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Music: “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

Ross Blocher: Hello and welcome to *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*, the show where we don't just report on fringe science, spirituality, claims of the paranormal. No, no, no. We take part ourselves.

Carrie Poppy: Yep! When they make they make the claims, we show up, so you don't have to. I'm Carrie Poppy!

Ross Blocher: And I'm Ross Blocher. And I know what you're expecting. It's the last episode of 2023. You're ready for us to review the year and all the previous predictions.

Carrie Poppy: (*Conspiratorially.*) But no. No!

Ross Blocher: (*Chuckling.*) Yes. No. No, we're upsetting expectations!

(*Carrie laughs.*)

I was looking for some good way to rationalize why we're doing this. It's coming.

Carrie Poppy: It's coming.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, we'll review the year, and we'll look forward to the year ahead and what the prognosticators have to say about it.

Carrie Poppy: I had a migraine for two days. It screwed us up. Sorry.

Ross Blocher: But! And a lot of squirrely psychics!

Carrie Poppy: Yes! We're trying to get our 2024 readings, and we're having a weird amount of trouble.

Ross Blocher: Both of us have been like rebuffed multiple times and not because we're podcasters. Weird.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, I know. Well!

Ross Blocher: Weeell. Well.

Carrie Poppy: That we know of! They are psychic!

Ross Blocher: But in the meantime, we have this great interview that I've been excited to share for a while. This was recorded at CSICon 2023 with me and Kenny Biddle.

Carrie Poppy: Yes, Kenny Biddle. He's the Chief Investigator at the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry and he's a fellow at CSI.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, and as you'll see, a top-notch paranormal investigator. Really fun just to pick his brain.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, I'm stoked to hear this. I love all the things that they do at CSI. It's a great organization. They make *Skeptical Inquirer*, the magazine.

Ross Blocher: Great magazine. Which you've written for.

Carrie Poppy: Yes! Yes, yes. And our friend Stephen Hupp is now the Editor in Chief of! Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Exciting stuff there. So—

Carrie Poppy: Hey Stephen, what's up? What's Hupp? I can't believe I've never done that before.

Ross Blocher: What's Hupp. Yeah!

Carrie Poppy: I can't believe I've never done that before!

Ross Blocher: That will be now the official way to greet him.

(Carrie confirms.)

Here's the interview!

(Scene change.)

Welcome to the show, Kenny Biddle!

Kenny Biddle: Oh my goodness, I'm so excited! This is like my bucket list!

Ross Blocher: I'm excited too! Alright, so Kenny Biddle, what is the official title? You're an investigator.

Kenny Biddle: Chief Investigator.

Ross Blocher: Chief Investigator at *Skeptical Inquirer* at Center for Inquiry?

Kenny Biddle: So, the full official title is Chief Investigator for CSI, Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. And that puts out *Skeptical Inquiry* magazine.

Ross Blocher: Used to be CSICOP, which was cofounded by Carl Sagan.

Kenny Biddle: Paul Kurtz. And James Randi.

Ross Blocher: Paul Kurtz, of course, and James Randi. Isaac Asimov?

(Kenny confirms.)

So, this goes back a long time.

(Scene change.)

This is later-Ross. Just wanted to interrupt real quick to put Kenny and myself out of our misery.

(Carrie giggles.)

Because we were like trying to come up with all of the names. So, I'm going to summarize here. So, the initial group that CSICOP was based on was formed by, of course, Paul Kurtz.

(Carrie affirms.)

And Marcello Truzzi.

Carrie Poppy: Okay, yeah, this is a new name to me, I think.

Ross Blocher: Yeah he wasn't involved with later iterations of the group. But then you had all these other folks that we mentioned—James Randi, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan—but also Martin Gardner.

Carrie Poppy: I love Martin Gardner!

Ross Blocher: Ray Hyman. B.F. Skinner, your old buddy.

Carrie Poppy: Great. *(Laughs.)* Long and storied history.

Ross Blocher: Philip Klass, noted UFO skeptic. It was a really impressive group. So, there we go. That'll save you and us a bit of work. Back to the interview!

(Scene change.)

Well, you tell us a bit about the mission of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry.

Kenny Biddle: So, they started in 1976, and basically they started out going against claims of the paranormal. So, psychics, psychic readings, horoscopes, all kinds of weird stuff out there. Healing, faith healing—yeah, especially faith healing. It grew from there. It really grew over the years, and they had more people involved, and they spread out. Alt-med. Got into different kinds of sciences. And just giving the public a lot more information about science, diving into politics, diving into religious aspects, and just covering a lot from a more skeptical and scientific point of view.

Ross Blocher: And anything that has a testable claim attached to it falls within the purview.

Kenny Biddle: Exactly, exactly. If we can test it, we look into it.

Ross Blocher: Well, and I feel like Carrie and I are very closely tied to CSI and also CFI, which is the Center for Inquiry—yes.

Kenny Biddle: Center for Inquiry. (*Chuckles.*) I know it gets confusing. I mean, I—

Ross Blocher: Ah! I thought I was so ready for this.

Kenny Biddle: I mean, I am advocating for going back to CSICOP. I just like that.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, that was a great name.

Kenny Biddle: I like that name.

Ross Blocher: Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Yeah. Well, anyways we've often told our origin story—how Carrie and I met—and it was at the CFI in Los Angeles at both the lectures and the book club there. And then for many years, I've been part of the IIG, as it was called then—the Independent Investigations Group. But now it's very dependent on CFI.

[00:05:00]

(*Kenny laughs.*)

So, now it's the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group. We'll have more to say about that later. Anyways, just kind of drawing the connection there. And of course, the fact that you and I are, right now, meeting together at CSICon.

(*Kenny confirms and they chuckle.*)

You got all the acronyms straight, everybody. I hope you're paying attention at home.

Alright. Well, that was all very clinical, but now we know who we are.

Kenny Biddle: You should put a scorecard. Bingo!

(They laugh.)

Ross Blocher: Well, why I'm excited to talk to you is because I think you are—I got to say—the best out there when it comes to paranormal investigation. Like, I would say—you know, if you have a claim that needs investigating, be it a ghost that showed up on camera or, you know, or an angel appearing at the hospital, what have you, I would call in Kenny Biddle. I would want to get your backup on, you know, how do we analyze this photo or this video? 'Cause you have this great mind for not only the technical aspects of how photography and videography work, you chase down those—the original equipment—but also I think you have a really good understanding of the psychology and where people are coming from and what it is that might draw them to see these images. That's why I'm really excited to be talking to you. Oh, man! Okay. Well, let's just get into it!

Kenny Biddle: *(Stammering.)* You're making me blush. I feel so humble here. Like, this is awesome.

Ross Blocher: Well, I know you have like a really interesting backstory. You weren't always a skeptic. Tell us a bit about the earlier Kenny Biddle of—how many years ago are we talking about?

Kenny Biddle: Ooh, we're talking—like, around 1997. That's when I got married. It really—everything started really falling into place then. I've always had a belief. I grew up in a time of *In Search Of, Unsolved Mysteries, Sightings*.

Ross Blocher: Yep. Watching all those *X-Files*. Of course.

Kenny Biddle: *X-Files*. Loved it! I still own—I own all the seasons. I love it.

Ross Blocher: On DVD?

Kenny Biddle: Yes. I love it.

Ross Blocher: Excellent. It was so fun to walk my son through that series. And he got into it.

Kenny Biddle: I have VHS and DVDs. So, nerd. Total nerd.

Ross Blocher: Oh yeah. And I think he, like I, had a big thing for Gillian Anderson. Of course.

Kenny Biddle: All of us did. I really think. She was the awesome nerd. I mean, they were both nerds. I don't know where we're going to get with this, but I liked the kind of role reversal.

(Ross agrees.)

Because you usually had shows like that where—

Ross Blocher: The woman is the sensitive type.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And the one that believes in psychic stuff, and the man is usually like, “This is all bull crap,” and stuff.

Ross Blocher: The hard-nosed rationalist.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. Having those roles switched I think was genius. And the casting, genius.

Ross Blocher: Well, and it's been shown since that there was a real Scully effect, which I think was working on me as well. Even though I was a believer at that time, even though they were clearly in a world that was fictional and had paranormal elements, her pushback on the things that Mulder was saying—I had a Scully effect as well, even though usually when you talk about that, that's women getting into STEM fields. Anyways, you were saying the kind of stuff you were watching. *(Laughing.)* I'm sorry. This whole conversation is going to be like this. We're both way too excited.

(Kenny stammers into agreeing and they laugh.)

Kenny Biddle: This is how it's all going to go. So, yeah, those kinds of shows are what I was watching, and I loved them. And I thought like, “This is amazing. That's what I wanna see. I wanna see these stories.” These stories are happening around the world, and I want to be a part of that. I want to get out there and see the Loch Ness monster. I wanna see aliens land down—not the anal probe part. I just wanna see the aliens land.

Ross Blocher: *(Laughs.)* I'll see it. I'll watch that part.

Kenny Biddle: *(Laughing.)* Okay, well, I'll let them know. If I ever see them.

I wanted to see a ghost. I wanted to experience that. I wanted to see like stuff flying around the room for a poltergeist, you know. And I love that kind of stuff. And so, as I got older in 1997—that was like the pivotal time here when I went into ghost hunting, because I got married that year. And as a gift for ourselves, we bought our first computer. This is dating the computer, but it came with four megabytes of memory.

Ross Blocher: Four megabytes.

Kenny Biddle: This is old school.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. What are we talking about there? This is like—?

Kenny Biddle: Compaq? Compaq with a Q? Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Let's not get off on that rabbit trail unless we've got Leonard Trammell in the room or something.

Kenny Biddle: Oh my goodness. Yeah. *(Laughs.)* I know somewhere in CSICON, he is like looking up going, "I hear my name. I hear my name."

We got our computer. We got online—after some upgrades, because this new thing called the World Wide Web—you know, I wanted to get on it, start reaching out. And one of the first things I looked up was ghost hunting groups. You know, or who did it in my area? Because you saw it on TV, you saw it on the shows. They would bring in like Hans Holzer or somebody else like that. And I was like these are people that are actually doing this! I want to try it.

So, I found a local group, and I joined them, and we went to cemeteries. We went to historic places like the Betsy Ross house. Because I grew up in Philly. We went—

Ross Blocher: She that designed the flag?

Kenny Biddle: Allegedly.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, there's more to that story.

Kenny Biddle: There's a lot more to that story. *(Whispers.)* She didn't do it.

Anyway. So, we went to those places. And we went after hours, because everything happened in the dark. You know? *(Laughs.)*

Ross Blocher: Right. Why question that logic.

Kenny Biddle: And Ross has a look of like contemplation on. It's like, "Hm."

[00:10:00]

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Why wouldn't the same things happen during the daytime? Are ghosts corpuscular?

Kenny Biddle: Well, that's the funny thing. The witness stories that we were getting from the business owners and homeowners, most of the stuff happened during the day. Okay? *(Laughs.)* But we were showing up at night.

Ross Blocher: Why replicate that? Yeah, it's easier to scare yourself at night.

Kenny Biddle: Right, right. And you know, you turn the lights out, you can't see. It makes it all spooky. So, I went around with them for a while. And I learned, I guess, in the tribal knowledge kind of way. Because I was there; I was with them. I didn't know any better.

This was before I was any kind of skeptical. I grew up Catholic. Actually, I was raised Catholic, yes.

Ross Blocher: Okay, I was gonna ask if there was a religious component.

Kenny Biddle: Yes, so my mother's Catholic; my father is not, but I was raised Catholic. So, I had that belief that there was an afterlife, but it was more like heaven and hell and purgatory, stuff like that. So, I already had that belief. It was already there. Ghosts were not a next step. It was just a sidestep. Because they existed. Because you have ghosts in the Bible. You have people claiming that they have ghosts. Even my mother thought that she had felt, like, her father after he passed away.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, as a real Bible literalist myself, at the time I remember reading stories like the Witch of Endor and being like, okay, what do I do with that? That tells us that somehow spirits can come back and give truthful information.

