

IU Southeast's Annual 'Haunted IUS Walking Tour'

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Each October since 2017, I have hosted a haunted walking tour on the IU Southeast campus. What started as a casual suggestion by a colleague has now snowballed into a yearly event that is not only fun to host, but has revealed the darker side of campus...

Some may wonder how a campus like IUS could even have any paranormal happenings – after all, the current campus location is barely fifty years old. Nonetheless, as soon as I started asking folks around campus to share their personal experiences, the stories started rolling in. The campus police in particular had many stories to share with me – two, in fact, about the library itself. One of those stories involves an area of the library very near my office. I guess that's what I get for digging around, huh?

Personal stories aren't the only materials I use for the tours, though. I spend a fair amount of time digging through the archives of the student newspaper also. I use archived materials for two reasons – first, it can help verify when someone reports a story to me, like the memory someone had of that one time noted paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren came to campus or the time there was a funeral held in the Hoosier Room. Additionally, it's a wonderful place to find additional stories to add to the tour.

Like the 1974 eyewitness drawing of a UFO hovering over campus or the time two students found an older community member slumped dead over the wheel of their car in the early 2000s. Ok, sometimes it's a bit more macabre than paranormal, but the archives are a seemingly-endless trove of information to be discovered. Over the last three years, I've always relied on an assistant who can



help me engage the crowd, especially as we move from location to location around campus. The first year my assistant and I both dressed as witches and she discussed her experiences as part of a local paranormal group. The second year a friend joined me dressed as Medusa and shared her own personal experiences along the way. This year, another student and friend is helping me – someone with tour guide experience and personal paranormal experiences. I owe a large amount of success to these co-hosts who help ensure a seamless and fun

experience for our attendees.

I always begin my tours by talking briefly about the role of stories in our lives and about the particular role that the paranormal plays in our lives as well. Everyone has a ghost story or knows someone who does. I start the tours just at sunset, as the sky is slowly turning that bluish black color and the night is closing in on us. We stop at certain points to offer folks a chance to ask questions or to share their own experiences, related to campus or not. Last year was an especially interesting tour as a student passing by saw our group and overheard us and chimed in with an experience he had just had a few short weeks prior. It seems there is a mysterious figure lurking around one of the dorms...

I host these tours not just because it's a fun event, and not just because I'm personally obsessed with all things paranormal, but also to create a welcoming environment for people who may wish to share their own paranormal experiences. There's a certain stigma, I think, for being an academic who believes in ghosts and things that go bump in the night. These tours are my way of breaking that stigma and showing that the weird can be a wonderful thing to explore, no matter who you are. When people, especially students, see their faculty members musing about and embracing this weird world that's all around us, maybe they'll feel empowered to express their own weird interests as well. That's my hope, at least. For those reasons, and many more, you can find me each October wandering around the IUS campus and telling ghost stories to anyone who wants to listen. And in the meantime, if you have your own paranormal experiences you wish to share, my inbox is always open. What's your spooky IU story?

