

INTERVIEW BY Kyle Stevens



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ACTIVE IN THE PARANORMAL, AND WHAT SPARKED THE INTEREST?

I have been a member of WSPIR, a local paranormal group, since 2006. I joined WSPIR because I was looking for a group of people that had similar interests in the unexplained or paranormal. I have always had a fascination with ghosts and ghost stories as long as I can remember—probably back to the age of four.

WAS THERE A RECENT OR HISTORICAL FIGURE THAT SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION?

No, I have just had a life-long interest in the paranormal but for years I have been intrigued with the ghost stories surrounding President Lincoln.

WHY A GHOST TOUR COM-

PANY? WOULDN'T BEING YET ANOTHER BLOGGER HAVE BEEN ENOUGH?

You just answered your question. There are numerous bloggers in the paranormal field. When I was ready to make a career change, I thought that Seattle needed a ghost tour. Seattle didn't have a year round ghost tour then. This was back in 2000. At that time, ghosts weren't as trendy as they are now with all of the TV shows, movies and books that deal with the paranormal. I make my living by running a tour company, focusing on my research and knowledge of Seattle; while some bloggers consider that ghosts are their hobby and want to share their information. Ghost tours and bloggers are two

different components of the paranormal world.

WHAT MAKES SEATTLE A GOOD SPOT FOR THE PARANORMAL?

Seattle is a port city and also a Scorpio town. As with any port city, there has been a colorful history with a mixture of many different ethnic groups settling in the area. All of these groups brought their own cultural beliefs with them. People that moved out West, in those days, had to have a sense of adventure. Some wanted a new life while others were looking to make a quick buck and not always legally. With that came murders, accidental

deaths, suicides and diseases that swept through the city. All of these things are conducive to producing a ghost or restless spirit.

AREN'T THE CITIES ON THE WEST COAST SO MUCH YOUNGER THAN THE EAST COAST THAT THEY CAN'T POSSIBLY BE THAT HAUNTED?

It is true that Seattle is a relatively young city compared to those on the East coast. But before Seattle became Seattle, it was known as Duwamps, and was the home to many Native Americans, who have strong beliefs in the afterlife. Chief Seattle's famous speech of 1854 states "...when the memory of my tribe shall become a myth among white men... and when your children

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think themselves alone in the field, the shop, the store they will not be alone, and when you think that your streets are deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and loved this land, for the dead are not powerless, Dead I say... There is no death only a change of worlds.”

Perhaps, Chief Seattle was predicting the supernatural activity that surrounds Seattle today.

SO HOW DOES THE GUIDED TOUR WORK? DO BUSINESSES MIND?

Both of my ghost tours are by vehicle, with several stops along the route. Offering a driving tour versus a walking tour, allows us a much larger area that can be covered, along

with more time for the stories. We are very careful not to irritate the businesses and private locations that we feature. At the places where we stop, we encourage respect for that particular location as well as any other people that we may encounter at the site. We have not had any formal complaints.

IS THERE A PARTICULAR SPOT ON THE TOUR THAT ALWAYS MAKES YOU SMILE? A FAVORITE SPOT OF SORTS?

I wouldn't say that there is particular spot that makes me smile because many of the stories deal with death. However, on the Haunted Happenings Tour, we visit an infamous site in the Chinatown area where a gruesome, terrible massacre occurred. Because that site is an unfortunate but important part of Seattle's criminal history, it is a story that should not be forgotten, even though the details may be disturbing to some.

On the Spirits of Seattle Tour, many of the stories deal with Seattle's habit of deciding that the land is too valuable for an existing cemetery. There are some unfortunate souls that been exhumed and reburied here in Seattle up to five times. That makes for a perfect recipe for restless spirits. I enjoy sharing these stories; they should not be forgotten.

MANY TOUR GUIDES DRESS IN PERIOD FOR THE CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE. WHAT IS YOUR "PERSONA" WHILE CONDUCTING THE TOURS?

For eleven months of the year, I have the usual Seattleite persona. But during the Halloween season, I dress in various costumes that reflect the con-

tent of the tours and the season. As a true native of Seattle, I still feel that Seattle is more conservative, in some aspects, than other big cities. I don't think that some people here in Seattle would understand and/or appreciate a Halloween type of dress all year round.