Kenny Biddle: Right. So, I just started ghost hunting with this group, going out and thinking that the pictures of these little balls of light were ghosts, that these misty forms were ghosts. And—

Ross Blocher: Taking EVP recordings.

Kenny Biddle: EVPs on cassette recorders. We didn't have digital yet. They came like—as soon as I started getting into the hobby, that's when the first Panasonic digital IEC recorder came out.

(Ross laughs.)

Are you looking for EVPs? *(Laughs.)*

Ross Blocher: No, I'm just—you know what? I'll ask later. Is anyone in the room with us? *(Beat.)* You saying that reminded me I should be doing a backup recording. So, I put out the recorder.

Kenny Biddle: *(Laughing.)* Oh, okay. We're talking about it and out comes a recorder from his pocket. I'm like, wow, he's all ready to go! That's great.

Ross Blocher: But yeah, I remember excitedly pulling up audio files and like learning that Media Player would let me play them backwards.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And you know, because that was standard. I remember being in Catholic school and a nun coming into the classroom with a record player with like ACDC or—what was the big one?

Ross Blocher: Led Zeppelin, yeah.

Kenny Biddle: Led Zeppelin. Yeah. And purposely playing it backwards. And now that I think about it—like I actually haven't thought about this until right now. The way she picked out the phrases that she claimed it was saying was exactly how I see ghost hunters do it today. Because they hear what they want to hear, and I'm listening going I don't hear anything!

Ross Blocher: Okay. But then she primes you and says, “Did you hear when he said—?”

Kenny Biddle: Exactly. She would play it first.

Clip: “Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin played backwards. The track warps and stutters with the vocalist cutting in and out erratically.

Ross Blocher: “Sweet, sweet Satan,”—did you hear that? Oh, now that you say it— (*mimicking the distorted lilt of the record*) sweet, sweet Satan! Okay.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, and then I hear it. I'm like, (*conceding*) “Oh yeah, I guess that kind of—” And then they play it again and again.

Ross Blocher: For a younger generation, you might not know what a big deal backmasking was at the time. This was a big part of the Satanic Panic that you and I grew up with, this idea that secret messages were encoded in music backwards. There's no underlying explanation for why that would even work or why our brains would pick up on that and decode it, but that was the belief.

Kenny Biddle: And then you wanted to do it. I mean, I went home. That's the first thing I did. I went home, put all my records on the record player and played them backwards!

(*Ross laughs.*)

Like, waiting to hear. And it really depended on the speed. Because if you slowed it down or you were too fast, you didn't hear anything. It was gone. But right speed, it was there. So, yeah, we had EVPs, we had EMF meters, and we had the Dr. Gauss EMF meters. So, it had a 1 to 10 scale on it for milligauss. I think 1 to 3 was colored green, because that was good. And then 3 to 7 was yellow.

Ross Blocher: That's middling.

Kenny Biddle: And then 7 to 10 it was red. Yeah, but I was always told that if the meter went into the yellow, that was a ghost.

Ross Blocher: Oh! And green means?

Kenny Biddle: Green means it's probably electrical. Okay. Red means probably electrical. Yellow, which is in the middle—

Ross Blocher: That's the sweet spot, okay. Alright.

Kenny Biddle: That's it. As long as you didn't walk any further to the electrical source, you were fine.

Ross Blocher: Stop there.

Kenny Biddle: But that's one of the first things that I picked up on.

Ross Blocher: And about how big was this group?

Kenny Biddle: We're talking about six/seven people.

Ross Blocher: And how often were you getting together?

Kenny Biddle: Maybe like every other week and just going out to different places.

Ross Blocher: Okay. But I picture the quintessential ghost hunter that you see now on so many TV shows.

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This proliferation of media of ghost hunters. And I think that you kind of match the mold at the time of someone who has a day job, but they have this big hobby that involves a lot of fun equipment, cameras, a lot of various sensors that beep and make noises and flashlights.

Kenny Biddle: All of which I had no idea how to use.

(They laugh.)

Ross Blocher: You were learning on the job, so to speak, from your other friends.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. I like how you say that. "So to speak." Because that's—I wasn't really learning. I was learning a method but not the correct method.

Ross Blocher: This is like where people often say, "Practice doesn't make perfect, practice makes permanent." You know, like you can enforce the wrong thing.

Kenny Biddle: Exactly. And that's what it was. I mean, that idea that if your EMF meter, which can be set off by any kind of electrical wiring—a light, a two-way radio, whatever. If it went into the yellow at any point, it was a ghost. That's what I was taught. That's what I believed, because I already had that belief. So, I was like, okay.

Ross Blocher: Without having to understand the underlying mechanism of why that yellow range somehow is tied to a ghostly presence.

Kenny Biddle: Right. And the excuse or the explanation was always—it always sounded made up. It's because the ghosts have energy, and their energy is what makes the meters go off.

Ross Blocher: Alright. Yeah. Those are words, and they can stand in the gap as long as you need them to.

Kenny Biddle: That's it. That's the gap. Because I never asked. At the time, I didn't ask, "What kind of energy?" Never asked that. I was just like, oh, okay. It's some kind of energy! It sounded good to me.

Ross Blocher: "It's bioenergy." Oh, thanks. Okay. I feel better now.

Kenny Biddle: "Got it. Got it." Okay. So, after going with them for a while, basically I went with them for a long time, and then I formed my own group, my own ghost hunting group. And we had fun. We did the same thing. I was trying to be more methodical; you know. I really had—I had a seven-page form for interviews where I asked all kinds of questions. And then eventually we went to a conference in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. And that's where my world changed. My world literally changed. We were at a conference, ghost hunting conference.

Ross Blocher: How many score was that a go?

Kenny Biddle: Oh. "Four score." (*Laughs.*) That was 2004? I think?

Ross Blocher: Oh, so that was—oh, just one year shy of a score. Oh, okay. Alright. Well, it's Gettysburg. That's how we count years when we're talking Gettysburg.

Kenny Biddle: So, I'm at this conference and we're having fun. We're with a bunch of friends and it's one of those feelings where you're with likeminded people. I could speak freely about my beliefs, and everyone was like, "Oh, cool." Everyone accepted it. No one questioned it at all, which is kind of fun when you're ignorant of anything else.

Ross Blocher: But it's not going to be an inciting incident.

Kenny Biddle: No. So, I listened to some of the stories. We talked to some Rangers. Found out that there was a secret spot on the battlefield where the Rangers didn't go. They didn't want to go, because it was so scary, so haunted, they just avoided it. I was like, alright, cool. It's a little patch of woods. It's next to an open field called the Wheat Field. We can go in this little patch of woods. No one would see us. It would be dark, quiet. Awesome.

So, one night after the conference, we went over there. There's like six or seven of us, and we're chilling. Nothing's happening, but we're still waiting for something to happen. And I look out through the woods into the open field, and there's a road that runs along it. And here comes three cars. Three cars pull over at the open field, because there was like a tourist spot there where you could pull over and you play like an audio tour.

Ross Blocher: Because everyone's thinking about the Confederate and Union soldiers that battled here and their spirits that are wandering about.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. Everyone's looking for the ghosts of the soldiers. So, I see people get out of the cars, and they have flashlights, they have laser pointers. Because that was when the thermal guns, the temperature guns, infrared temperature guns came out, and they were very popular, and they all had the little laser with it. So, like any kid—(*chuckles*).

Ross Blocher: Another key tool in the belt of any paranormal researcher, the little heat measuring gun. Yes.

Kenny Biddle: They had those; I see lasers going all over the place.

Ross Blocher: I like these two rival paranormal gangs showing up. I feel like there's gonna be a rumble.

Kenny Biddle: The Jets and the Sharks?

(*Ross agrees and starts rhythmically snapping while they laugh.*)

Oh my, oh we're having so much fun with this. So, I see them get out. They go up into the field, and I'm not really thinking much about it. Until they turn, change direction, starts coming towards us. And now I'm getting worried, because we're here, we're hidden, they don't know we're here.

Ross Blocher: So, we need to break this easy to them, so we don't startle them.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, that would probably have been better. That's not the way I went.

(*They laugh.*)

I waited, because I was hoping maybe they would just stop, turn around, leave, whatever. No.

Ross Blocher: Never know you were there.

Kenny Biddle: They got closer, they got louder, and I got angry because at the time ghost hunters were very territorial. Some still are.

(*Ross chuckles.*)

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But I was definitely—this was my spot. I didn't want them coming in here. So, I didn't want them finding us and saying, “Oh, hey, we're ghost hunters too! Let's join you!”

Ross Blocher: Join forces. Yeah.

Kenny Biddle: No, I want all the credit for ourselves if we find it.

Ross Blocher: Want to be able to publish—yeah, whatever happens.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. Publish. (*Chuckles.*) That's—we can talk about that in a minute. So, I finally hit my breaking point. And I marched out of the woods and started screaming at them like, “Get out!” And I don't remember what I said. Basically, get the fuck out. Get away, you're spoiling it, this is our spot, go away. They stopped, turned around, ran back to the cars, got into the cars, drove away.

Ross Blocher: Okay, so hey, effective!

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, mission accomplished. I'm done. Went back into my little patch of woods, finished out the night, nothing happened. Went home, went back to our hotel room. Get up in the morning, go down to the hotel lobby. And we start talking to everyone, and we find out somebody saw an apparition last night.

Ross Blocher: Oh, do tell!

Kenny Biddle: I know! I was like, tell me about it! Asking questions. And they were like, “Hey, it was last night on the battlefield, it was by the Wheat Field.”

Ross Blocher: “Wait, that's where I was! Why did I miss this?”

Kenny Biddle: Exactly! It was about 7 o'clock or so? That's what time I was there! Then they said, “This huge guy, this soldier came out of the woods—appeared out of the woods.”

Ross Blocher: (*Chuckling.*) Sergeant Kenny Biddle.

Kenny Biddle: Yes.

(*They laugh.*)

And started yelling at them, but they could not understand what was being said.

Ross Blocher: (*Menacingly.*) “Just go away.”

Kenny Biddle: That's when it clicked like I think this is me. So, I said that.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, yeah, I am the *Scooby Doo* villain. You take off the—

Kenny Biddle: My mask is coming off; I'm pulling it off myself! And they said no. And I said, “Well, you came up in three cars. You got out, you had flashlights, laser pointers.”

Ross Blocher: Identifying details.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. “No, it wasn't you.”

I said, “I marched out of the woods—” And I described the spot. There's a monument with two cannons. We were right across from that. “Well, yeah, but that wasn't you.” Okay.

Ross Blocher: Wooow. So, you could see them wanting the story to be preserved more than—

Kenny Biddle: I'm seeing—I'm not even processing that yet. I'm trying to process the idea that I'm telling you the truth, and you're saying no, and I can't get past that. So, I kept pushing, and I'm like, “No, these are other details. This is what you were holding, this is what you were wearing. I remember you. You said this.”

And finally, one turns to me and goes, “Stop trying to steal our spotlight.”

(Ross “wow”s.)

And that was it. Like that—I almost just jaw dropped, staring at them, and they just wanted the attention. Because people were all over them.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, they were already getting the accolades. They were the center of—yeah. Okay.

Kenny Biddle: The spotlight was on them. They didn't want any shade. So, I walked away from that experience thinking—ironically, I wasn't mad at them. My thought process was: I told them the truth. It solved that mystery. They ignored it, because they wanted attention. They wanted to believe what they wanted to believe. How many times have I done that?

Ross Blocher: Okay! You already realized, uh-oh, this might be an indictment on me as well. Wow.

Kenny Biddle: Right, that big mirror just popped in front of me, and I'm staring at myself going, how did I do this? Do I do this?

Ross Blocher: Yeah. And I mean, to your credit, other lessons could have been taken from that interaction. But that's great that you kind of took that extra step back to sort of see yourself in the frame.

