



John E.L. Tenney is a writer, researcher, and lecturer with a broad span of interests across the anomalistic and paranormal spectrum. His writing and lectures cover but are by no means limited to topics such as conspiracies, UFOs, ghosts, parapsychology, and cryptozoology. With over two decades researching, writing and thinking about these subjects, John is a respected individual with an open but objective perspective on the subject.

John E.L. Tenney's "Weird Lectures" have been attended by over 40,000 over the years and he is also the producer the award winning "Realm of the Weird" podcast, which delves into the case files of Mr Tenney's own research.

OWNE welcomes and introduces....

John E.L. Tenney

***OWNE:** First John, thanks for taking the time to do this interview, we appreciate it.*

From what I've read in your articles and heard from your interviews, you typify the open minded but sceptical and informed approach. Twenty plus years researching, investigating, writing and taking about the paranormal is impressive, especially considering most investing that amount of time end up being either a confirmed believer or hardened non-believer. What maintains your open mindedness and scepticism (used in its true sense) and what still fuels your motivation?

***JOHN:** I was very lucky to grow up not only with open-minded parents but also with great mentors. When I started actually investigating and researching strange and anomalous occurrences I had already adopted and was refining my investigative practices. I didn't start out in the field of "paranormal" research, my specialty was historical/ governmental research and my mentors in that field stressed that we were trying to set down as un-biased an account of history as possible. When my interests began to shift toward the high strangeness individuals were/have experiencing I couldn't help but bring a rational, common sense, unbiased process with me. It's a struggle to live without a concreted belief system but if I am*

being honest, not only to myself but others as well, I have to focus on the data and not a personal judgement on these experiences.

OWNE: *I think you mentioned in an interview that you started out as a researcher for the TV show "Unsolved Mysteries", though please correct me if I'm wrong. You also said how invaluable this experience was in terms of your own independent research. I'm always looking to expand my knowledge and research methods. So in terms of the more journalistic/archivist elements of research what advice, techniques or literature can you suggest or point people in the direction of?*

JOHN: My first solo "professional" research job was doing investigative and historical work for some episodes of Unsolved Mysteries back in the 1990's and it was an experience that I feel everyone should have in the sense that you really get to see from an insider's perspective how entertainment works even when it's meant to entertain. TV, Movies and any other popular culture media are designed to make money, that is the main goal. If you happen to educate people along the way, and I'm not speaking of independent outlets, at least not most, than educating is fine as well. Knowing that money is behind the choices made not only opens your eyes to the real "fake" reality which is portrayed on TV and in films but it can act to solidify your integrity. I've walked away from multiple shows due to the influence of producers trying to manipulate evidence in order to drum up more viewers. Trashing 25 years of research for 22 minutes of fame is a poor decision for anyone.

OWNE: *I know you're an advocate for the awareness of the history of paranormal and psychical research, and have commented on the lack of it amongst amateur paranormal groups. Why do you feel this aspect of paranormal research is both essential and beneficial?*

JOHN: The smartest (and dumbest) people in the world have written books and in doing so have given us the opportunity of experiencing their wisdom, or lack of it. The history and research done by those who have come before us are as relevant now as ever. I truly believe that the paranormal "community" should know where it has been so we don't waste a lot of time rehashing what has already been done. So many of the "greats" of psychical research, Gurney, Myers, Podmore, etc. have left us the most helpful of clues with which we can unwind to perhaps discover new and better means of investigating.

OWNE: *Your recent book "One Last Thing: Strange, curious and humorous conversations with the other side" covers EVPs and ITC (Instrumental Trans-Communication). Can you talk to us a little about this book and your thoughts about this area of research?*

JOHN: The book is a very silly labor of love. I have spent 20+ years experimenting with E.V.P. and in all of that time there have only been a handful of examples that I would be willing to say are "as yet unexplained". The book is short, containing about 50 transcripts or E.V.P. responses, and I feel they showcase just how weird not only the responses can be but how fascinating the "other side" itself might be. I still use a somewhat traditional method of E.V.P. experimentation, pioneered by the likes of Raudive and Jurgenson, which allows me only to hear the responses after the recording session is over. I still use analog tapes which I find, when they produced "results", are clearer and more intelligible. I do find it interesting

that so many people perform E.V.P. experiments with newer digital recorders since we never really understood why analog tapes were working in the first place. A pet peeve of mine is that so many people in the paranormal community are so quick to change their methods of investigation without ever really understanding how the original methods worked.