I KNOW FROM PREVIOUS TALKS WE'VE HAD THAT YOU HAVE RETURN CUSTOMERS. HAVE ANY OF THEM SHARED THEIR MOTIVATION FOR COMING BACK TIME AND AGAIN?

We do have quite a few return customers, both local and from other states. Some customers want to revisit the sites so they can take more photos or try EVP's, while others bring different friends or family members with them on a repeat tour. Because we are a guided driving

tour, it is also a great way to see the city and some guests have remarked that they enjoy revisiting some of the neighborhoods. Some locals also say that they enjoy seeing some of the neighborhoods again that they are not very familiar with while someone else is doing the driving, so that they can just enjoy themselves.

HAVE THINGS EVER GOTTEN ROWDY WITH ANY OF THE SPIRITS IN THE TOUR?

I wouldn't say that the spirits have gotten rowdy but we do get some interesting activity on some of the tours. I always tell my customers that we can't summon up ghosts on demand and that it is up to them to be open for some type of experience. I have taken both psychics and mediums out on the tours and it has been very interesting to me to hear their comments concerning the locations. I encourage photo taking on the tours and some guests have "captured" things that I can't explain. Although the route remains the same, every

tour is different and that's what makes it both fun and interesting. Customers are encouraged to share their own experiences on the tours.

WHERE DO YOU SEE PRIVATE EYE TOURS, SAY 10 YEARS FROM NOW? ANY PLANS TO EXPAND TO OTHER CITIES OR STATES?

That's a difficult question to answer. It is hard to say if the subject of ghosts will remain as popular as it is today. I hope so. I don't for see expanding to another state but possibly another city or maybe an alliance with another Seattle Tour Company may occur.

I KNOW THAT YOU OFFER A FEW VIDEOS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS THAT KEEP THEM FROM TAKING THE TOURS, ARE THEY CLOSE TO THE ACTUAL TOUR EXPERIENCE?

The video was filmed several years ago during daylight hours. This allowed some close-ups of several locations. The ghost tours are offered at night, usually after dark. Customers tend to associate nighttime darkness with ghosts. The video was designed for those who aren't able to travel to Seattle or those who would like to "revisit" the locations of the tour.

The videos are also available during the tours and some people who have just completed their tour also purchase a video to take home.

HAVE YOU ATTRACTED ANY REPEAT ENTHUSIASTS TO THE TOURS?

Yes. The Haunted Happenings Tour is now starting its 12th year. It is a comprehensive tour covering a large portion of the city. The Spirits of Seattle Tour was launched during the spring of 2011 and it focuses on the metro neighborhoods: Capitol Hill, Belltown, the Market area & Downtown Seattle. People that have gone on the original tour and are ghost enthusiasts have also gone on the newer Spirits of Seattle Tour. Both tours complement each other. Some customers tend to repeat the same tour.

WHILE CHECKING OUT YOUR WEB SITE I NOTICED YOU HAVE BEEN FEATURED IN MANY OF THE NORTHWEST'S PAPERS AND SHOWS. DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE PARANORMAL, AND ESPECIALLY YOUR TOURS, ARE GETTING A FAIR SHAKE BY THE MEDIA THESE DAYS?

This is also a difficult question to answer. Nowadays, some of the media feel that ghosts are getting to be old hat--what I mean by that is that the media tends to think that all ghost tours are similar with the same stories and locations. That couldn't be further from the truth, at least here in Seattle.

Each company has their own way of conducting a tour. Some companies emphasize that they are "ghost hunters" while others, my company included, emphasize the historical part of the ghost story. Other companies stress the shock value of their tour's content.

I don't feel that the media truly understands the difference. Not all tours are the same. My tours are well researched and offer an interesting way to see the city. Being the oldest, continuously operating year round ghost tour in Seattle should say something about our tours. We were here before the ghost market became trendy.

<http://www.paranomicon.org/index.php/kunena/january-2013>

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TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT JAKE, AND PRIVATE EYE ON SEATTLE: MYSTERY, MURDER, AND GHOST TOURS CALL 206-365-3739 OR VISIT <http://www.privateeyetours.com/>