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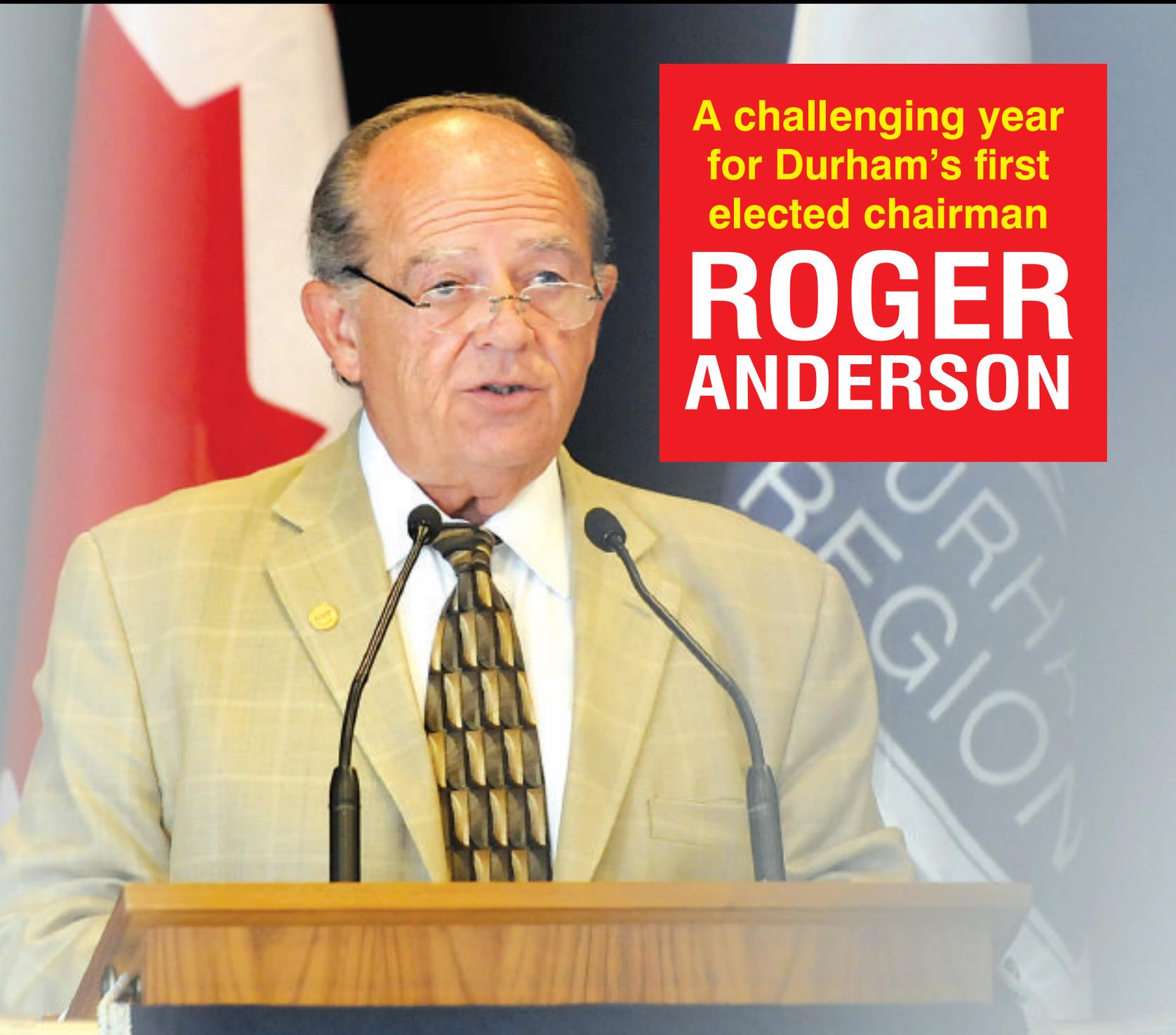
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NEWSMAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2015



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Q&A

Searching for 'proof' with ghosthunter Paul Silliphant



○ ● Story by **Parvaneh Pessian**
Photograph submitted

Chasing ghosts is more than just a hobby for Paul Silliphant; it's a way of life.

