ETV films ghost documentary in Clemson area

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CLEMSON — William Richardson doesn't believe in ghosts, but that doesn't stop the South Carolina ETV official from bringing such stories to life on the small screen.

On Monday, Richardson, who is director and producer of "Ghosts and Legends of South Carolina II," — which make up the Carolina Stories documentary specials for the network — stopped in Clemson and Pendleton for his latest adventure. Richardson and his camera crew were on hand at the Old Stone Church Cemetery in Clemson to interview Clemson University historian Jerry Reel before traveling to Hunter's Store in Pendleton to interview Jo McConnell of the Pendleton Historic Society.

Carolina Stories' "Ghosts and Legends of South Carolina II" is a 30-minute, locally produced documentary that takes a look at Palmetto State's ghosts, legends and other chilling mysteries. From the scenic Upstate to the moss-canopied streets of the Coast, ETV visits a college bell tower, a haunted railroad and other sites to uncover stories that have captivated listeners for decades.

Richardson said the purpose of the documentary isn't to convince people that ghosts exist. Instead, he enjoys telling stories that have been passed down through the generations and visiting the areas where they originated.

"You basically learn a lot about the history of the places," Richardson said.

But Richardson said there is much preparation that must take place before he visits a site, including conversations with local historians.

" You can talk to people who do ghost tours and fright fest-type jobs, but historians have more accurate types of information that can tie it together more," he said. "I've talked to people who do ghost tours, and you're not sure whether they're making things up to make it more appealing to people who are listening. In talking to historians, you learn more about the town legend without adding to it or making it more unreal."

Last year, Richardson said areas he visited included "The Legend of the Lizard Man in Lee County;" "Annie's Inn," a haunted bed and breakfast in Aiken; "Ghosts of Charleston," which included the old jail and exchange house; and the Abbeville Jail.

ture with video."

When asked why ghost stories seem to be so popular even today, Richardson explained, "I think people love mysteries, and there are a lot of things in the world that people don't understand."

Jerry Reel, professor emeritus at Clemson University who first joined the faculty in 1963 and is a local historian, took part in the Old Stone Church cemetery and grounds visit. With the camera rolling, Reel provided background into the grave of a woman, who along with her male friend, was murdered by her brother. The family refused to accept her body, so she was buried in the Old Stone Church Cemetery.

"The grave has been hard to keep and hard to maintain," Reel said, adding, "This is the first time that flowers planted here (about a year ago) have grown, and the marble headstone has been hit with lightning through the years. Some people believe she is a witch or ghost."

The Old Stone Church and Hunter's Store segments of the "Ghosts and Legends of South Carolina II" documentary are scheduled to air the Sunday and Thursday (Oct. 25 and 29) prior to Halloween. Ghosts and Legends In South Carolina I and II will air back-to-back.



Jessica Nelms/Staff

"Ghosts and Legends of South Carolina II" Director/Producer William Richardson films local historian Jerry Reel in the cemetery at Old Stone Church in Clemson.