

# *Living with Ghosts*

*By Christine B.*

People ask me what it is about the Paranormal that intrigues me so much; and why do I feel this overwhelming need to write about it and to investigate it. I guess the best answer I can give to that question is “because its there!” Not only is it there now, but it has been “there” since recorded time. There are stories about ghosts in the bible and spirits and other unexplained creatures depicted in cave drawings. As long as man as roamed this earth, the dead have roamed it with him. Ghost stories have been handed down through generations; and almost as soon as the camera was invented, they have even shown up in photographs.

The first ghost story I ever heard was told to me by my grandmother, who had lived with ghosts her whole life. It was 1964 and I was 16 years old at the time. My grandmother told me and my family that she had gotten up in the middle of the night for a bathroom run, but was interrupted by the sound of footsteps coming up her basement stairs. As she stood in the hallway, which had a direct view of the three bedrooms around her and the landing at the top of the basement stairs as well, she heard the cuckoo clock behind her strike three am. At first she thought the footsteps might be coming from her oldest son, who made it a habit of late night homecomings, but she could she him fast asleep in his bedroom from where she was standing. At that point she was too petrified to move. She knew the footsteps were approaching the landing and she couldn't take her eyes off the area.

Moments later she saw, quite clearly, although it was dark in the house, her brother-in-law and his former wife standing at the top of the stairs, arm in arm. As she watched them in awe, they both smiled at her, and then turned around and walked through her back door. At that point my grandmother decided that she didn't have to go to the bathroom after all, and jumped back into bed. The next morning at 7:00am they received a phone call reporting that my grandfather's brother Nick had passed away at the exact time my grandmother saw him and his dead wife by her back door.

That story started me on a paranormal investigative journey that has lasted my entire life. I began reading anything I could get my hands on regarding paranormal activity, and found there are many more books on the subject than I could ever read in one lifetime.

After I married, my husband and I moved into a home in 1969 located in North Royalton, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. We knew as soon as we drove up the 450 foot driveway that it was the home for us. The home was all brick and nested in towering pine trees. We moved in and were quite happy in our new home. Things were relatively quiet there until my husband and I decided to remodel the kitchen. Our daughter was about a year old at the time. I have learned that resident ghosts do not appreciate the living messing with their homes, and the paranormal activity begun with the first blow of my husband's hammer.

My husband worked two jobs while I was a stay-at-home mother. One evening as my daughter and I were down the basement doing laundry I heard something fall heavily onto the living room floor above us. Since I knew that we were the only two people in the house at the time, I was extremely unnerved by the sound. Convinced that someone had entered the house, I took my daughter by the hand and quietly guided her up the stairs and out the back door of the home. We ran to a neighbor's home and I called my husband in a panic. He rushed home. He and a group of neighbors searched the entire home for an intruder. The only thing they found out of place was a hand made ceramic pot that I had always kept on one of the end tables in the living room. It was on the floor near the table. That pot weighed at least ten pounds and would not have fallen off that table (and never did again, by the way) of its own accord.

After that incident I saw people out of the corner of my eye on a daily basis in the house. I saw the same two people so often that it became normal to me, and I just assumed everyone else in the house saw them, as well. Things also began disappearing at the house. The first thing to disappear was an antique rifle that had been given to my husband by his diseased grandfather. Since I have never been a proponent of guns, I asked that my husband keep the rifle in

the attic storage space and not purchase any bullets for it. He did as I asked and the rifle was placed right below the light switch between the studs to the right of the entrance of the attic. One day when I entered the attic and turned on the light I noticed the rifle was gone. I was very upset because we had had house guests that stayed in the upstairs bedroom for a while, so I assumed they had taken the rifle when they moved out. Since the house guests were relatives, I decide to search the attic before accusing them of purloining the rifle. I took every box and item out of the attic and the rifle could not be found. I resigned myself that I would have to write a letter to my cousin and ask him to return the rifle. Before I could do that, however, I went into the attic again about two weeks later. I switched on the light and to my astonishment, there was the rifle, standing between the two studs as it always had.

The disappearing rifle was only the first of many things that disappeared on a regular basis in the house. Sometimes the things that were "taken" eventually were returned, other times, we never saw them again. Another incident that I remember vividly was the case of the disappearing buttons. I had been working on a yellow jacket for weeks and had finally come to the point where all I had left to finish was sewing on the buttons. By this time we had a son too, and as my daughter and son watched TV one evening, I sat in my reclining rocking chair sewing the buttons on the front of the jacket. The phone rang and as I left the room I warned my children not to disturb the chair I had been sitting in. Five minutes later I came back to find the buttons I had left on the arm of the chair were gone. At first I blamed my children for disturbing the chair, but they swore to me that they had never left their spots in front of the TV. We searched the entire living room looking for those buttons, to the point of me flipping over the chair thinking that the buttons might have slipped down between the seat and the arms. After about an hour of reconnaissance, I gave up and put my children to bed. When I came back into the living room, there were the buttons, exactly where I had left them on the left arm of the chair. I uttered a quiet "Thank you!" and sat back down and finished sewing on my buttons.

Twice we put the home on the market before we actually sold it in 1982. Both times the Realtors who listed the home did one open house each, but no others. Both reported that they heard cars driving up our driveway all day long, but when they went to door, no one was ever there. That was another regular occurrence at the house. We eventually learned to ignore the sound of a "car" coming up our 450 foot gravel driveway, because no matter how often we heard it, 95% of the time when we went to investigate, no one was there. There was a time when I was cleaning the breezeway that attached our garage to our main house when I swore I not only heard my husband's car come up the driveway, but actually heard it pull into the garage. My husband needed a new muffler at the time, so the sound of his car was very distinctive. I waited for several minutes for him to enter the breezeway. I finally went into the garage to find out why he not come into the house yet, and found the garage empty, and there was no car in the driveway. I shook my head and went back into the breezeway to finish cleaning.