Kenny Biddle: I don't know how many people experience this, but when I do something and screw up, it really hits me hard. Like, I get down on myself and I'm just extremely angry with myself for doing something wrong which I should have done better, which I should have known better. And that was the realization that I didn't do better; I should have known better, but I ignored it. I had gone into people's houses, told them that it was haunted. I told them

they had ghosts, and then I packed up my equipment and I went home. I slept in my own bed. I left them with a fear of some weird entity in their house.

Ross Blocher: Now you're feeling the weight of that.

Kenny Biddle: Yes, and it's hit me hard. And that's when I started getting into more of the skeptical literature. I found *Skeptical Inquirer Magazine*, that's literally one of the first ones I found.

Ross Blocher: Which you're now writing articles for.

Kenny Biddle: I know, right?! I found the work of Ben Radford. And Joe Nickell. Started reading their work, because they were doing this kind of investigation. And I realized how much I was doing wrong. I was not investigating anything. I was fear mongering. I was going in there with a belief. I was looking only for things that supported that belief.

Ross Blocher: Anomaly hunting with a foregone conclusion.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And I had no idea what I was doing. So, all the equipment that we touched on and more, I was going in and doing exactly what I saw on TV. If it beeped, it was a ghost. If it lit up, it was a ghost, and that was it. That was the extent of my technical knowledge of ghost hunting gadgets.

[00:25:00]

Ross Blocher: All of this existing in that low information zone, where your brain can do the interpretation and turn it into something.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. If you didn't have that metallic sound when you over edited your audio clips, then—

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Yeah. Cranked up the gain, played it backwards, and now it sounds like rah-rah. And you're like, "That's 'get out'!"

Kenny Biddle: Exactly. I just—it was a mindfuck, basically. (*Chuckles.*) And I don't want—I'm trying not to drop too many F bombs, but that's what it was. It really hit me I was doing so much wrong. I screwed up so many people's lives. How much anxiety did I cause by telling people, "Yeah, your house is haunted," and then I just left them to deal with it themselves? That idea themselves. And now I see what was happening, because I came in, we had matching shirts. Ghost hunting teams love—we have matching bowling shirts.

(*Ross agrees.*)

Yeah. We came in with pelican cases full of equipment. We looked like we knew what we were doing.

Ross Blocher: Hundreds of dollars of equipment.

Kenny Biddle: We looked like an authority. And we were not. We were fools, to be honest. And walked in as an authority. They saw us as an authority. We told them what we thought. They took it as concrete, and I screwed up a lot of people's lives, I think.

Ross Blocher: And you're realizing there's an emotional cost and impact to what you were doing. Yeah. And was the skeptical literature always kind of there on the periphery, and you just finally decided to take a closer look at it? Or had you had a different reaction to it before?

Kenny Biddle: That's a good—that's a good question. Because being a ghost hunter at that time, and this is my personal experience—the people I knew in the ghost hunting community, we all had that idea that skeptics were evil. Skeptics were the bad people only trying to keep us down. We knew secret knowledge, and they were trying to keep everyone else from finding out about it. And it sounds so conspiracy theory, doesn't it?! (*Laughs.*)

Ross Blocher: Right. Shills with an agenda.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. That was it. Scientists couldn't figure it out. They were embarrassed because they couldn't figure out what we were figuring out. (*Snaps.*) Almost like that. Not a snap of the finger. It took several weeks/months for me to realize what was going on. And *Skeptical Inquirer* actually was recommended by a friend of mine—two friends Andy and Tanya Kaiser, good friends of mine that I've known for years. And they told me about Ben Radford and his work. So, I started reading it. I picked up a copy. It was in the bookstore. Picked up a copy, read it, and I was like, wow, he solved it.

Ross Blocher: Do you remember which book it was?

(*He doesn't.*)

Okay, I know he has like a manual on paranormal investigations, but he has many books.

Kenny Biddle: Well, no, this was before the books. This was just in *Skeptical Inquirer*.

Ross Blocher: Oh, right, one of the articles, okay.

Kenny Biddle: One of the articles. And I don't remember which one it was, but it just hit me like, wow, this is what I need to be doing.

Ross Blocher: The world makes a lot more sense now. Okay.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And then I started getting into photography at the same time as a side job. So, I started doing like family portraits and product photography and stuff like that. And that was giving me more insight into how light interacts with the camera.

Ross Blocher: Yes. And you're realizing, oh, these things that I'm trying to get rid of or prevent in my photos, because they're errors or glitches or reflections are things I don't want. I know what I would have thought of those before. So, your additional knowledge was further reinforcing this assessment.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. And building my knowledge base. And now I was looking at photos going, “Oh, yeah, that's not a spirit orb. That is a speck of dust. And now I can tell why it's a speck of dust, because I'm looking at certain characteristics, and I can see it and I can match it up with this one.”

Ross Blocher: “It's in multiple pictures in the same spot. It's on the lens. Oh, it's moved. So, it was somewhere in the environment.” These kinds of analysis.

Kenny Biddle: Exactly. Exactly. And even something as strange as frosty breath. You think it would just look like regular mist, but when you film mist that's at a distance—

Ross Blocher: Out of focus.

Kenny Biddle: Yes, that's exactly it. You get that fuzziness that comes with the out of focus, because it's right up at the lens instead of focused on something like 10 feet away.

Ross Blocher: Oh darn, it's not ectoplasm!

Kenny Biddle: You know what, that's something that actually came as I started to learn more about photography and realized about these ecto-mists that we were getting, and that Ectoplasm was actually something completely different.

(They laugh.)

And when you had the Victorian seances—which I actually have some of that Ectoplasm in the Center for inquiry.

Ross Blocher: Oh, like the cheesecloth variety?

Kenny Biddle: Yes. I made some! I made my own, and it looks great. It really looks great.

Ross Blocher: Fantastic. Yeah. I love how, from a certain era, you had so many like ghost trails that were camera straps, but now people take photos without those little camera straps that were on all the—you know, the tiny point and shoot cameras. So, you just don't get that kind of image anymore.

Kenny Biddle: You don't get them. You don't get them anymore. The only time you see them anymore is in when like a television show says, “Oh, they started getting pictures back in the '80s and the '90s.” And they'll show the portrait, and the telltale sign is because people usually turn the camera to the portrait way.

[00:30:00]

So, not landscape, where it's longer left to right.

Ross Blocher: Now you've got this dangling thing on the move.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And they never put it around their wrist, or even when they did, depending on how long it was, it fell right in front of the lens.

Ross Blocher: It's so dependent on the technology, where there were like also a bunch of effects that were unique to the Polaroid. Or like the ability to go in like right after you'd snap the picture—or actually before—and maybe like use a cotton swab and like write a message or something. Right? I remember having a personal friend who was really swayed by these photos with words in English that showed up imposed over the image. And I was trying to tell him like, “Uuh, you can do that on a Polaroid. You want me to show you?” “No.”

Kenny Biddle: You could even double expose on a Polaroid camera. There was a way to do it where you had the front door, the loading door—it was open. You would keep it open but press it closed a little bit, and as soon as you hit the shutter button you'd open it so it wouldn't eject the slide. And then you would take another picture with it, and you'd have a double exposure.

(Ross is surprised.)

And in fact, my CFI's outreach coordinator, Eric Shaver—he works in the office next to me. He purchased a Polaroid camera and put film in it and found out that it takes double exposures by itself, because it only spits out a picture every other time he hits the shutter.

Ross Blocher: What?! *(Giggles.)*

Kenny Biddle: So, it's an internal mechanism. It's not supposed to do that. It's broken.

Ross Blocher: It was a glitch! But a perfect tool for the ghost hunters.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, he sent me pictures. Because we go back and forth. We buy vintage cameras.

Ross Blocher: Oh yeah, you've got such a collection. It's amazing.

Kenny Biddle: I love it. I love it. But he sent me pictures from one weekend. He was like, “Hey, I picked up this camera, this Polaroid. Is this supposed to happen?” And he showed—he took pictures of the Polaroid images that came out.

Ross Blocher: Amazing. Because going farther back to plate photography, you had this long tradition in the late 1800s and early 1900s of spirit photography where people would sit for a

photo, and then the photographer would later on then plunk down a doll or another child or something and add this ghostly figure that would show up in the image.

Kenny Biddle: And a lot of them, the photographer—especially if you had like William Mumler; he was the first one that really publicized it. And it's speculated that he would visit people's homes. And then he would pre-shoot the plate. So, he would have the image of the family member already on the plate, knowing where it was. So, he could load the plate—

Ross Blocher: Ready there. Then composed the rest of the photograph accordingly.

Kenny Biddle: Right. I mean, he did a good job. 'Cause he fooled a lot of people. But then—

Ross Blocher: Yeah, we're talking about two different phenomena here. The knowing fraud and just chance accidents that show up.

Kenny Biddle: Where were we?

(They laugh.)

Ross Blocher: Well, you were talking about gaining this photography experience. And I think this is key, because it's so easy to say, “Oops, I was wrong about that. Let's move on and do something completely different.”

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. I wanted to know more about—I wanted to know how these anomalies were captured. So, I would practice over and over again. What makes orbs? What makes mist? What makes the camera stop thing? How to make a good double exposure?

Ross Blocher: By reproducing it.

Kenny Biddle: Right. Yeah. By reproducing it. And the reason I started collecting all these vintage cameras that I have is because people were using different cameras and saying, “Well, you're using that camera. It's probably easier with that one, but I have this one over here.” And I would go buy that camera and do it and say, “Here. I just did it with your camera.” And I make a habit of that with anything. When I test a new ghost gadget and they're using a certain EMF meter, even though most of them do the same exact thing, I will order that meter that I see.

Ross Blocher: Now, you have the coolest office of anyone I've seen. 'Cause it's just covered—every shelf all around you is covered in nerd memorabilia, but also like all these cameras and equipment and ghost meters and stuff. Do you have a rough estimate of how many cameras are in your possession?

Kenny Biddle: I have probably about 300-some cameras, ranging from 1904—that's the earliest one that I have—all the way up to modern cameras. I have a large collection of Polaroids. And not talking just the rainbow camera, which is one of my favorite. That's the one I grew up with. I have all the versions of the rainbow camera, which is like—there's a

black face one, there's a grey face one, one called the Button, all kinds of different colors. And then I have the older cameras, the older Polaroids, which were the accordion style.

(Ross “wow”s.)

Yeah! I love them. I even have two of the SX-70 original folding cameras which were—that was a big deal. That was your first time when you actually used the cartridges that go in, and it would spit it out. So, Polaroid used to have film where you loaded the cartridge in the back, and it was more of a process. You took the picture, you had to rip out this piece of film. You had to wait like a minute or so, depending on the temperature. There was a graph on the back that told you like the ambient temperature and then how long you had to wait before you peeled it apart.

(Ross “wow”s.)

And then you got an image and that was it. No negative, you just got the image. And then when the SX-70 was released—

[00:35:00]

Don't quote me on this, but I think it's 1971 or so. I forget the date.

Ross Blocher: Like Kenny Biddle says, it was 1971. Oh wait, I was not supposed to quote you on that. I'm sorry.

Kenny Biddle: (*Laughs.*) Oh, that's great. But when the—yeah, the SX-70 was released, it was the first time you had the front-loading cassette. And that's your (*mimics loud photo printing sound*). That's the noise.

Ross Blocher: So, shake it like a Polaroid picture, but that never actually did anything.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, but never shake it.

Ross Blocher: Never shake a baby, never shake a Polaroid picture.

Kenny Biddle: That's right. But you had—it folded down.

Ross Blocher: Sorry, André 3000.

Kenny Biddle: It was a funky-looking like triangular shape, but it folded down into what looked like a small pocket book. And it was a pocket camera. You actually put it in your suit coat, and then you pulled the viewfinder—you pulled it up, and it was like a transformer. Boop! You had a camera! And it was like really cool!