OWNE: *I believe these days, when you carry out your "field" investigations, you do so on your own. You have though been part of investigative groups in the past. What was your deciding factor in continuing as a solo investigator, and what have you found to be the main advantages and disadvantages between investigating as part of a team and on your own?*

JOHN: I began as an individual researcher, with mentors and fellow researchers, in the mid-80's and by 1993 I had formed a "team" of investigators who were very apt in their specialized fields of research. Unfortunately egos usually become involved at some point and I found that more time was being spent arguing over who was supposed to be doing what than actually doing anything. I left my own team in 1998 and returned to a much more comfortable, individual style of research. I still have numerous friends with whom I can share, explore and construct ideas but since there is no "team" there are none of the uncomfortable situations which arise when personalities clash. With the advent and popularization of the internet and social media I have full almost immediate access to hundreds of other researchers, teachers, specialists so I feel that, for me, working with a team or group would just be adding a difficulty into the equation that I don't need.

OWNE: *OWNE have a policy that we do not conduct investigations in private residences, that we will not go into someone's home to conduct an investigation. This probably separates us from 99% of other investigators. We certainly don't look down on those that carry out these investigations, but essentially we feel there are too many potential ethical or well-being issues for both the investigators and the client. Of course we also realise that this stance reduces potential research opportunities for us. How do you go about this type of investigation yourself, and how do you feel generally about amateur groups going into people's homes, bearing in mind some of the issues involved and some of the nonsense groups at times present as fact?*

JOHN: My research protocols are very strict, in-depth and have been honed over many years so although I do investigate private residences it is usually less than three times a year. When I am contacted by a client, and after discussing the case, interviews, etc. there sets in motion a sometimes months long process before I even step foot in a house. Historical research, geographical, genealogical research, psychological evaluations, etc. after these requirements which I have set forward are followed through on usually no on-site investigation is even needed. If in-home, on-site research does need to be done it's another 2 or 3 months of research. So, I do find it somewhat disturbing that so many groups are willing to basically walk in "cold" to a location and within a few days are willing to make a determination about what a client might be experiencing. I have never told anyone that their home is haunted and I would have some personal issues with anyone/team/group that ever would tell a client such a thing. There is a way to explain to a client that something "might" or "could possibly be" in their home without exciting their imaginations and causing more problems and anxiety than

would be necessary but I have found many individuals who would rather, sadly, take the route of assuming that they know best and therefore state conclusively that a location is "haunted".

OWNE: *A great deal of what paranormal researchers and investigators have to work with are personal experiences, either the experiences of the witnesses or the investigators themselves. Have you yourself had any notable personal experiences? By notable I don't just mean experiences that at the time or still evade a prosaic or natural explanation, but maybe experiences that you have been able to account for, and in doing so gave you new or essential insights into paranormal experiences?*

JOHN: The stories I tell in Realm of the Weird are the weirdest life/thought altering experiences I'm willing to discuss in public. I do have personal experiences which go beyond even those tales but I feel that those happenings are uniquely mine and occurred to me for my benefit. I have ideas, which I discuss in my lectures, that were shaped by those unspoken experiences by I never actual speak of them outside of family and friends.

OWNE: *Your bio mentions being contacted by The Vatican to participate in a sanctioned exorcism. How did this come about and what did the experience involve? Has this experience effected how you perceive or think about the paranormal, either generally or in regard to specific phenomena?*

JOHN: That situation was a very weird one and came about due to some contacts I had made over the years. There is much that I cannot discuss about it due to an extensive NDA I signed with the Vatican. After the experience was over I wasn't even allowed to, nor did I want to, discuss it for many years. When a person is exposed to such a startling occurrence it does have an effect on your thought processes and for me I had to really find a way to reconcile what I had seen and heard, which seemed unexplainable at the time, with my understanding that it may be something which could be explained at a later time. The entire process did help to move my ideas into new realms of questioning the universe and indeed reality itself but again, as a person with no beliefs, it was a struggle to stay unbiased.

