is when the real investigation gets launched. Film will be studied frame by frame. Voice recordings will be analyzed second-by-second.

There, Cliff began replaying the video from the infrared cameras.

One segment clearly shows a figure floating up the hill and on up into the air. It's shadowy and white, shaped like a peanut. Investigators make a note to dissect this segment later.