Ross Blocher: But that's so great, because like you were saying, you know from experience and your collection and from trying all these things which cameras produced which effects.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And the SX-70, I got that because that was used for the Doris Bither case, the *Entity* case. So, there was a film called *The Entity*, based on a book called *The Entity*, and then that was based on a “real-life”, quote/unquote, poltergeist that happened. And it's very involved, but—

Ross Blocher: It's always fascinating to learn details about the original cases that these extrapolated, grandiose stories are based on—the ones that all of society knows about, like the Amityville horror and the Annabelle doll being a Raggedy Ann.

I remember learning that and going, “What?! That is so less dramatic than what I had in my mind.”

Kenny Biddle: An interesting fact. So, the Annabelle doll—it's kept in a ridiculous enclosure. It's a wooden and glass enclosure that's supposed to house this doll that everyone thinks is possessed by some kind of demon or something like that. And it just boggles my mind, first, that this tiny, flimsy case is holding this demonic doll in place. That's just silly. But when you go back and read the book by Ed and Lorraine Warren—and I really don't like bringing them up, because I don't like them. But when you read the book that they published—

Ross Blocher: Boy, were they troublemakers.

Kenny Biddle: And they published that story. The first time, Ed writes in there that the doll is not possessed. It never was.

(Ross “wow”s.)

That dolls don't get possessed. It was just used as a prop to get attention. That's it. So, there's nothing demonic or anything about that from the guy's mouth. Wild. From himself, but yet it still has this—

Ross Blocher: Until it landed in the popular consciousness. Yeah.

Kenny Biddle: Then it becomes all scary. It's just a freaking doll.

Ross Blocher: Amazing. So, you spent time just as an avid photographer. Were you active in any way in trying to like either join a skeptical group or be an activist of some sort or did that come much later?

Kenny Biddle: I think I was trying to do it my own way. I knew about *Skeptical Inquirer*. I didn't realize CFI was there or CSICOP was there. It was just like this is a magazine. It does that thing. That's cool. But I didn't really go beyond that.

Ross Blocher: Well, I remember for years, I was involved with the skeptic society in Pasadena, and that's where I learned about skepticism and eventually left my faith. But I remember listening to Point of Inquiry for years before I noticed they mentioned CFI Los

Angeles at the time, now CFI West. And I went, wait, what? There's one in town?! So that became my new home, because they had so much going on there.

Kenny Biddle: It really came down—and (*sighs*) I got to give credit to Ben Radford again, which I don't want to. I love you, Ben.

Ross Blocher: (*Laughs.*) Yeah, yeah, you seem very hesitant there.

Kenny Biddle: But damn. A friend of mine—I wrote a book, a self-published book, and it was called *Orbs of Dust*. And it was about photographic anomalies. And basically—oh crap, I want to bring up the Warrens again. I watched a video from their Connecticut case, and it's a video that Ed shot. He went back into the home apparently by himself, because he wanted to, quote/unquote, “confront the demon”. So, he has a video camera set up on the kitchen table and chairs and he's calling out like, “In the name of Jesus Christ, tell me your name. Show me a sign that you're here.” And the chairs move. And the chairs move towards him.

Ross Blocher: Okay. And he's the only one.

(*Kenny confirms.*)

Again, we're taking his word for it, but okay.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. He says it again, table and chairs move. Again, towards him. And I'm watching this. Does it a third time, comes towards him, and the chairs and the table—

Ross Blocher: Where are the ropes? Where are the ropes?

Kenny Biddle: Any rotation is always as if you pull something. And I'm like he's right there. It's coming right towards him. But not like—how do I say this? Like, the chairs aren't just going one direction. They are converging where he is.

Ross Blocher: There's a focal point.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And I'm pretty sure that's because he was pulling string.

(*Ross affirms with a chuckle.*)

And it infuriated me. So, in one weekend, I wrote out this book.

Ross Blocher: At this point, we are well past just happenstance, accident. This is preplanned.

[00:40:00]

Kenny Biddle: I use the term book loosely, because I just wrote everything that was coming out of my head. And I literally printed out pages. My wife, myself, and two friends of ours—

we printed out all the pages, folded them, stapled them, cut them so all the pages were even, and we sold them at conferences. And it was fun, but it went into all these photographic anomalies and explained them. And the friends I mentioned earlier Andy and Tanya Kaiser, they sent one of those to Ben Radford.

And he read it, he contacted me and said, “Hey, I can't write a review, because it's not an actually published book.” It's just something that I put together and put out there. But he's like, “I can ask you to write something for the newsletter that we do.” Which was “Skeptical Briefs”. Okay! You know, that's cool. That was a learning process, because I had never written for a skeptical organization.

Ross Blocher: This was new.

Kenny Biddle: This was new. Because as a ghost hunter and you write on your own website, you can write whatever the hell you want. You don't have to support it.

Ross Blocher: You don't have to have editors fact checking.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. No editors! So, my grammar was horrible. No fact checking, no citations, no references, nothing. I sent him something about a case I worked on, and he sent it back saying, “You need a lot more.” And it was a good learning process. I appreciate it now. It was a struggle my first time. But I appreciate it now, the process, because I learned so much about how to write, what to write, what I needed to do in order to say some of the stuff that I was saying. And it was just—it took a few months, but eventually he published my first article. And I was like beyond the moon. You know, like oh my god, there's my name! I got a newsletter in the mail, and right there, that's me! So, I did a few more for him, and then I just started like, alright, this is something I really want to do. So, I started writing more articles for not just *Skeptical Inquirer*, but just on a blog, getting it out there, making videos. And my early videos on YouTube—I mean, as I think anyone that made a podcast knows, your first 10, 20, whatever shows—

Ross Blocher: I'm sure if I knew anybody who had made a podcast, they would probably agree with that. If I could think of somebody. Yeah. (*Chuckles.*)

Kenny Biddle: Yes, that they're horrible. They're horrible. They're horrible. So, eventually I did better. I realized, you know, like I don't have to be so in your face. More information, be professional.

Ross Blocher: I have met some smart people who have made a few episodes and then just like redone them or deleted them. That is a smart way to go. I was not that smart.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. I've done that. I look at it and within a minute, I'm like, “I can't believe I made this. Forget it. No, I don't want anyone to see this ever again.”

Ross Blocher: Burn with fire.

Kenny Biddle: But then, 2016, I was all into the skeptical movement. I knew a lot of people. I knew about James Randi; I had followed his work. I knew several people that are associated with it, and one of my goals was to meet Randi. He had just had a stroke; he was scheduled to be at CSICon for 2016.

Ross Blocher: You're like how many chances will I get?

Kenny Biddle: That's what I was worried about. Like, how much longer? I gotta go. So, my wife and I, we planned the year in advance. As soon as the announcement came in, saved up our money, flew out here.

Ross Blocher: Here being Vegas.

Kenny Biddle: Here being Vegas, yes, I'm sorry. We're sitting in Vegas right now.

Ross Blocher: In the glamour of a—I don't know, staff dining room.

Kenny Biddle: (*Chuckling.*) Staff dining room that's empty. And I came up the escalators, got into the lobby. The first thing I see: Randi. And I'm starstruck.

(*Ross affirms.*)

And I walked up to him like the fanboy I was. And I was like, (*stammering bashfully*) "Hi, Mr. Randi. I'm raising—I'm—(*stumbling*) Randi."

Ross Blocher: What do I call you?

Kenny Biddle: And he's looking at me and he's—you know, he was stooped over, looking up and like—

Ross Blocher: You're holding the imaginary cane. Yeah. Oh, but yeah, he loved the interaction.

Kenny Biddle: He loved it. And I said, "Hey, I saw that you made an announcement that if somebody wanted to come up and give you a hug, you would hug them. Can I—can I give you a hug? Can—would you hug me?" (*Laughs.*) And I get real nervous when I—you know, I was like, oh my god, this is the guy. Like, I've been looking up to him.

And he's like, "Oh yeah, come here!" Gives me a hug. And I was like, (*sing-song with delight*) oh-ho, yeah! It was so nice. Then I started meeting everyone. I met Barry Karr, which I learned was the second time. Because I had met him a couple years earlier in DC. Didn't realize who he was. Because I had met—Ben Radford did a talk in DC, and I attended it, so I actually met Barry Karr, Jim Underdown there.

Ross Blocher: Yep. We're all talking about members of the CFI family. Jim Underdown, I've known for many years. He runs the Center for Inquiry West and runs the CFIIG, which we'll talk more about in just a bit. Good folks to know.

Kenny Biddle: It was great! That's the first time I met Susan Gerbic.

Ross Blocher: Yes! Oh, I was just telling a friend today like, “Really, she outpaces all of us in her reach.”

(Kenny agrees.)

Because she's the Wikipedia (*inaudible*). And we've had her on the show.

Kenny Biddle: But she was great. Everyone was friendly, everyone was great. I met Mark Edward. He actually taught me some things about preshow work for mentalism.

[00:45:00]

Which I was—wow! These people were really—(*stammers*).

Ross Blocher: They're sharing knowledge. Yep.

Kenny Biddle: He was so amazing and basically taking me under his wing, because I was so interested in what he was doing. So, I learned a lot.

Ross Blocher: That's the cool thing about coming here is, you know, I've seen all of those people you just mentioned this year.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. I came back the next year as a guest, because they wanted me to do a workshop. And I was like, wow! That was like—that was like—what? Photographic Anomalies?

Ross Blocher: I remember that. I think I went to that one. Yeah, you were co-leading with Jim. Was it that one?

Kenny Biddle: It wasn't that one.

Ross Blocher: Oh, okay. So, that was an earlier one.

Kenny Biddle: So, I did one before that one about just photography. And at one point I did the Pepper's Ghost effect. And I had little pieces of plexiglass for everyone.

Ross Blocher: To get the reflection so you can have a superimposed image but one exposure.

Kenny Biddle: I had them—because everyone would see it in rows. So, I had them put it up right to their face and put it on angle.

Ross Blocher: Kenny's holding a plate of his hand between his eyes, and now he's rotated it.

Kenny Biddle: Like, 45 degrees, so that you were looking through the glass at the screen, but you were also seeing the reflection on the screen of the person next to you.

Ross Blocher: Of an object that was 90 degrees to your side.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. So, we did that, and everyone was like, wow, this is awesome! And it was so good. I was so happy that I was able to teach these people that I thought were much smarter than I was. And it was just overwhelming. And I've been back ever since. Been working here, did more stuff for them—writing articles for *Skeptical Inquirer Magazine*.

Ross Blocher: And meanwhile, you were also putting out YouTube videos where you would take claims, like a baby cam catching a ghost in the background. You did an excellent analysis of that. And figuring out exactly, A) which camera it was. B) its capabilities and where it would like, you know, crunch values in its processing. And then C) exactly who and what it was in the background that was being mistaken as the ghost. And it was a member of the family, if I remember.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. Yeah, it was the father. But yeah, that's the kind of stuff. I guess learning from everyone—and this is where it becomes a team effort. Because—and I appreciate what you said in the beginning, like how much you love my work. And I totally appreciate that. And it was awesome, but it's not just me. Learning from all these people—again, Ben Radford, Joe Nickell. They're the ones that really inspired me. Then learning from Randi, then meeting everyone here and listening to you—listening to your investigations helped me all the time. Because I listened to—because you have a different perspective than I do. We share a lot, but you still have a slightly different one. And I learn from you when you tell your stories and your experiences and what you did.

Same for Susan Gerbic. I learned a lot from her. Mark Edward. Everyone that I meet here, it's just amazing. So, it's a total team effort whenever I put out an article or a video, because the detail that I put into it, I've learned from everyone.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

[00:50:00]

Carrie Poppy: But also, Ross, while I have you here, we have a Jumbotron!

Ross Blocher: A jumbotron, yay!

Carrie Poppy: It's where someone's message goes up on the big screen right behind us. Everyone can see us right now.

Ross Blocher: This big podcast screen. But we'll read it just in case you can't see it.

Carrie Poppy: Yes, exactly. In case your eyes are turned away, this message is for Paulina Cheslik.

Ross Blocher: From Christian Aparta.