The Oshawa resident and co-founder of Paranormal Researchers of Ontario or proof(f), a Durham-based team of paranormal investigators, has been following his fascination with the unknown for decades.

He and his dedicated team members, including his wife Michelle, travel across the region and beyond to assist those who believe they have encountered paranormal activity.

1. How and when did you first become interested in the paranormal world?

For me it was at a very young age. Things were happening that I did not know were paranormal -- I just thought they were normal until I was old enough to realize they were not normal. As a teen I had a paranormal encounter that left a profound impact on me, and that sealed the deal for me.

2. Why are you so fascinated in researching this topic?

My fascination was born out of the necessity for knowledge. I needed to find the answers to the things that were happening in my life and that were going on around me. Every time I thought I was close to the answer, another three doors would open offering me new questions.

Paul and Michelle Silliphant, a Durham-based team of paranormal investigators.

3. What methods do you use to conduct your research and what is your main goal?

Our main goal as a team varies somewhat depending on the location and circumstances. It really depends on the investigation. In a private residence case, you want to give them answers to what is happening and/or find natural explanations to what they are experiencing. In public locations (e.g. museums, abandoned places, historic sites), we are there more to document what happens and to have personal experiences. Ultimately I would say it would be to better understand what is happening and to hopefully gather some proof of the paranormal.

As for our methods again they vary location to location. The one constant is we always start with what we call baseline readings -- that way we have a rough outline of what is normal. We then structure our night around the experiences that others have had happen there, and to what the investigators are feeling or drawn to.

4. What's the most interesting case you've ever come across?

There have been many interesting cases in my time investigating the paranormal, most of them have been private residence cases that I cannot discuss due to respect for the families. I find the ones with deep and dark traceable histories to be the most fascinating. You can check out our website www.proofcanada.com for a few of those.

5. Are there any particular cases in Durham Region that stand out to you?

Durham Region is a hotbed of paranormal locations, so many places have history and tragic histories. This may be a bit of a cop-out but the one location that stands out to me I am not allowed to mention by name, but if you are sensitive and you go there to see this place as a possible wedding location you may have an encounter as I did. And I wasn't even investigating at the time, just being shown around.

6. In proof(f), you say f stands for fear and is the unknown part of an investigation. Can you elaborate on what you mean by that? Do you ever get scared while conducting your research?

What we mean by that is fear can make you head towards the real answer or run away from it. We in life generally fear the unknown and the unknown is what the paranormal is all about. We head towards it to try to find the cause of what is happening, voices, noises, dark figures, shadows - if you run away the fear wins and you will never know what truly was going on.

At times walking around abandoned buildings in the dark with the only visibility being your camera screen can put you on edge but personally I am more afraid of the real factors than the paranormal ones. Stumbling upon homeless people or kids doing drugs scare me more than anything. Like I said, if I saw an apparition I would be heading towards it, not away. I think the scariest moment I have had was with a pack of coyotes while doing an investigation of a building where the doors and windows had been removed.

7. What's the most common misconception you hear about paranormal activity?

The one we hear the most is that orbs caught in photos are proof of the paranormal. Can an orb be a spirit? Absolutely, but we rule out more than 98 per cent to natural occurring reasons, everything from lens flares, dust, camera straps, reflections, and bugs to moisture in the air. The 2 per cent that we cannot explain usually have their own light source and some sort of intelligent movement (this happens more on video).

8. What would you say to skeptics of your research?

It's funny you would ask that as we actually have a full-blown skeptic on our team: Ben Stacey. Ben keeps us honest and grounded by questioning any possible evidence with possible natural explanations for things. My personal feeling is there are no skeptics -- only people who haven't had a paranormal experience. Once you have had a true experience you will no longer doubt. *loupe*

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