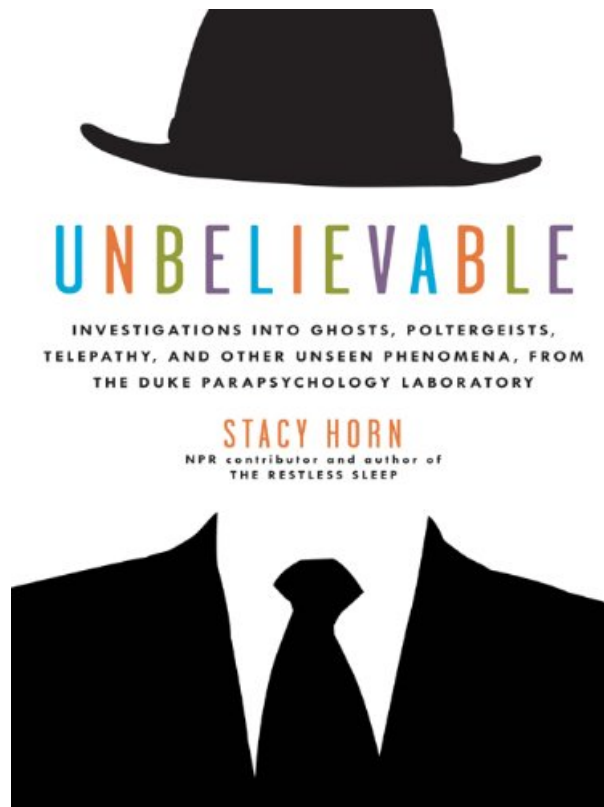


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STACY HORN

NPR contributor and author of
THE RESTLESS SLEEP



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"Some of the explanations here, backed by scientific fact, will send shivers up readers' spines."

About the Author

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“Author Stacy Horn dissects all the things that go bump in the night—ghosts, poltergeists, your ex-boyfriend Klaus—in [her] macabre book.”

—Marie Claire

A fascinating, eye-opening collection of “Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena, from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory,” *Unbelievable* by Stacy Horn explores science’s remarkable first attempts to prove—or disprove—the existence of the paranormal. A featured contributor on the popular NPR program “All Things Considered,” Horn has been praised by Mary Roach, bestselling author of *Spook*, for her “awe-fueled curiosity [and] top-flight reporting skills.” Horn attacks a most controversial subject with *Unbelievable*—a book that will appeal to armchair scientists as well as fans of TV’s *Medium*, *The Ghost Whisperer*, and *Crossing Over* with John Edward.

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Most helpful customer reviews

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

A Captivating History

By George Poirier

I stumbled upon this book in the science section of my favourite bookstore. When I saw the words "ghosts", "poltergeists" and "telepathy" in its subtitle, I thought that it had simply been misplaced from another section. But upon browsing it, it became clear to me that this was really a history of serious scientific research into the paranormal. So, out of curiosity, I bought it and read it - and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The book's main focus is the professional life of Dr. J.B. Rhine, a botanist by training, who, along with his associates, performed decades of serious scientific research into the psychical abilities of humans. In particular, he and his team concentrated on ESP/telepathy, but they also delved into psychokinesis and, to a much lesser extent, various ghostly phenomena (although these are also extensively discussed). The book follows Dr. Rhine from the mid 1920s to his death in 1980, and concentrates on his work before, especially during, and after the creation (and his directorship) of the Duke University Parapsychology Laboratory (which existed from 1935 to 1962).

Thanks especially to the author's clear, friendly and engaging prose, but also due to the interesting social climate of the period covered and the subject matter itself, I found this book to be absolutely fascinating and very difficult to put down. This book should be of great interest to anyone fascinated by the history of serious, scientific research into the paranormal. Since the author does not "take sides" in this controversial subject but reports the events in a seemingly very objective manner, the book should prove to be quite enjoyable to both "sceptics" and "believers" alike.

29 of 32 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent!

By D. Dodd

I really enjoyed this book. I've read quite a few books on the paranormal, and this is one of the best. Ms. Horn manages to present a smart and fair overview of decades worth of research in an entertaining and readable way. She reports - but leaves it to the reader to draw their own conclusion about Rhine's work. She's also included a number of stories from the Duke case files from people who reported some pretty weird experiences (a number of which appear to have a reasonable amount of corroboration). While I consider myself to be an open-minded skeptic regarding claims of ghosts, I have to confess that at a couple of points in the book the hair stood up on the back of my neck. Bottom line, whether you are interested in the science or just looking for fun and creepy, this book has it covered. Highly recommended!

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

A good introduction to the field, lacking detail

By ladyguinevere

When I graduated from college with a psychology degree I seriously considered parapsychology as a profession, but ultimately many of the downsides Horn mentions in this book put me off it. But in my research I came across the Duke lab, of course, as well as most of the others mentioned in this book. Already having an interest in the field, I've done some research on the subject myself, so was already basically familiar with a lot of what is talked about in this book. I was disappointed that it didn't seem to go much further than what I'd read already about the lab, so I'd say this is a good book for someone with no previous knowledge on this topic, but doomed to be a bit of a disappointment to someone wishing for some more intimate tidbits of information or scientific details. Like another reviewer mentioned, I felt like not enough detail was given into the actual experiments taking place in the lab itself over all those years, just a watered-down summary and side stories.

It's well written in a fairly dispassionate journalist's style, and speckled with enough ghost stories to keep it entertaining, even if (as another reviewer points out) a lot of them had only a very tangential relationship to Duke. So I can't say I didn't enjoy reading this book. I don't know if there just wasn't in fact enough variety of research going on at the Rhine lab to fill a whole book without resorting to anecdotes that were pretty much dismissed by Rhine, and without much actual research on his part, but it felt superficial to me, like it glossed over the work going on at the actual lab and then padded out the rest of the book with more 'entertaining' ghost stories of the day. I love a good ghost story as much as the next person, but Horn says several times that Rhine wasn't interested in studying ghosts, so to say this book was supposed to be about solely the research going on at Duke is a little misleading.

The author mentions in her additional reading section that she wishes more detail could have been given to Louisa Rhine and Gaither Pratt. For such a relatively short book (I read it in basically a day), I think she could have afforded to flesh out some of the key players a bit more, as well as some of the scientific experiments, and spend a little less time on unimportant and uninteresting details and people.

It's clear that Ms Horn has done a LOT of research for this book, and she can definitely write, but I felt it was a bit too distilled. In general, I think the problem is one of editing. I found multiple spelling and punctuation/grammar errors throughout that one last final read-through by an editor could have eradicated, and the same could be said for some of the details included and possibly some of those that were axed before publication.

So, in essence, a well-written, entertaining, decent introduction to the Duke lab for people coming to this field without any prior knowledge, but not enough detail for anyone with any scientific background or prior familiarity with the field.

I would recommend her blog though, which is continually being updated with more of the stories that obviously didn't make it into the book. Interesting stuff: [...]

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