Carrie Poppy: And it says, “Happy birthday, cousin. May your path be un-bumpy as you make it through the next lidocaine variant trial.”

Ross Blocher: “And lots of crafts, D&D, and fun times with Bombelle!”

Carrie Poppy: Bombelle is apparently an enormous dog. (*Baby voice.*) Hello, Bombelle! Hello!

Ross Blocher: Okay! A cute, enormous dog. But I guess as far as Carrie is concerned, I repeat myself.

Carrie Poppy: Touche. Yeah, it's categorical. Well, happy birthday Paulina and, most importantly, Bombelle. Whenever your birthday may be. Oh wait, but the screen is coughing to life again.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, new message. It looks like this one is for Lisa? From Eric?

Carrie Poppy: Boy, these are unusual names. But yes, I think that's right. It says, “Happy 15th anniversary to Lisa, from Eric.”

Ross Blocher: “I hope we have another 50 more to share our quirky interests with each other, argue over trifles, and feel safe in each other's company.”

Carrie Poppy: Aw, that's really sweet. And their anniversary will be on January 2nd, 2024. So, everybody on January 2nd, think of Lisa and Eric.

Ross Blocher: Happy 15th!

(*Carrie cheers.*)

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(Music fades out.)

Ross Blocher: And this is where I want to like get into some of your actual like investigations, because you've done so many. This is such a big can of worms that we could be doing that for, you know, four+ hours and we're not going to obviously.

We got a party tonight. Neither of us have had dinner, right? And I don't know, like maybe if you could share just a couple highlights.

Kenny Biddle: So, there was a recent one that I did. It was a psychic that came across my social media feed. She claimed to be psychic and also a Reiki master and a doctor. When I hear those things together, that's a red flag. Like, okay, let me look into this. The claim that she was making was that she helped find a missing teenager in Oklahoma. So, missing person case. A teenager ran away from home, nobody could find her. Somebody reached out to her, I guess, and she drove to Oklahoma to help find this girl. And by the time—this is her words, by the time she left, she had the entire police department believing that she was psychic. Because she had helped them find the girl.

Ross Blocher: Oh wow! Or at least in her telling.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. That's key.

Ross Blocher: Ugh, now I have to—okay, which police department was it? Okay, what's their number? Okay, yeah, who were you working with? What—who's an officer I could talk to?

Kenny Biddle: That's funny, because I asked questions! I saw the post, and I did that. I said, "Hey, you know, can you tell me what the police department this was, because I'd like to call and verify?"

And the response was, "What business is it of yours?"

(Ross chuckles.)

Which, because I was working here for CSI, I was able to respond, "It is my job, literally, to look into this. So, I'd like to confirm this."

Ross Blocher: So, this is a fun fact about you is that you're part of a very small group of full-time paid investigators of the paranormal. How many of those are there?

Kenny Biddle: As far as I know, right now, zero.

Ross Blocher: Well, one. You. I'm talking to him.

Kenny Biddle: Me. Yeah, me.

(They laugh.)

I keep forgetting myself. But yeah, so I do this full time. This is what I do for a living. They didn't want to answer any of my questions. They got very upset with me, that I was questioning in this. So, that only made me want to look into it more, because, yeah, you're hiding something. Let me look.

So, the first thing I did was look up newspaper articles. I was able to find the case through little clues that they had given me. Found the detective that was on the case, called the detective, spoke to the detective.

Ross Blocher: So, you had to completely on your own without her help narrow in on what we were talking about. Okay. So, now you called. You're on the horn.

Kenny Biddle: Yep. Called. Left the message. He called me back the next morning. I spoke to him, and I quote it right from her social media post.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. "Do you feel this is an accurate representation of how things went down?"

Kenny Biddle: And he said no. And I was like, okay, good.

[00:55:00]

And one of the great things—and I'm sure you're going to love this. One of the things that she had said was that the teenager was by water.

Ross Blocher: Classic! This is—if you're going to make the *SNL* version or that Mitchell & Webb version, you're going to have the psychic say, "They're near water." That's about as cliché as you can get.

Kenny Biddle: So, I brought that quote up, and he laughed and said, "Son, we're a lake town. Uh, everything's by water. There's water all around, there's swamp, there's water everywhere. So, you can't walk anywhere without water." I told him some of the other things that were said. And he's like, "No, that's not accurate. She did not give us any information that we did not already know." So, I wrote an article about it, put in all the information, the quotes,

everything. About two weeks later, I get an email from not the psychic but her business partner in the form of a cease-and-desist letter.

Ross Blocher: Oh, good luck with that.

Kenny Biddle: Which was not an official one. But demanding that I take down the article.

Ross Blocher: Just hoping you'll be somehow concerned about this, which sometimes works.

Kenny Biddle: And threatening to sue me. She was going to. She was going to file a lawsuit against me. And that she was going to inform my company, and they're going to sue them too. And I was like—I'm sitting at home watching *Star Wars*, because that's what I do.

(Ross laughs.)

And I read it, and I laughed. I was like, “Ha-ha-ha!”

Put the phone down and my wife's like, “What's up?”

I'm like, “Psychic's trying to sue me.”

She's like, “Oh, alright.” And goes back to watch TV. Like, we didn't think anything of it. I called Nick Little, who was our legal counsel. And he's like—

Ross Blocher: Yeah, we've had him on the show too.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. He's like, “Don't worry, I'll take care of this.”

Came into work the next morning, talked to Barry. He's like, “Ha-ha-ha! Okay, whatever.”

Within one email, Nick had nixed it. He wrote back saying, “What specifically did he say that wasn't true that you think you can sue for?” This and that, like really good hardball. I loved it. The lady responded once with no information. That I made fun of them, that I mocked them—which I didn't, just pointed out some facts. Nick responded, “What specifically?” And that was it. We didn't hear from them again. I added that story to my presentation that I do here. When I started doing the presentation, I went back to her website to check up on—you know, let's see if there's any changes and there were. Every reference to her missing person case was gone.

Ross Blocher: Though you've already either screen grabbed it or found it in the internet archive.

Kenny Biddle: Wayback Machine. Oh yeah. It's all there. That's like something—

Ross Blocher: Such a great tool for people wanting to catch psychics and others changing their phrasing, their approach, their advertising.

Kenny Biddle: Absolutely. And I mean, there was other information about her, like for seven years, she used the doctor title because of the Universal Life Church Doctor of Divinity that she had.

(Ross “wow”s.)

She eventually did get an actual doctorate.

Ross Blocher: Oh, from a diploma mill?

Kenny Biddle: In 2022, from Capella University.

Ross Blocher: Not familiar.

Kenny Biddle: So, it's an online university, but it is a legit university. Which is fine. But for seven years, she was using that title.

(Ross affirms.)

And I think her main beef with me was that I called it a fake title, which it's a diploma mill title, and then, yeah. I mean, you pay 20 bucks, and I sent her a picture of me and Eric Shaver, my coworker, holding it.

Ross Blocher: With your own doctorate?

Kenny Biddle: *(Laughing.)* Yeah! Like, we got it too. We're not doctors. So, that was one case that I worked on. What else? What else? There's so many.

(Ross confirms.)

There was—oh, there's an interesting one that I did. It was the 1900 photograph, so it was a photograph taken in 1900, and it was of a bunch of ladies that were together. They were mill workers. I forget exactly what they were doing, but they got together. And when you search for ghost photos, it's one of the more famous that shows up. Because you're looking at it, and it's probably about 15/17 women and in three levels. You look at the middle row, and on the side, there's the woman on the end. And she's standing there, looks normal. And then you notice that on her right shoulder there is a hand. But there is no body next to her.

Ross Blocher: Interesting! That's fun.

Kenny Biddle: So, I looked into it a little bit and the closer I got to it—because I got a high-resolution copy of it. I could not figure out who actually owned it. I was able to find like one

of those photo—like, a photo website where they keep high resolution images; they own the rights to it.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, like Getty photos or one of those.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, something like that. But it was a very high resolution okay, I was able to get that and look closer at it. And the more I looked at the side of the woman with the hand on their shoulder, the more I realized there was a different look to it. It was darker in some areas. Some just didn't look natural. Then it reminded me of something called a crayon drawing or a crayon portrait, which is a—it looks like a real photograph. And it's a larger portrait. But what it is is you take a small like 2x3 image that was taken, and you put it in something called a sun enlarger.

[01:00:00]

It uses the light of the sun to make a larger image of that, and it projects it onto a wall. But you put canvas there, so it projects the image onto a canvas, and an artist comes in with charcoal or pencil and traces it. So, part of it—I know it's probably difficult. I don't know if I'm explaining it right. But—

Ross Blocher: Podcasts are great for talking about images, but we're doing it.

Kenny Biddle: We're doing it. So, like her—the side of her dress, the side of her head of this woman that had the hand on her shoulder—so, it's a real photograph, but that part, that side of her opposite the hand—so, when you're looking at the photo, it would be her right side—when I looked at it, it looked drawn in. And the closer I got—because then I put it under microscope to look at it closer—and it was drawn in. And that led me to understand that there was not only her side but the dress of the girl behind her, which could be seen, was all drawn in. So, I'm pretty sure—I can't prove it 100% because I don't have the original, but I think there was another woman there and they took her out.

Because there is something—they would edit photos back then. You would use something called a retouching desk. And this is really getting into the vintage stuff, and I love it. But it was a vintage desk; it was a little desk. It unfolded. So, you had almost like a Z, if you're looking at it from the side. The bottom would be a metallic plate that was reflective. The middle part, which you would work on, was opaque glass. So, the light from the reflector would come through that.

Ross Blocher: This is kind of analogous to the animation process for many years. Yeah.

Kenny Biddle: Yes! Yes, exactly. And then the top cover was just a cover to block out the sunlight that was coming through the window. And you would literally go through with a pen knife and scrape away the emulsion, and you could retouch photos. You could remove—like, there's examples that I have in the article that I wrote of someone that had a neck tumor—like huge. It looks like a softball.

Ross Blocher: And it was painted out?

Kenny Biddle: They removed it completely. And you can barely tell the difference.

Ross Blocher: Interesting. 'Cause you hear about airbrushing, maybe a later process. And artists that would do like very exact knife cutouts of images and stitch them together. Before you had Photoshop, there were a lot of different ways. But I wasn't familiar with this crayon process. That's really cool.

Kenny Biddle: This is amazing. I mean, I didn't know about it either until I started looking into it. And that was another time that Joe Nickell helped me, because he's well versed in this. So, I had him come into the office and like, "Hey, I have this idea. I think this is what it is."

And he's like, "Yeah. That's it. You got it."

I'm like yeah! I got approval!

Ross Blocher: Amazing. You helped me out with another article, because I remember when we were talking about the gentleman's psychic. He had been interviewed on a show and—shoot, it's one of the popular ones, and the name's escaping me at the moment. But they were using this device, and they kept picking up these background elements that would turn into like a little skeleton—like a wire frame skeleton of a human being.

Kenny Biddle: Oh, the Kinect. Yes. Okay.

Ross Blocher: Yes! And so, reading your article that helped me figure out, oh, they were using this Kinect censor—Microsoft, Xbox Kinect, and then they were using that, and when it was just pointed at an empty area, it would get some false positives and think it saw a human being and create this. And they were interpreting that as being spirits in the room.

Kenny Biddle: That's a fun gadget to play with, because at first I didn't know what it was. Then I'd start playing with it. I got one. You can hook the Kinect to a laptop, and you can download directly from Microsoft all the software for it, which most people didn't realize. I don't know if there was a legal issue with that or not, because certain ghost hunters they were selling—

Ross Blocher: Repackaging the Kinect?

Kenny Biddle: The Kinect with a tablet with the software on it, which was open source.

Ross Blocher: Okay. As a ghost tool.

Kenny Biddle: And charging like 3 or \$400 for it. And I was like, you can download the software for free! I don't know if they're supposed to be doing that. I'm not the legal guy, so I don't know.

