

A ghost of a chance at Parkway, part one

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Members of T.R.I.P.P. set up equipment for their October 15 investigation at The Parkway Grill.

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The Parkway Grill opened its doors in 1983 and has grown into one of the most popular locally owned establishments in Wichita Falls. Half family-friendly restaurant, half fan-friendly sports bar, the inviting hang out is a place some patrons and employees might have a hard time leaving. Ever.

The suspicion that ghosts might be mingling with the crowd at Parkway has circulated for years, spurred by the history of the building and some of the people who spent time there. Dating back more than two decades, circumstantial evidence would lend room for a potential haunting.

The primary suspect is the manager of a business that operated in the same building prior to the current name and ownership. Giving no indication why, the manager took his own life in the office of the building with a self-inflicted gun shot to the head. Scheduled to be audited that same day, some people made the assumption that he faced some kind of financial difficulties.

Employees have had an uneasy feeling in the office where the former manager took his life, with some refusing to stay in the room for more than a few seconds. Drops in temperature, believed to be a sign of the presence of a spirit, have also been reported.

A waitress from several years ago is another former employee some people believe might still be with them, though she did not pass away in the establishment. Some events that have happened in the bar have led employees and patrons to wonder if she wasn't trying to make her presence known.

Another former employee named Sergio and two longtime patrons named Brad and Kyle were also mentioned by current employees and regulars. None of them died in the bar and nothing specific had happened to lead anyone to believe they were still there, but all three had a long connection to Parkway.

Sergio and Brad both have plaques on the wall in their memory. Kyle, the most recent to pass away, has his regular spot at the bar permanently reserved with a marker reading "Kyle's Corner".

With the potential for [paranormal](#) activity, the ownership at Parkway agreed to have professional investigators come in and try to capture evidence. Enter Texoma Researchers Investigating Paranormal Phenomena (T.R.I.P.P.), a group based in Wichita Falls.

Founded by Judy McCullough and Bethany Figueroa, T.R.I.P.P. has gathered evidence of the paranormal at a number of locations in the Texoma area over the years. Their more successful investigations include the old Big C Appliance building in downtown Wichita Falls and the infamous White Sanitarium.

Using a combination of specially designed equipment and natural senses honed by experience, a group from T.R.I.P.P. set up at The Parkway Grill on October 15. Offering their services free of charge, the group tries to separate what is believed to be actual paranormal evidence from typical bumps in the night and active imaginations.

Television shows like *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures* package investigations into hour or half hour segments, making the process seem quick and, at times, even glamorous. In reality, investigating the possibility of a haunting is a lengthy procedure that is sometimes met with more resistance from the living than from the dead.

On the night of the investigation a large crowd was on hand as the group waited for closing time to set up their equipment. Fans in the sports bar were celebrating the Texas Rangers second consecutive American League Championship as word began to spread about the investigation. The reaction was a mixture of curiosity, excitement, and a little teasing.

A few alcohol inspired bards rolled off the back of investigators who are accustomed to facing far greater scorn. Misconceptions about the people who do this kind of work are numerous in the area, most notable to at least one team member is the assumption that they don't believe in God.

T.R.I.P.P. has worked with members of the clergy in the past when helping clients who need counseling or want a blessing for their home. Not everyone in the religious community is so willing to work with them.

"This area we live in is truly the Bible Belt," McCullough said. "It's harder for paranormal researchers because of so much religion in the area. We have just accepted that is how it will be and have tolerated remarks made about us from time to time. We know the truth."

McCullough intended to be part of the investigation, but an illness kept her at home. Members of T.R.I.P.P. on the job at Parkway included Nick and Sheena Moore, Traci Lynne Roberts, Clint Lee, Jimmy Brown, and newcomer Kellie Morris on her first case since joining the team.

Also present were representatives of Parkway who stayed on hand to witness the investigation and help with questions. Once the crowd was out the door and a some minor problems with equipment were taken care of, the investigation began.

One theory surrounding the presence of spirits is that they create cold spots, so base temperature readings were recorded. It is also believed a ghost can emit an electromagnetic field (EMF), so base readings were taken as essentially the same field can come from electrical devices.

Infrared cameras were set up in the bar and restaurant. Another infrared camera was set up in the kitchen placed to see down the short hallway leading toward the office. Investigators kept K2 meters to measure EMFs and audio recorders on hand.

Splitting into two groups, Clint, Traci, and Kellie centered their part of the investigation on the bar while Sheena and Jimmy set up in the back of the restaurant area. Meanwhile, Nick started out monitoring the video cameras from a computer set up by the front door.

The back of the restaurant offered nothing in the way of evidence, but shortly into the investigation some apparent activity began in the bar.

A small, hand held device, the K2 meter announces the presence of an EMF by way of small lights along the top. The stronger the EMF, the more lights that light up. As investigators asked if anyone was present, they received a hit on the K2.

Clint followed the K2 hit with questions, trying to determine if the EMF reading came from one of the people suspected to still be in the bar. When asked, "Was this a happy place for you?", an apparent response came through with another hit on the K2 meter.

While there was no response to specific names, what the investigators did get from that point could suggest a sense of humor and a still present love of sports.

Kyle's favorite drink was 40 Creek whiskey. As the investigation began the bar manager poured a small glass of the drink and placed it in front of Kyle's reserved seat, hoping it would help spur some activity.

