

Bumps in the Night!!!!

April 2015 – Issue No. 56

Paranormal “U”

Mass Hysteria Effect

By Tracey Tanner, TnT Paranormal Investigators LLC

Mass Hysteria is defined as “a frenzied emotional state that affects a large number of people at the same time” by www.collinsdictionary.com. There is also something called mass delusions which is described as “rapid spread of false or exaggerated beliefs within a population” (www.csicop.org). These collective delusions appear to occur within a larger population whereas mass hysteria typically occur in tightly knit, smaller groups. “All mass hysterias are collective delusions as they involve false or exaggerated beliefs, but only rarely do collective delusions involve mass hysteria as to do so, they must report illness symptoms”.

Mass hysteria is broken down into two common types: motor hysteria and anxiety hysteria. Motor hysteria typically is a shorter duration such as a day. Its trigger is usually something sudden and threatening such as a strange odor. Motor hysteria can appear gradually over time but takes weeks or months for it to subside. This type of hysteria occurs where there are intolerable social situations. This can range from an extremely strict family household, strict schooling, religious settings where there is excessive discipline, etc.

Anxiety hysteria is exactly how it sounds. This is a psychological condition involving anxiety which leads to hysteria. However, not all hysteria is emotional. In many cases a delusional belief may be hysteria. An example of this could be believing you are overweight, when you aren't or if you believe you are sick when there is nothing wrong with you.

Some notable hysterias are the Hispanic Goatsucker (1975-present) and the Mad Gasser of Mattoon, IL (1944). Residents of Mattoon, Illinois, in September 1944, found themselves in the world media spotlight after many reported imaginary gas attacks by a “phantom anesthetist”. One of first reports was a woman and her daughter who reported that they were left dizzy, nauseated, with a slight difficulty walking after a sweet smelling gas was sprayed on them by a figure lurking near their bedroom window. There was very little evidence and the circumstances were unclear but this did not stop the story from spreading. It hit the Mattoon local gazette by the following evening. When the store was seen by the public, there were 2 other families that reported similar “gas attacks” in their homes prior to the reported incident. Before this was over, over two dozen calls reported similar experiences and most of them were female. All of this occurred from September 1st through September 12th. Researchers concluded that this was a case of mass hysteria.

In 1975, from the months of February and March, there were reports in Puerto Rico of a mysterious ‘thing’ that was attacking domestic and farm animals. These attacks were quite gruesome as the blood was reportedly drained from the animals and there were chunks of flesh missing. Many residents would claim to hear flapping wings and/or loud screeches that seem to coincide with the attacks. Because of the nature of the attacks, locals referred to the mysterious ‘thing’ as “The Vampire of Moca”, also known as the “cattle mutilation mystery”. In 1995, similar attacks have been reported but the attacker was referred to as chupacabras or goatsucker. With these reports the attacker exuded a sulfur-like stench. Web sites have been created due to the high interest in chupacabras with it stopping abruptly in 1996. Many researchers believe that this attacker does not actually exist and is an example of hysteria. The attackers are believed to be mostly dogs, coyotes with mange, and Mexican hairless dogs.

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What does this, if anything, have to do with the paranormal you may ask? Just ghost stories have their way of creating hysteria. The Mad Gasser was a figment of someone’s imagination or perhaps an apparition and that spread quickly. Some consider the chupacabra a paranormal being and look how many years this has continued. While during my research I found that while reports may have dropped off in 1996, I still hear about the chupacabra and its killings to this day. I have also experienced what may be considered mass hysteria while on an investigation. Remember that mass hysteria is ultimately collective delusions. If one person hears a voice or sees a shadow that moved, have you had others in the room suddenly hear and see the same thing? I am not in any way suggesting that more than a few people can experience the same thing. I am merely suggesting that this CAN happen and to be cautious.

Other information:

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/mass-hysteria>

http://www.csicop.org/si/show/mass_delusions_and_hysterias_highlights_from_the_past_millennium/