Ross Blocher: Send Nick after them.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. So, yeah, people were using this. And one of the first rules from Microsoft is put it on a stationary surface and leave it. Don't touch it. Because when you turn it on, the Kinect actually goes up and down. It's motorized; it goes up and down and looks at the environment and says, alright, I know what's here. But then—

Ross Blocher: But it expects that you're leaving it in a stationary position.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. Yes. So, any stationary object will be stationary. If an object moves into the scene, it knows that's a player and assigns a skeleton to it. You know, that stick figure.

Ross Blocher: Very sophisticated computing going on.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. However, if it's mounted to a handle and you're walking around an allegedly haunted place, everything is now in motion. Nothing is stable.

Ross Blocher: And just like our brains are programmed to recognize faces, it's programmed to recognize bodies.

Kenny Biddle: Yes, aaall types of bodies.

Ross Blocher: So, it has similar kind of I guess you might say hallucinations like AI does or pareidolia that it solves for, because it sees random patterns and says, “Okay, how can I interpret this as a skeletal figure? Here you go.”

Kenny Biddle: And it's using a speckle pattern. The first version uses a speckle pattern.

[01:05:00]

So, if you watch the *Paranormal Activity* movie where they use the Xbox, that's what they see. It's thousands and thousands of dots, and it's all in a specific pattern. And it's repeated. I think there's actually like six sections where it repeats. So, it knows where every dot is. So, when it reads that, it can see either the dot is closer to the camera, farther away, or if the dot is elongated, it's going around a curve. So, it knows. That's how it maps it out.

Ross Blocher: Huh! Smart. Smart. But it's doing this so many times per second—you know, 60, 120, something like that—so that it can track people's movements for games and give real-time feedback. So, it's good. It's good at this.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. It still makes mistakes though. It still can be fooled,

Ross Blocher: Especially when it's not being used the way it's supposed to be.

Kenny Biddle: But it also would pick up like houseplants, if you had a chair in the way. It had a problem with people sitting down. And that was right from Microsoft. They said like if you're sitting down trying to play, it has a problem, because it doesn't see your thigh.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. It doesn't know how to deal with that foreshortening.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. And it's like where's the other segment?

Ross Blocher: So, stand up when you play.

Kenny Biddle: Right. So, it was making mistakes. And it was also seeing, like I said, plants and other things as stick figures. So, it would occasionally pop up.

Ross Blocher: But yet again, we're dealing in the low information zone. How can we kind of break this and create anomalies that we can then accentuate and tell stories about?

Kenny Biddle: Right, exactly. And that's what happened. Ghost hunters scooped it up. They said, "Oh, we can use this. Look, we're getting ghosts everywhere, and we can interact with it." Because they would get into the scene, and you would see them go close to the stick figure. Which could—it didn't have to be like on a plant or something. It could be on a wall fixture. But it—you don't get that depth. You don't know that it's on the wall ten feet away from the camera. It just looks like it's in space. So, if you got close to the stick figure—

Now, let me make that clear. When you came into the scene, you got a stick figure, because you're a player. If your stick figure got near the other stick figure, they didn't want to touch. And that's programmed from Microsoft, because you're supposed to be two separate gamers. So, they would purposely—the stick figures would try to avoid touching each other. So, you had ghost hunters going into the scene and reaching out to the "hand", quote/unquote—

Ross Blocher: And now it's moving around to avoid them.

Kenny Biddle: The hand's coming back. Or it jumps out, that tries to connect to form one big stick figure.

(Ross chuckles.)

So, lots of flaws. Lots of flaws with that. And people exploited that.

Ross Blocher: But all of this is anomalies that you can build on. I've always thought it would be fun to create a parody show of these ghost shows and just call it *Anomaly Hunters*. Because that's really what you're looking for. Ways to tell stories.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, that's what you're looking for. Yeah, exactly. That would be a good show. I would do that for you.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, alright. Alright, future collaboration. Well, fantastic. Thanks for running through some of those. But if someone, say, were to want to find more of these stories and your very detailed breakdowns, where might they go?

Kenny Biddle: They can go to SkepticalInquirer.org. Most of my stuff is on there. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: There's a lot of really good breakdowns, like the ones we're talking about with the actual photos. So, if you're having a hard time visualizing some of this and you're like, "Wait a second, I need to see it." That's where it is.

Kenny Biddle: And yeah, the Xbox Kinect, I actually had two videos on that page. Because I did one with the original version, and then they released the second generation, which I wasn't going to do but somebody gave me a challenge. Because I had said something about how the stick figures are anchored, the phantom ones, the ghost ones.

Ross Blocher: And now with version two, they're like, au contraire!

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, somebody was like, "Hey." Actually, two people the same day sent me emails saying, "There's a YouTube channel where a guy's using this, and the stick figures are walking around like people." So, I was like, alright, that can't happen with the first generation, so let me look. And I looked, and I was like, oh shit, they are! They're moving around.

Ross Blocher: Let's update this.

Kenny Biddle: So, I did another video. Started that video not knowing how to do it. I think I say it in the beginning like, "I don't know how this is done, you're gonna learn with me. We're gonna figure this out together." And I was able to make a stick figure walk into a scene and knock a doll off the shelf by itself. So, you had a nonphysical stick figure knocking off a physical object on camera with the camera never moving. And I was like, wow, this is amazing. Once I figured it out—which is in the video; I tell you exactly how I do it. Once you figure it out, it's easy to do any of these things. You can have multiple stick figures in the scene all interacting.

Ross Blocher: Microsoft Ghost 2.0.

Kenny Biddle: Yes! It was fun.

Ross Blocher: Standard Plus Edition.

(Kenny laughs.)

So, you have a couple of other amazing projects. I love that you will watch TikTok videos and reply to them. So, you'll find people who have posted some kind of clever jump cut or just their take on something that they've seen, and you'll just give a quick reply to it. "This is what I think about that. You know, I suspect this." You'll just kind of walk us through your thought process, which I find super helpful.

Kenny Biddle: It's fun.

[01:10:00]

I mean, it's a distraction, because TikTok is the fastest growing platform, social media platform. And everyone that I know uses it in some fashion, and you can do 30 second videos. You can do 10-minute videos, and you can put a lot of content out there all day long. And going through it, it's an easy platform for paranormal things to be put up. There's so many channels where like, "Oh, my house is haunted. Look at this poltergeist activity." And so, I scroll through stuff like that like, "You know what? I think I can do that. I think I can recreate that. I wonder if I can—yeah, let me try it." And I have the whole CFI office to try it, which is great. I got stairways, I got hallways, I got open areas, I got all kinds of things!

Ross Blocher: Yeah, whatever kind of environment. Well, eeh, we can recreate that.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah! I've got it, and I have coworkers that are more than willing to participate. Sometimes—I ask Eric all the time, "Hey, I need a ghost."

He's like, "Yep. What do you need? What do I have to do?" And he's been a ghost in a lot of my videos.

(Ross laughs.)

From either like sticking his hand out to try to grab me and then all of a sudden he's gone. You go around the corner, there's no one there, to being like a transparent thing. I've had—

Ross Blocher: All to reproduce these videos that people are posting.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. One of our editors for *Free Inquiry* and sometimes *Skeptical Inquirer*, Nicole Scott, she's been like a—almost like a—what's that? *The Ring*, the girl with the hair? She's been that for me, where like I'm in the library of CFI, and she's on a cart with her hair down. And I'm looking at her, and I'm filming it, and she's like slowly rising up. And I'm like, "Oh my god, oh my god!" And I flick the light on, and she's gone. She disappears completely, and that was such a fun video to make. But everyone's so enthusiastic, because we're like, oh yeah, we can do this! They've dropped stuff on me.

Ross Blocher: Well, and this is fun stuff, like when you get to be participatory and make something. Especially when there's this element of analysis and reproduction. That's really fun to be like, oh, let's reverse engineer this. You're always going to get volunteers. That's great.

Kenny Biddle: And we try to do—when we film that kind of stuff, we always have that second camera that's filming all of us.

Ross Blocher: Because, yeah, you don't want that to go viral for people to say like, "Uh-oh! We have proof of ghosts."

You can then say, "Well, here's the setup."

Kenny Biddle: Here's the setup. And you can see exactly how he did it, where the jump cuts were. And I mean, I love that. I love when the jump cuts happen and the scene entirely changes, but you don't see it because the camera's moving so fast. And it's so much fun to do, to recreate. But yeah, I love showing you—like I'll show the quick clip of someone doing their experience. You know, showing their poltergeist. And then usually I'm like, “Yeeeah, we can do that. Let's go!” And we get to work. And I'll show you the setup, and then I'll show you the finished product. And it's great. I've done anything from disappearing people to portals opening up over my head and dropping something on me out of nowhere, where you see the whole scene and all of a sudden, boom, something's there. To a teleporting teddy bear that got stuck halfway through the portal.

Ross Blocher: Oh, I gotta see that one.

Kenny Biddle: Oh, it's so much fun. So much fun.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, how do people find you on TikTok?

Kenny Biddle: My name on TikTok is KennyBiddleCSI. So, if you look that up, you'll find me, and all the videos are there.

Ross Blocher: He has great responses. Another project you have is the Skeptical Help Bar that you open up every Friday and bring on guests such as yours truly and Susan Gerbic and Brian Dunning and others to just talk openly. And if any of you have any questions along these lines or you see something online that you want to talk about, that's how you can hit up Kenny Biddle in real-time.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, it's every Friday night. It started when the lockdown—pandemic hit.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. You've kept it going.

Kenny Biddle: Nothing to do, you know. We were stuck in, and I was like, “You know what?” It started—it actually started Ask the Skeptic. That's how—I just put it up there, just went live and waited for people to show up, and I did other stuff. (*Chuckles.*) You know, I was working. I look up. Oh, someone commented. Alright, here. You know, and then we'll talk about that for a little bit. And then it really developed into—we have a core following, and it's nice. It's nice. Everyone shows up on a Friday night! I mean, that's pretty cool. After you're allowed out—

Ross Blocher: Your work week and everything. Yep.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. So, yeah, we promote it as—like it's a bar. So, it's basically you go to your local bar. You see your buddies, you have a couple beers, you drink. Obviously, you drink, but you talk about different topics, and you're honest about your opinion. And we add on that it's a learning show. So, it's live. We make mistakes. We keep going through them. If we make a mistake or screw up, we make fun of it. But it's a learning show. So, we look up things. If you ask me a question and I don't know the answer, I tell you, and then we pull up Google. I share the screen, and we start learning together. We figure it out. Because there's

been plenty of times somebody has asked me a question and they're like, "I don't know. I don't know what that is. I have no idea what that is. Let me look it up." Then we do that. So, it's fun. My wife helps me a lot. She takes care of the comment section.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. We keep referring to your wife, the wonderful Donna. And the unsung hero. Well, let's sing the heroism of Donna.

[01:15:00]

Kenny Biddle: She is—my problem was that I was doing a Q&A show. Because this is before I started having guests on; I would get way behind with the questions, like 20 minutes behind. So, I would see questions pop up, and I would try to answer them. And I tend to talk a lot. I don't know if you noticed, but I talk a lot.

(Ross laughs.)

So, by the time I got to the next question, it was 20 minutes after they had posted it. So, my wife was like, "You're behind." And she kept reminding me, my little helper. I loved it. She would love to tell me like, "You're 20 minutes behind, hurry up!"

(They laugh.)

So, finally she offered to help me out.

Ross Blocher: To be there live and keep things moving.

Kenny Biddle: So, she sits right off camera. And she'll give me a question, and if I'm going over like she'll sit there and, you know, do the cutoff. You know?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, he's doing the universal symbol for "cut this out", yeah. Slicing the throat thing.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, like let's move on, or like rolling the fingers like let's move on, let's go. And then—

Ross Blocher: Helpful, real-time editing.

Kenny Biddle: Oh my. It's so much helpful. And I stay on track now.

