

Ghosts. Fact or fiction? That is a question man has wrestled for centuries, but still has no answer. Some people believe ghosts do walk among us. Others believe there is something unknown and supernatural out there, but are more reluctant to say ghosts haunt us. Still others are just non-believers - we die and that's it. No hangings around. No nothings. But at Western Kentucky University, many believe there are restless spirits hanging around. Some are friendly; some aren't. But this isn't an attempt to disprove or prove ghosts exist. It is simply a composite of the stories people on campus have heard or have witnessed in some way. The stories are here for all to see, and for you to decide if you want to believe them or not.

Other students have researched the same topic, and their papers lie in the Kentucky Archives. Some are people telling things they have heard; some stories are about ghost stories that sound like ones passed through generations of college students around the country. These stories are random interviews from people from different areas on campus. This paper focuses on the most popular ghost stories here. The only purpose to get more than one person at least for each story to compare differences and similarities. The only thing expected was any kind of information, especially personal experience information, about Western's ghosts. There is plenty of both. There are four tapes of interviews with several people, all telling their own story.

Each person was interviewed at his or her convenience

and in their settings: a dorm lobby or recreation room, an office or the haunted house itself. They were not interviewed with a prepared list of questions. They were relaxed and only asked to describe the stories they know and experiences they witnessed. None were uncomfortable and willins to provide information. And provide they did. Some interviews took 30 minutes to an hour. None were under 20 minutes.

For space purposes, this will include some of the interviews, but not all. This paper could easily be 100 pages long, but to keep length down, it will focus on the ghosts of Potter, Barnes-Campbell, McLean halls and the the AZD house. Interviews about Van Meter and the Lambda Chi house have been taped, but those and others were ruined because of microphone problems and can be barely heard. There are newspaper articles of Van Meter hall that are attached. I transcribed the interviews I could hear and the ones I redid. There is also other attached articles I found on Schneider Hall's ghost.

One of the most intriguing stories is about the ghost of McLean Hall. It is not a ghost as well known as the one in Van Meter or Potter halls. To Terri Hutchinson, Jeanette Brown and Annette Southard, the ghost of Mattie McLean is very well known. Some of the other girls interviewed had also heard of her. "I didn't hear about it until my second year (in McLean Hall)," said Hutchinson, a fifth year senior from Louisville. "And then I didn't even think anything about it until just last year, and we started playing with the ouija board. And that's when we started seeing things and hearing things." We are Hutchinson's

other friends in McLean Hall. Now, Hutchinson is a desk clerk at Potter Hall and lives off campus. But she vividly remembers Mattie. Like more than half of those interviewed, her experiences with the supernatural at Western began by playing with the ouija board, which would make a fascinating paper itself. Hutchinson said she and her friends played the board constantly and talked to Mattie, who is a friendly, motherly type. They asked her questions about her family and job, and they would verify it in the Kentucky or Helm Library Archives and find the information there accurately fitting the things Mattie told them.

Some interesting facts about the real-life Mattie are that she graduated from Western in 1902 and immediately became secretary to Henry Hardin Cherry, Western's first president, until he died in 1937 and then worked for the next president, Paul Garrett, until retiring in 1945. McLean Hall is named after Mattie, who died in Lexington, Mississippi in 1954, and an oil portrait of her hangs in the dorm's lobby. All of this information and more is in the Archives and was told by Mattie through the ouija board to several women. On campus, Mattie was popular and well known and liked by students and faculty members. She was affectionately known as "Miss Mattie." She said she lives in McLean Hall among the students. "Everybody that lives here are her girls," said Brown, now a resident assistant in the dorm. That's because she feels a certain closeness to the dorm since it is named after her.

All three women said they have seen or heard Mattie. A couple of experiences are related here. For more detailed information and more experiences refer to the attached

transcriptions of the taped interviews, which are quoted almost verbatim. They talk of Mattie playing tricks on them such as turning the radio on and off, knocking things off the wall or taking some balloons on Valentine's Day. They said Mattie is funny and has a big sweeping motion back and forth the ouija board. "And it was kind of fast, and it was just really comforting when we talked to her. She's kind of playful, but she never really did anything to scare us," Hutchinson said. Maybe this sounds far out, but read the transcriptions, you may be convinced at least slightly that they have encountered something supernatural. All three have seen the ghost or caught a glimpse in some way - at the same time. Brown and Southard were interviewed together and Hutchinson alone, but all stories are similar in many ways. "I can sense her when she's around sometimes. It's really strange because you feel like there's a difference in the room like somebody is there, even in the middle of the day," Brown said. Like Hutchinson, Brown and Southard said Mattie never made herself known to them until they began playing with the ouija board.