I took college classes in the evening in the 70's. One of the classes that kept me at school late was my photography class. I loved working in the darkroom, and was often the last student to leave it at night. By the time I came home, often my entire family would already be in bed. One of those evenings, I was so tired that I couldn't put my binders of negatives away where they belonged in the vestibule closet. (A vestibule was a unique building design to the eastern United States. It is a small hallway, usually with a small closet, between the front door and the rest of the home. In this case, there was an outside door, the vestibule hallway and closet, and an inside door before entering the living room. ) I placed my binders on the floor in the vestibule, and then closed the inner door. I then took my shower and went to bed. The next morning I was the first person in the house to wake up. As I walked to the kitchen through the living room I noticed that the door to the vestibule was open, and so were both of my negative binders! And the photo negative pages were thrown all over the vestibule floor. Now this spooked me a bit, since whoever/whatever had strewn those pages all over the floor not only had to open the inside vestibule door, but also had to open the binder rings to do it!

For some reason, spirits have a connection to pennies. No one is exactly sure what the connection is, but often paranormal experiences will have something to do with pennies. Actually, I have found that putting a stack of pennies in a home is a good test to see if it is haunted. If the pennies remain undisturbed, there are probably other explanations for the amoralties one might be experiencing. One evening, after coming home from visiting a friend who played cards games with my son and daughter, they stacked the pennies my friend gave them on their dressers before going to bed. The next morning I found my daughter and son both asleep huddled together on the couch in the living room. When I asked them why they didn't sleep in their beds they told me they were too scared to sleep in their rooms. My daughter took me into her bedroom to show me that there were several pennies all over her

floor. Since I had cleaned my house the day before, I knew her floor had no pennies on it when I put my daughter to bed. She told me that after she fell asleep she woke up at 1 am to the sound of the cuckoo clock (my grandmother had given me one!). After she heard the cuckoo go off once, she also heard a creaking on her floorboards in her bedroom, and then the sound of a penny falling onto the wood floor, and rolling around the room before it eventually landed on its side. This routine continued in her room at 2 am, 3 am, and at 4 am. By that time she was so petrified that she went on the couch to sleep. My son joined her there a short time later, claiming the same thing had happened to him! I went into his room, and also found pennies on his floor. I guess the moral of this story is: if you are going to test a ghost with a stack of pennies, make sure the pennies are not in your bedroom!

As I mentioned, I would see two people out of the corner of my almost on a daily basis at the house. The house was an eastern bungalow, which meant it had two bedrooms downstairs and one large bedroom and a half bath upstairs, a hallway with a half wall and the staircase curved around it taking you to the first floor. There was a woman I saw just about every time I descended those stairs looking over the half wall at me as I made my way to first floor. Since our bedroom was the upstairs room, this was a frequent occurrence. The man I saw the most often, however. He had dark hair and a full beard, and he was dressed in 18<sup>th</sup> century period dark clothing. Seeing this gentleman from another time out of the corner of my eye never unnerved me. It seemed to me that both spirits were non violent, as the pranks they pulled were merely an attempt to let us know they were there. About a week before I finally moved out of the house, however, the gentleman ghost wanted to make sure he made himself more known to me. I was divorced at the time, and was going to be married to my second husband. I had sold the house in 1981 and I was doing a final cleaning before moving out. I was alone in the house at the time, completely lost in thoughts of our new place and with my marriage plans. While in my son's bedroom I suddenly felt I was no longer alone. I turned to look into the living room and saw, quite plainly, a man slowly, (drift) move past the doorway. That was the first time I had ever seen the gentleman ghost straight on. Naturally, I was a bit shaken, but went on with my cleaning. (I cleaned a lot back then!) I few minutes later I moved my cleaning into the living room. There was a large mullioned paned window that presented a view of the pine trees that surrounded a driveway turnaround at the front of the house. I had a plant stand in front of the window and was there cleaning the stand when I felt the entire atmosphere of the house change. It became "thick" and heavy—but not cold as is usually the case with ghostly sightings. The closest analogy I can give is that the air felt like it was as thick as water. As I kneeled in front of the picture window in the living room I could feel something move through the house from the back door, through the kitchen, into the living room and then stop behind me. All the hairs on the back of my neck and arms stood at full attention at that point. Fighting to keep my composure I said aloud, "I know you don't want me to go, but I have to leave. You're free to come with me, but I have to move on." As soon as I had said that, the room's atmosphere became normal again and I no longer felt the spirit standing behind me. That was actually the last time I saw the gentleman spirit. I'm hoping he moved on as well.

I never did any investigation of the property in North Royalton, but I know the lady and gentleman spirit that inhabited that house were from another time. I'm sure the home that was originally on that site had long been demolished by the time my home was built in 1948. I saw spirits at another home I lived in not too far from that home in North Royalton. I saw these spirits outside the home, however, never inside. My children (by that time I had twin daughters) saw them as well, and even followed a group of civil war spirits into the woods near the playground they frequented, (much to my shock and dismay!) I've seen other ghosts out of the corner of my eye, so I know they are still there, in that dimension closest to the one we exist in.

For me, the "paranormal" is not that "para" but more the normal. People seem not to want to accept anything that frightens them (like the world being round, or the possibility of man riding in a machine that flies above the ground). Eventually, however, science has a way of convincing everyone. And the most important part of science is investigation—trial, error and defining evidence until theory becomes reality for everyone.