Ross Blocher: What I love about both of those projects we just mentioned is that they—I think they come out of your restless energy, that you're just so excited about all of this that you want to be constantly engaging with it. 'Cause I don't think either of those were on your job description when you signed up at CFI. It's just, you know, like you found a good way to get the message out there and encourage people to take that second look. How might one do this if one were trying to do this? Which usually seems to be kind of the underlying motivation.

Kenny Biddle: And we have guests on now, like you mentioned, like Brian Dunning. We have Susan Gerbic, Ben Radford. We had you and Carrie on. It's always nice talking to you guys.

Ross Blocher: And all these are on YouTube too. So, you can go back and find them.

Kenny Biddle: They're all there. And then various people. We've had my friend A-Aron, but I call him Aaron—

(Ross chuckles.)

—who's a police officer in Maryland. He came on, and we talked about evidence. Like, what evidence means to him versus what it means to me. And it was a great conversation. Daniel Reed, who is another *SI* author, he came on and talked about different topics about like the Mothman, because he had a different idea about what the Mothman might've been. So, we talked about that, which is really cool. We just recently went to the Mothman Festival.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Is there a quick takeaway of like a new theory about what the Mothman might have been? I think Joe Nickell came down on the owls.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. It's still a bird. It's still a bird, just a different one.

Ross Blocher: Okay, it's still a bird. Oh yeah, there was a special type of bird, right? Kind of like a heron type bird.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. Blue Heron. Giant Blue Heron. Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Okay. That's it. Very cool. I mean, it's so fun. The stories are fun, and we still love the mythos of ghosts, of cryptids, of all of these things. But I think debunking is totally the wrong word too. The investigation process is fun. It's really fun to figure out how did we get this story to the point where it is now.

Kenny Biddle: I always try to just say that debunking is a result of an investigation. It's not what I set out to do. I don't try to debunk things. I try to solve the mystery. That's what it is. It's a mystery. We don't know what caused something or someone—whoever contacts me has an experience, and they don't know what happened. So, they call me, and that's what I do. I try to go in there and see if there's enough information first. That's important. Because if it happened like 60 years ago and the only thing we have is one person's memory, that's not enough.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, at that point you always say, “Oh, well, that's a really cool story. I wish I was there. Wish there was some way we could reproduce that, but thanks for sharing.”

Kenny Biddle: But if there's enough information, then we get into it. And my goal is to solve it, to figure out what happened, and then honestly report that. So, if I can do that—no matter what the answer is. If one day it turns out to be a ghost—

Ross Blocher: Right. And how will we find that out? By people asking the questions and doing this kind of research.

(Kenny agrees.)

Eventually, yeah, if there is the—what is it, the white crow?

Kenny Biddle: Something like that. *(Laughs.)*

Ross Blocher: If eventually there is the real deal, that's how they'll be discovered and verified. Speaking of which, that's a good segue. You and I both participated in a live demonstration today of the CFIIG \$500,000 Paranormal Challenge!

So, this is the largest active prize. You've all heard of the James Randi \$1,000,000 prize. Right now, CFIIG's is the largest one in operation. And we had an applicant during this conference today, as we were talking, who had the claim that she could move clouds under her will. And then also it seemed like she could maybe make them disappear, but it seemed like the primary claim was moving clouds on command in a drastic way that would be noticeable.

(Kenny confirms.)

And all credit to Stan West from the group who was in communication with her, Jim Underdown, who is the head of the CFIIG. They got this set up at the conference, but a bunch of us went out. We were supposed to be down at a little meeting spot. And there were no clouds visible at all. So, we moved all together and got on top of the parking garage by the Flamingo in Las Vegas.

(Kenny confirms.)

[01:20:00]

Where the conference is being held. The things that happen in Vegas! But we found some clouds low lying and, you know—

Kenny Biddle: Off in the distance.

Ross Blocher: Yep! And could sort of identify them and point to individual cloud clusters like, okay, it's right above the Westin hotel. Or you know, let's focus on all the clouds to the left of the pole. It was fun to kind of watch that back-and-forth communication, just to clarify, okay, what clouds are we affecting? Okay. Where are we going to make them move? And I'd love to get kind of your take on this and recounting.

Kenny Biddle: This was the first time I participated in one of these tests with you guys. So, it was fun to watch and see how everyone was so professional. And I want to stress that, because it's not like a bunch of skeptics got together and was like, "Haha, we're going to

prove you wrong!” No, everyone was so polite. So professional, and it just showed the professionalism of the group.

Ross Blocher: I'm glad to hear that. And you know, often we do have the matching shirts. We didn't this time, but you know, like that is something we do think about a lot. Because we don't want to intimidate the person and have too many hangers on or people in their face. You and I were both taking video of the whole process. And you know, I think both of us—I could see it in your actions as well—we're trying not to get between her and the clouds, not to be right in her face. She's probably aware of us, but you know, we didn't want to be distracting her. And another thing that we do before a test is we want to make sure that the person feels confident. Like, are these the conditions? And what were some of her conditions?

Kenny Biddle: So, from what I heard, she had started out by saying she could move the clouds. She could force them to move independently of any environmental conditions. Which, okay, that would be awesome! I mean, that would actually be world-changing.

Ross Blocher: Oh, no kidding! Yeah. Talk about like weather control. Oh, I didn't even think about it at the time, but she'd be like Storm from the *X-Men*.

Kenny Biddle: Yes! That'd be cool.

(Ross agrees.)

Yeah, I'm just totally nerding out now.

(They laugh.)

Ross Blocher: Yeah, yeah. *(Laughing.)* It's so funny; I feel the energy. We both want it to be real.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah like please, please do it. I want to see that!

Ross Blocher: Which is another weird conflict of attitude is you do want them to succeed on some level. And then on the other level, you want it to be real before you give away the half a million dollars.

Kenny Biddle: So, yeah. So, she—that was the first test. She tried to move a specific cloud, and then it didn't go well.

Ross Blocher: So, it was supposed to—as we were looking at it floating just above the Westin hotel to the left, it was supposed to go dramatically to the left, originally to like the Ferris wheel. It's not a Ferris wheel, but the link—it's this giant, spinning thing that looks like a Ferris wheel on steroids. And then we were a little more accommodating and said, okay, just get it over to that new giant dome that they built in Las Vegas, this glowing—I was going to call it a monstrosity. It's an amazing thing to behold at night, but still. Yeah, the cloud was actually kind of going the opposite direction.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. I noticed that the wind was blowing in the opposite direction. Which is good. That's—I mean, as soon as I heard about the test, that's the first thing that came to mind. Like, make sure we know wind direction and ask to go to the opposite direction.

Ross Blocher: Right. And all of you at home or wherever you're listening are thinking clouds do all kinds of things on their own. They disappear. They show up. They—you know, it's fluids in another fluid, and that's all the kind of stuff we were trying to anticipate too. Let's make sure it's not something that can happen naturally. And kept repeating to her, you know, this needs to be noticeable.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. Significant, extraordinary, out of the ordinary. I want to look up and go, “Holy shit.” But nothing happened.

Ross Blocher: We would give her five minutes to accomplish the agreed upon task. And we did this three times in a row, and it just wasn't happening. There were two attempts at moving things and then one attempt at like just clearing out the clouds, like you said, on the left-hand side.

Kenny Biddle: Make them disappear.

Ross Blocher: Right. And then afterwards she was saying, “Well, okay, but I'd kind of like to try—” And she wasn't really saying that it didn't work or that her powers were somehow compromised, but now she started talking more about how, “Well, you know, I'd prefer the clouds be on the side of the sun, because whenever it's really successful they're between me and the sun.” Like, okay, well, that's a different claim. (*Chuckles.*) Might've been helpful to know beforehand.

Kenny Biddle: To me, it was changing. She changed the rules. Well, she tried to change—

Ross Blocher: The goalposts, yeah.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah, she tried to change what she could do with each test, because it didn't work. First, she wanted to move one of the clouds that we picked, and that wasn't good enough. She didn't like that her energy wasn't in that cloud.

Like, that was her words. It was in the clouds in the back, so we changed it to that one. And said, “Move it over.” And we gave it a shorter distance too. And it's hard. Like, when you're trying to do distances or describe the distance, it was going to be a significant distance—especially because the clouds were not moving.

(Ross confirms.)

Like, nothing. Nothing was moving. And then by the third attempt, she had changed it to where she said she could take this whole section of clouds that we saw in the distance and make them disappear.

[01:25:00]

It didn't happen. And one of the things she said that really stood out to me was that when she looked at it, she was like, "Oh, I knew—I saw these were turning like dark gray. So, I knew they were going to fade."

And when she said that I was like, well, so you were expecting them to fade naturally, but you seem to be trying to take credit for that. Like, you were going to try to take credit that in the—within that five minutes, if they dissolved, you were going to take credit when you already knew it was going to happen.

Ross Blocher: Yeah. And I feel like that kind of response is—A) predictable, but B) indicative of how the storytelling normally happens when they're doing this on their own, where they can just kind of retell the story a little bit more, a little bit more each time to give themselves more credit for things that just would have happened regardless. In this case, the clouds, but in other situations, other phenomena.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. I mean, it was going to happen anyway. And I think that's pretty much what we were hearing anyway. As she described what she could do and how she had done it before, it just sounded like she was looking up at the sky, natural phenomenon. And I don't know if she was purposely taking credit for it. I think things happened with the right timing, and it maybe convinced her that maybe she had something to do with it. So, I don't think she was outright lying to us. I don't think she was trying to deceive us.

Ross Blocher: That's a—I think a really important point. She really does believe that she has this ability, and we did not disabuse her of that in this test. And she had a whole process that looked very interesting. She wasn't just staring at the clouds. She was moving her hands. She was looking through her phone camera, doing these very dramatic kind of like waving of the hand and twitching of the fingers. But at the point where she had done these three trials, five minutes each, and nothing had happened, we told her, "Well, officially it was supposed to be three out of five. That's no longer possible."

I think the hardest part of all of these tests that the CFIIG does is the after discussion where you have to, first of all, communicate to them that they did not pass. But then kind of recommend that if they want to reapply again in a year, that they need to test this out on themselves, try it again. And hopefully this time be aware of what we're looking for. And so, we're trying to teach them a little bit of the scientific method. Call it in advance. Write down what it is that you intend to do. And then after it happens, was it exactly what you said, or did you kind of change your expectations as it happened?

Kenny Biddle: Right. And that was part of the professionalism that I saw. You guys really handled it nice. I mean, so nice! It wasn't—again, it was not a point your finger and go, "Aha!"

Ross Blocher: Yeah, yeah. We don't want them to leave with their head down, you know, feeling like they've been defeated or lost or something like that.

Kenny Biddle: Because there's probably already an embarrassment.

(Ross agrees.)

You know, 'cause they did this. And I mean, her hand movements, I was like this is like Dr. Strange, this is the force. You know, we're doing all this stuff the way she was doing it, and nothing's happening. And to be honest, I felt bad for her. I really did, because she really looked like she was into it. Nothing was happening. And here she is in front of all these people. You know, you gotta know—like, if I was her, I'd be like, “They're talking about me. I know they're talking about me.”

But when she left—by the time she left, everyone—like Jim and Stan, they gave her advice. They said, “Hey, you know, if you really believe this, if you know you can do this, then we suggest you practice. You do know what we expect now. You know, we want to see a dramatic movement. Break those clouds away from everything else and fly around.”

Ross Blocher: Because frankly, that is what she said she could do.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. So, practice. You know where we're gonna test you. We're gonna be here next year.

Ross Blocher: Take a video. Send us the video. Show us your progress.

Kenny Biddle: Show us. Yes, show us what's going on. And then, next year, when you come back—if you come back—you should have practiced. You should have mastered it. And we can view it again. We'll test it again. I'll gladly come out.

Ross Blocher: I had a lot of fun doing it. And yeah, I feel like she was well-intentioned, and there was a good conversation afterward. And hopefully she does start to kind of catch on, sort of like you did in your story—just sort of being aware of the underlying factors and kind of how she was telling the story to herself. Or she gets those clouds moving, and we see it and give her half a million dollars.

