

Phone Calls from the Dead

By Jim Hale

Another mysterious phenomenon that seems closely related to EVP is called, appropriately enough, "Phone Calls From The Dead". Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people have reported being on the receiving end of a telephone call that appears to have come from a deceased relative, friend, or (more rarely) even from someone not directly known by the recipient in life. The communication is usually simple and brief, and it is nearly always a one-time occurrence - although there seem to have been exceptions to almost every rule one might try to apply to the phenomenon.

Ordinarily, EVP's are obtained as a result of someone actively engaged in paranormal research who is intentionally trying to communicate with "spirits" by means of a recording device - and EVP researchers are usually very open to sharing their experiences with others. On the other hand, Phone Calls From The Dead occur quite spontaneously, and seemingly at random. The recipients of these phone calls are seldom involved in paranormal research prior to the occurrence - in fact, they often tend to have been skeptical of anything involving ghosts or the paranormal, and they may very well prefer to keep the incident private. For these reasons I suspect that Phone Calls From the Dead may be a phenomenon that is much more commonplace than "ordinary" EVP, and these extra-long-distance calls probably occur far more frequently than anyone realizes.

Numerous cases from all over the world have been documented in books, magazines and newspaper articles. The first (and only ?) book totally devoted to this intriguing subject was published in 1979 by Prentice-Hall. It's called Phone Calls From The Dead, and it was written by D. Scott Rogo and Raymond Bayless.

Rogo and Bayless were parapsychologists, psychic investigators, and authors of numerous books dealing with a variety of paranormal topics. They heard about their first case involving a "phantom phone call" in 1967 and soon began a thorough search of the literature available at that time. Finding just enough bits and pieces to confirm the phenomenon and pique their curiosity for more, they began actively soliciting case reports through magazine articles as well as through other personal connections. After several years of developing and investigating leads, they wrote a book that I think stands as one of the most unique, fascinating, and truly significant works ever to be produced by paranormal investigators.

Phone Calls From The Dead contains dozens of well documented cases from credible sources. Often the phone call in question was witnessed by more than one person. Once for example, two people on different phones in the house apparently conversed simultaneously with a deceased individual. In other cases, one person answered the phone then turned it over to someone else whom the phantom caller asked to speak with.

Although Rogo and Bayless's book doesn't attempt to answer all the challenging questions which naturally arise from their research, they did present some interesting phenomenological conclusions. Quoting directly from the 1980 Berkley edition of the book:

"...as our work continued, we discovered that just about all of our cases have fallen into one

of three basic and very different categories:

1. Apparent phone calls from the dead: . . .the witness receives a call - usually brief - from a person who has just recently died or who has been dead for some time. Occasionally the person receiving the call does not know at that time that the caller is dead and believes he/she is talking to a living person.
2. Intention cases: The witness usually receives an urgent message by phone from a friend or relative, or even from an unknown individual who explains that he is placing the call for the former. Later, the witness learns that the friend never made the call, although he or she thought intently about doing so. The phone voice will often mimic that of a living person perfectly. However, a few witnesses have described these voices as "mechanical" or "drunk sounding", although this was rare.
3. Answer cases: Rarely, the witness himself places the call and carries out a conversation with a person whom he later discovers either (a) was dead at the time the call was placed or (b) could not possibly have been home to receive it. . . . By far, the vast majority of the cases we have collected fall into the first category."

Recently, as a result of my association with the VGHRS, I have heard from several individuals telling me about apparent Phone Calls From the Dead that they have experienced. A friend, who was living in Germany at the time, once told me about being awakened in the middle of the night by a phone call from her father who said he was just calling to see if she was alright - unfortunately, her father had died a few years before making that call . . .

Several years ago I experienced a long period of unexplained calls which would occur at all hours of the day and night. Often there would be something odd about the nature of the "ring" - a different tone or shorter duration than normal, and then only static silence when I answered. These mysterious calls coincided with a time in my life which was also marked by other strange occurrences, synchronicities, bizarre coincidences and changes in my way of life. The mystery calls subsided for a while, then they began to reoccur and finally culminated in a highly active night at the time of my own father's passing. Well, I may have to update this - twice since I've been typing this article, my phone has rung and no one was on the other end. Or maybe I'm just not able to hear them?

While my own mystery calls aren't clear cut cases of "PCFTD", they are reminiscent of the bizarre telephone related experiences described by John Keel in *The Mothman Prophecies* (Saturday Review Press, 1975). During the time when he was actively involved in UFO investigations, and hot on the trail of West Virginia's fearsome "Mothman", Keel's phone line seemed to become plagued by phantom phone calls. It was physically tampered with by unidentifiable linemen (possibly working for the Men In Black), and it was sometimes used to place calls by someone (or something) that might best be described as Keel's "voice doppelganger". *The Mothman Prophecies* is a chilling, mind-boggling story that would be high on my list of required reading for any paranormal investigator - it's a shame that whoever wrote the screenplay for that recent movie didn't read it.

Is it possible that our vast network of telephone wires and associated electrical apparatus can somehow be tapped into and made use of by "spirits" of the deceased or "beings from other dimensions"? After all, the telephone is now so deeply ingrained within our psyche as being a normal and natural means of communication that perhaps the archetypal symbology of

"telephone" has now carried over to "the other side" where cosmic switchboard operators are standing by? I wonder what effect the new technologies involving fiber optic cables, digital processing, caller ID, cellular phones, etc. may be having on those who have passed but are still trying to "reach out and touch" us?

Here is a technique you can use for experimenting with paranormal communication via your telephone: If you have an answering machine that allows you to record directly off the phone line onto a standard cassette tape, you can simply use it as your "Tele-EVP" recorder.

Otherwise, try using Radio Shack's telephone pickup (item # 44-533, also mentioned in my article Ghost Detectives) or simply place your telephone's earpiece close to the microphone of a regular tape recorder. The trick is to open your line by leaving the phone off the hook for a few minutes - at first you will probably hear a recorded message and some annoying beeps alerting you to hang up, but these will stop momentarily, leaving your telephone open to receive any messages that might be coming through the cosmic switchboard. Then, just start recording with the answering machine or tape recorder and let it run. You might try asking for a communication as is normally done by EVP researchers before recording. When the tape is done, rewind and play it back - preferably on a good quality tape deck with earphones - and listen carefully for any potential messages from beyond.

If you've had any paranormal telephone related experiences I'd like to hear about it. Feel free to contact me at **jim@virginiaghosts.com**. And next time you answer the phone, you might think twice before saying "Hell-o"?

Update 2/5/2019: Unfortunately, Jim Hale is no longer with CPRI and he is greatly missed. However, we are still collecting reports of "Phone Calls from the Dead". Please email us at info@virginiaghosts.com. We would love to hear from you.