OWNE: *I've seen that you have a book due out this year called "Haunted Saucers", regarding possible connections between UFOs and haunting type phenomenon. Personally, I find the notion that differing phenomenon may be connected or on a continuum, as opposed to simply categorical, an intriguing one (assuming of course there is any kind of external reality to the phenomenon itself). If nothing else, it's a firecracker under the arse of those whose beliefs are so vested and entrenched! It's certainly been documented that UFO and Bigfoot researchers for example have disregarded or brushed aside the stranger elements of cases that don't fit their view or theories. Maybe the answers (or at least better questions) are to be found in the outlying data. Maybe when it comes to the paranormal, there are no outlying data! Can you give an overview of the book and why you felt the topic salient enough to put into print?*

JOHN: The topic of a combinatorial system of anomalous phenomena has almost always been a focal point of my research. We see the evolution of these weird phenomena in

something as simple as language. In the early 1990's while interviewing clients who believed themselves to have been abducted by extraterrestrials, and indeed throughout the popular history of abductees, we find their experiences are similar to what many people experience during NDE's, Demonic Possessions, Hauntings, etc. It seems that there are shared experiences which due to the lack of linguistically concepts get categorized and classified into different fields of study. Haunted Saucers will look to see if by combining the information drawn from all fields of anomalistic studies we might glimpse a more intriguing situation than what we think we may be experiencing

OWNE: *You've been involved in paranormal and related TV programmes over the years, both on and off screen. I can't let someone with that experience go without raising some of the issues surrounding them. In your experience, how are these shows typically put together? Are the "phenomena" they capture most likely staged reconstructions of reported events, outright fakes or genuine anomalous captures? I'm sure there's a lot that goes on behind the scenes, as with any TV show I imagine, that the fans of them don't think about – and maybe should.*

JOHN: I can only speak from my personal experiences but there always seems to be, as I stated earlier, the manipulation of what is being presented in the hopes that it will draw in more viewers and therefore more money for the production company or TV network. If the "reality" shows on TV were actually finding as much data as they would like the audience to believe then these locations would be flooded with academics and scientists from around the world and the stars of the shows would be receiving Nobel prizes for answering some of the greatest questions humankind has ever known. Since neither of those scenarios are happening I have to question what they are showing.

OWNE: *I think your "Realm of the Weird" series is wonderful. Listening to it, I can almost put myself in the shoes of a 1950's teenager listening to some Rod Serlingesque radio broadcast late at night! For those not familiar with it, could you just give a background to the idea and creative spark behind the show?*

JOHN: Ever since I was a kid I loved shows like The Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, etc, as well as being a comic book and sci-fi nerd. I had a comedy podcast a few years ago and after it ended I thought about doing another show focused on anomalous news and interviews with researchers in this field. When I saw how many people were doing podcasts and radio shows like that I realized I did not want to be one of those shows so I can up with Realm of the Weird. I had all of these real investigations I had done over the last 25 years so there was no shortage of material and it just made sense to dramatize them and present them in a format which I had grown up loving. It does sometimes become a hassle since all of my clients sign NDAs with me and before I can write and produce an episode I have to get them to sign off on using material from their cases. I do find it funny that some listeners get upset when new episodes don't come out on time or if there are a few months between episodes because, for me, it took 25 years to have these experiences! I do hope people enjoy them because I think that upon listening to them you'll find that although some are just "ghost stories" others have far-reaching and shocking ideas behind them.

OWNE: *I get the impression that your reading is wide and eclectic. Which researchers or writers have been most influential to you? Are there any researchers, authors or books you'd like to turn people onto?*

JOHN: I read a lot and I read everything. Having a well-rounded grip on our world is, I think, key to forming new and exciting ideas. I have found inspiration in authors who write nothing about paranormal phenomena, Octavia Paz, Kenneth Patchen, Aldous Huxley, but due to their insights on our shared reality you can't help but internalize and develop new thoughts. In the world of anomalistic or paranormal phenomena I find authors and researchers like Jacques Vallee, John Keel and Rupert Sheldrake fascinating.

OWNE: *We again thank John E.L. Tenney for the interview. We encourage everyone to check John E.L. Tenney at the following websites;*

weirdlectures.com

realmoftheweird.com