Kenny Biddle: Awesome! Yeah, like that's even better!

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Somebody gets a Nobel Prize.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. Just like you, I enjoyed it. I enjoy it not because she failed. I want to make that clear. I enjoyed it because it was a good test. It was a very meticulous process. I got to see the entire process, followed it through to the end, and it was nice to see all that and the attitudes of everyone involved. She did not leave angry. She did not leave hurt or crying or just hating us. We left peacefully, smiling. Everyone was fine.

[01:30:00]

Ross Blocher: Which is usually the case. Though sometimes, you know, the next day you hear a different level of—because they've had time to think about it and reflect, and then they come back with a different—I'm trying not to say excuses, but you know.

Kenny Biddle: They are. They really are.

Ross Blocher: Rationalizations. Yeah.

Kenny Biddle: Well, we'll see tomorrow.

Ross Blocher: Well, in a related note, one other thing I'd like to ask you about is you've given a really great presentation on just interacting with other people in the paranormal community, in some of these other belief communities that you were once part of, and that I think you have a certain sympathy with. Because, you know, you remember being in those shoes; I remember being in those shoes. And you talked about a Patrick Swayze rule, and I was wondering if you could just share that. Because I think it's a really good encapsulation of what I hope Carrie and I are doing with our show, but I think that's really important for everyone to remember.

Kenny Biddle: So, the Patrick Swayze rule is basically “be nice until it's time not to be nice”. And it's from *Roadhouse*, one of my favorite movies, even though the acting is eehh, I love it.

Ross Blocher: A great message though.

Kenny Biddle: Yes, it is. Because being nice is the best path to getting along, working together, and moving ahead. Skeptics, believers, they're always like butting heads. We are on two sides of the fence, and we work against each other. We try to inject critical thinking and logic and reason, and sometimes we're a-holes about it. You know? We are.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, yeah. We can all point to times when we, ourselves, have done that. And when, you know, our friends and fellow travelers have done that as well.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. And then you have people on the believer side—which I'm totally stereotyping the two sides—but the believer side where they have these beliefs since birth, and it's very difficult to give up those beliefs. It's very difficult. And when someone challenges them, and you don't have the supporting data or knowledge to back up your belief, you get into defensive mode. You get combative. And both sides do it. But I see believers tend to do it more, because they don't have anything to support their argument. So, instead of fighting—constantly fighting, almost like an eternal struggle, going around and around and around—let's try to find some common ground. Let's be nice. Be polite. Like today, the test. Very polite. We got together. Okay. Let's agree on some terms, and let's figure it out.

So, by finding common ground, working together, being polite and respectful—

Ross Blocher: Keeping the lines of communication open. That's key.

Kenny Biddle: Yes. That's key. Because if I can offer explanations that help you understand better, you can accept them, you can reject them, but at least we're talking. And if you want to reject what I said, okay, that's fine.

Ross Blocher: But that's just this moment. It could change later.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. But later on, you might remember that we talked; we didn't agree, but I wasn't an asshole about it.

(Ross chuckles.)

You know, we were respectful. I was like, alright, you know, that's your choice. I'm not going to force you, but I'm going to go about my business, and maybe they'll come back to me. And that's been my experience. People do come back and ask like, "Hey, you helped me with this before. We discussed this. I'd like your opinion on it." You know, or maybe a few days later they think about what I said and realize, "Oh, you know what? You might've had a point. Okay. Tell me more." So, with that, I say I try to be nice as much as possible, and it gets me invited to paranormal conferences. I go and I speak at them!

Ross Blocher: That's so cool. That's so cool.

Kenny Biddle: Token skeptic. They let me set up my skeptical help booth, which is a version of Lucy's psychiatric stand.

Ross Blocher: *(Laughing.)* From *Peanuts*, yeah. The doctor is in.

Kenny Biddle: Yeah. They let me set it up. They ask questions. I get to interact with people. It's great. There's also the time not to be nice. And that's—I try to keep that on the rare side, but sometimes you just can't have a discussion with someone or they're doing damage. They're doing harm to someone. And when that comes up, I'm not going to be nice about it.

Ross Blocher: I think that end coda of the Patrick Swayze line is important to remember. Because you do want most of the interactions to be nice, but there are parameters. There are boundaries.

(Kenny agrees.)

Well, we could literally go on for hours, and I hope we get to talk some more sometime because you have so many really excellent investigations that you've done. And that's why I do think of you in my mind is like the preeminent person to go to if you've got something that needs to be analyzed, because you have both the knowledge and just the enthusiasm to go after it. So, it's inspiring to me, and it's always fun to see you here at CSIcon.

(Kenny agrees.)

Carrie Poppy: Whoo, what an interview!

(*They laugh.*)

I endorse everything that was said.

Ross Blocher: Carrie hasn't listened to all of it yet, but I assume you will. If not—

Carrie Poppy: I will. (*Laughs.*) I will!

Ross Blocher: By all means, come on the podcast later and decry anything that we got horribly wrong.

Carrie Poppy: No, I love the work that they do out there, and Kenny's great. We've been on his show before.

Ross Blocher: Yeah! And he's just in the trenches, always looking for fun investigations.

[01:35:00]

So, we'll link in the show notes and on the Facebooks the links to some of the articles that we mentioned here. But yeah, check out his stuff, his writing for *Skeptical Inquirer*. It's awesome.

(*Carrie cheers.*)

And speaking of interviews and following up on a recent one, Brian Dunning's documentary, *The UFO Movie THEY Don't Want You To See* is now on YouTube!

Carrie Poppy: Oh no! Who's they?

Ross Blocher: Just popped up there. You know, the Kevin Trudeau shadow government people.

Carrie Poppy: Mmm, theeeey. Got it.

Ross Blocher: Theeey don't want you to see it. Yeah. It's supposed to be a bit of an enticement. Like, oh-ho, they don't want—but in this case, “they” is probably a lot of—

Carrie Poppy: Oh, right. It's about—it's like the UFO—

Ross Blocher: The proponents of UFOs.

Carrie Poppy: Right, the one Linda Moulton Howe perhaps doesn't want you to see.

Ross Blocher: Tom DeLonge from Blink-182. They don't want you to see it!

Carrie Poppy: (*Shouting gutturally.*) JIMMY CHURCH!

Ross Blocher: He's one of THEEEY that doesn't want you to see it. George Noory. He doesn't want you to see it.

Carrie Poppy: (*Inaudible.*) They don't want you to see it. Theeey.

Ross Blocher: They don't want you to see it. Theeey. But you can see it on YouTube. So, somebody wants you to see it. And yeah, think that's it for 2023!

Carrie Poppy: Oh my gosh! So, we will come back to review 2023. I mean, not the year, but like what psychics said about 2023.

Ross Blocher: (*Laughing.*) How many stars would you give 2023?

Carrie Poppy: Oh my god. No joke, this was the worst year of my adult life. Yup.

Ross Blocher: Wow! And that's including all these, uh—the heat of the pandemic years.

Carrie Poppy: I think so. I think—well, I shouldn't say worst. Actually, that's not true. It's been sort of a growing time. It's been the most stressful, most stressful year of my life.

Ross Blocher: Yeah, okay. Yep. So, here's looking forward to a 2024 for you, for our listeners, hopefully a lot of positive developments.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Has it been a good year for you?

Ross Blocher: Yeah, a busy year. But yeah. Overall, thumbs up.

Carrie Poppy: Great! Kenny, has it been a good year for you? Kenny?

Ross Blocher: Kenny?

Carrie Poppy: (*Pitching her voice down.*) “Uh-oh! Gotta go!”

Ross Blocher: (*Laughs.*) We've got an “and remember” from him that will be him carrying on the spirit of 2024. Oh, and by the way, our theme music is by Brian Keith Dalton.

Carrie Poppy: This episode was edited by Ross Blocher.

Ross Blocher: Our administrative manager is Ian Kremer!

Carrie Poppy: You can support this and all our interviews and investigations by going to MaximumFun.org/join.

Ross Blocher: Yes! Thank you so much to everybody who supports us and what we do. It makes it possible. We do have social media. I'd say right now, Facebook is the most active of them. You can usually find like some pictures from a recent episode, or if you ping me there and say like, "Hey, where's the picture that you mentioned?"

Carrie Poppy: Yeah, if you tweet at me and ask for like a very specific photo, I'll find it on my phone for you. That's the extent of my social media. I'll do it.

Ross Blocher: I did post Supermodel Jesus there, asking if people were Team Carrie or Team Ross. Oh, it's been very spirited. I would say most people are Team Carrie. They're like, "Meh."

Carrie Poppy: Okay, more just like, "That's fine." Yeah.

Ross Blocher: Even people are like, "Oh, he seems like the kind of guy who would do"—you know, insert obnoxious behavior here.

Carrie Poppy: Oh, okay, okay, okay. Somehow intrinsically unattractive to those people. Yeah. Interesting.

Ross Blocher: Right, right. But others are like, "Oh, dreamy. Yeah, I get it."

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. Well, you know, our mutual friend Stephen Bradford Long, whose show we've both been on—he also finds Supermodel Jesus very attractive.

Ross Blocher: (*Chuckling.*) Very apparently!

Carrie Poppy: I don't want—yeah, I don't want to get too into it, because they'll have to upgrade the rating of this podcast if I sell it out. (*Laughs.*)

Ross Blocher: (*Laughs.*) He takes it to a level I hadn't, but that's cool. Everybody has their own—

Carrie Poppy: Not that there's anything wrong with that!

(*They laugh.*)

Ross Blocher: Indeed. Anyways, yeah, you can find us on some social media.

Carrie Poppy: Yeah. I don't know! Want it bad enough? Go find us!

Ross Blocher: Yeah. Interact and then we'll be like, oh, people are looking at this!

(*They laugh.*)

Carrie Poppy: It's been a really tough year, you guys! We're busy!

Ross Blocher: Uh, but you can also support us by buying a Jumbotron, MaximumFun.org/jumbotron. You can support us at Bookshop.org.

Carrie Poppy: Yes. Bookshop.org/shop/ohno.

Ross Blocher: There we are! I should add some new book recommendations, because I've been—

(Carrie agrees.)

I've been cramming in a lot of books right before the end of the year.

(Carrie agrees.)

This was not a good year for reading. So, you know what? That's always a good barometer that it's not my best year, if I'm having a hard time finding time to read.

Carrie Poppy: Ah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I've read a lot, but not a lot of finishing books, but just a lot of research. Okay, I am going to update my Carrie's Recommendations on Bookshop.org today. That is my commitment to you, the listener.

Ross Blocher: Okay! I'll do mine tomorrow. Okay.

Carrie Poppy: Okaaay! Very good. Clap, clap, clap, clap, clap, clap.

Ross Blocher: Put that on my to-do list as I'm editing.

Carrie Poppy: And remember!

Kenny Biddle: The quote that I always end my shows with is never stop learning.

Music: “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

Promo:

Music: A bouncy beat.

Dave Shumka: *(Rhythmically.)* If you need a laugh, and you're on the go, try S-T-O-P P-O-D-C-A-S-T-I—ugh. *(Sighs.)* Hm.

(Music stops.)

Graham Clark: Were you trying to put the name of the podcast there?

Dave: Yeah, I'm trying to spell it, but it's tricky.

Graham: Let me give it a try.

Dave: Okay!

(Music resumes.)

Graham: *(Rhythmically.)* If you need a laugh, and you're on the go, call S-T-O-P P-A-D—ah, it'll never fit!

[01:40:00]

Dave: No, it will! Let me try.

(Music resumes.)

(Rhythmically.) If you need a laugh, and you're on the go, try S-T-O-P P-O-D-C-O-O-UGH! We are so close!

Graham: *Stop Podcasting Yourself.*

Dave: A podcast, from MaximumFun.org.

Graham: If you need a laugh, and you're on the go.

(Music ends.)

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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Speaker 6: —by you!