A small clink that sounded something like glasses bumping together was heard behind the bar. When it was mentioned that Kyle preferred his drink in a tall glass, investigators asked if Kyle was looking for something bigger to put his drink in. The question was followed by another hit on the K2 meter.

After some time with no activity, Kellie decided to use the love of sports to try and get a reaction. An Oklahoma Sooner fan, the new investigator sat down in the well known Texas Longhorn fans

reserved seat, announcing, "I don't like any Texas teams."

"You know there's an OU Sooner fan sitting in your chair right now?", Clint asked.

Seemingly in response, the K2 picked up the largest hit of the night as four of the five lights lit up and drew a hearty laugh from everyone watching. If someone was present, evidently their fondness for college football was alive and well.

Concentrating on something considerably darker than sports, Nick, Sheena, and Jimmy ventured back near the office where the former manager took his life. An uneasy feeling and a blast of cold added to Nick's feeling that someone was trying to communicate prompted the group to bring Traci to the office door.

Though neither consider themselves a medium, Traci and Nick have a sensitivity to spirits that are trying to communicate that they have sharpened over the years. Sometimes through words or phrases, sometimes through mental pictures, spirits can sometimes try connect in a way that can't be recorded.

As discussion in the bar turned to college football, Traci began to pick up words that didn't seem to fit the scene as "Kansas" and "sunflower" were presented to her. That day, the University of Oklahoma defeated the University of Kansas 47-17 in a college football game played in Kansas, nicknamed "The Sunflower State".

With skills possibly a bit stronger and hoping to get that same kind of result, Traci walked back to the office and stood outside the door. The uneasy air surrounding the area had vanished when she got there, but it still didn't take long for her to get some kind of feeling.

"He shot himself in the right side of his head," Traci said as she stood at the doorway to the office. "The entire right side of my body is, like... heavy."

Employees present confirmed that when the manager shot himself he was alone in the building and lied on the floor for several hours.

Miscommunication surrounding the suicide when the investigation began caused some confusion. Though Traci did know how the manager took his own life, she had little to no information on suspicions why.

"He was scared of something," Traci said as she picked up on more feelings. "It's obviously connected to the business. When I first heard that he had committed suicide, I thought it was a depression kind of thing, but I'm not getting that at all. I'm getting that he was scared."

As the investigation turned its attention back to the bar, T.R.I.P.P. brought out another piece of equipment called an Ovilus. Commonly referred to as a "ghost box", the Ovilus is a somewhat controversial device used in paranormal investigations.

Filled with a dictionary of pre-programmed words and phrases, proponents of the device believe spirits can use electromagnetic waves to select words which then emit through a speaker. It's not believed spirits can string together sentences, but that they can provide key words.

Television shows like *Paranormal State* and the aforementioned *Ghost Adventures* have used the device at times, but not all paranormal investigators endorse the Ovilus with some referring to it as "an electronic Magic 8 ball". Among it's detractors is paranormal investigator Martin J. Clemens who bluntly calls the Ovilus "a fraud".

At first, the Ovilus didn't offer much other than what sounded like a possible "yeah" when Clint asked the question, "Is anybody here with us?" Clint followed with the question, "Did you used to work here?", which provided a fairly clear "No."

After several minutes and no response through the Ovilus, it seemed that the investigation was coming to an end. Suddenly, the device sprang to life.

At first activity from the ghost box seemed random, as phrases like "all right" and words such as "cold", "Isabelle", and "battery" came through. At times the words came at such a fast rate it was difficult to keep up with, but they also started to show a pattern that led to something that didn't seem random at all.

Nick, who sports a haircut similar to recruits in basic training, entered the bar from the restaurant area. The Ovilus seemed to recognize his presence with the words, "Hi... a friend... military... Nick".

As the Ovilus continued to offer words a pattern began to become more apparent, with several possible references to the military. Words such as "combat", "enemy", "traitor" and what might have been "sentry" came up, as well as the word "military" itself several times.

Other patterns seemed to be pointing at some kind of monetary wrong doing, with words like "fraud", "amount", and "spent" coming through.

Some of the most often used words didn't fit in to any one pattern, but could somehow fit together. The word "seven" was probably the most common, while "Isabelle", "Melody", and "Saturn" were among words that were repeated several times.

Eventually the Ovilus fell silent and the group wrapped up their investigation.

There was no direct contact with any spirits in the sense of being touched or directly hearing voices. Certainly no full body apparitions, considered the holy grail of evidence by paranormal investigators.

Outside of the clinking glass and a scratching sound from the back of the bar that could never be identified, the audio and video taken would be the only evidence. The group would have to begin the lengthy job of scouring over what they had to determine if The Parkway Grill had permanent guests.

At the time of posting the evidence was still being reviewed by T.R.I.P.P. and a time to present the results to the people at The Parkway Grill was being set. Part two of the story will examine the evidence and the verdict from the investigation.

You can visit the [T.R.I.P.P. website](#) for further information on the group, including evidence from other investigations. You can also check out a [documentary](#) on the group produced by Mass Communications students at Midwestern State University.

[The Parkway Grill](#) is located at 2719 Southwest Parkway and is open seven days a week. See [A Guide to game time in Wichita Falls](#) for more information.



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