Last year, the three women and several others were talking to Mattie with the board. "One night we asked her if she was in the room with us. There must have been 10 people in there. And it was a little RA room. And she said yes. And we said, well can you give us a sign? Can you appear before us. And she said yes," Hutchinson said. The stories between Brown and Hutchinson don't fit too well here because the way they described Mattie, everybody should have seen her, and Brown said they shut off the lights, while Hutchinson the lights dimmed on their own.

Anyway, here are each of the two accounts.

Brown: We were "asking her if she was there...and she said yes. We asked if she would show herself with the light on and she said no. So we shut down the lights and pulled the shades...Two girls were on one side and two on the other side of the board...Just as soon as it happened, I screamed. (here only she and another girl saw the ghost and that girl) flicked the lights on real fast. They pulled me out into the hallway and kept her there." They asked each to describe what they saw, and "the stories were the same." The ghost had "gray hair, and then kind of a lighter gray face and then a lighter gray outfit...And then (her friend, whose name I couldn't hear from the tape) didn't see her the second time... I kept on watching the corner and it like \_ changed \_ like a dark and then a light (it was hard to hear this part completely on the tape.) Brown said she couldn't distinguish specific facial features.

Hutchinson: After Mattie said she would appear, "right then, the lights dimmed and all of a sudden there was kind of a bright light and there she was. And then she was gone. It was just the only light in the whole room. It was her, and she was kind of illuminating \_ and I was leaving the room at the time, and I just caught a glimpse of the light. I really didn't see her, but everyone else did. So I ended up staying and that's what we talked about for the next hour."

The Brown, Hutchinson and Southard talk of other personal ghostly experiences and how others have seen Mattie. Hutchinson said one of her resident's saw her. This resident, who is a religious person, was engaged and trying

to juggle wedding plans, classes, tests - it was a stressful semester. At one point, she had an especially trying day. Then, while asleep that night, she woke up in the middle of the night and said she felt like someone was watching her. So she turned over, and a woman was standing over her bed, and the student got a real comforting feeling from her, Hutchinson said. When she got up the next morning, she felt peaceful inside and described the woman to Hutchinson. She "looked a lot like the pictures I've seen of Mattie," Hutchinson said. She was kind of tall with almost white hair. She looked older with kind of frail features and had a long dress on. Brown and Southard said they know of another girl who saw Mattie on the stairwell, but refuses to talk about it.

The ghost of Barnes-Campbell is another interesting case, and a story not heard of around campus much. It was hard to find people who knew it, because the ones I did talk to said those who know about it have graduated. Two men who used to live in the dorm and whom I didn't have a chance to interview on tape told me they have heard the story about the ghost, but have not seen or heard anything themselves. Brian Kuster, acting Residence Life director and the assistant Residence Life director, used to be a dorm director at Barnes. His interview is on tape, but is one that didn't record well. He wasn't reinterviewed, so what follows is by memory. (Four people were reinterviewed; many other interviews came in partly and were salvaged some.) Kuster said the ghost of Barnes-Campbell is the

ghost of a Resident Assistant on the sixth floor had just taken a shower before the accident and that he knows of one person who has seen wet footprints and other weird things on the floor with no one else around. That person is Howard Bailey, dean of Student Life. His account will come in detail. He was dorm director there when he had his ghostly encounters. He is a skeptical man and still thinks there is some explanation for what happened, but we'll let you decide.

Bailey said the accident really happened in the late 60s. An RA on the sixth floor was trying to fix some elevator doors when he was crushed by an elevator. On one set of elevators, the doors stuck, and by opening the other set manually while that elevator was gone and reaching in the side to flip the switch, you could open the stuck doors to the other elevator no matter where it was. The RA had tried open the doors while the elevator was above him to open the other's sets doors. But while he reached in and flipped the switch, someone had gotten in above him and was coming down. The RA was killed. That really happened, and the elevators were fixed after that. But since then, there have been strange occurrences, especially with the elevator that killed the student.

Bailey said the elevators are programmed to go to the first floor by themselves and stand open when no one is used them. They are programmed not to do anything else, but one set - even to this day - will go to the first floor as it is supposed to, but then go up to the sixth floor, stop and stand open when no one is using it. Bailey said he and other students have seen this happen many times. He also

said in the 70s, several students said they saw a yellow glowing light go in with them into the elevator, but he never witnessed that. Bailey said nothing has been said about strange things happening in the past 10 years (about), so he is inclined to think the ghost is not there, except the elevators still go to that floor. Maybe the ghost had to serve a purpose for some amount of time or maybe it eventually found peace and didn't have to roam anymore.

Here are some things Bailey experienced himself. He said during one summer when no one occupied the building and he had to stay and watch it, that he would be in his room and hear loud metal sounds. Upon investigation, he would find metal trash cans that came from the locked and window-closed rooms at the bottom of the stairwells. He would put the cans back, but a few minutes later, he heard them fall down the stairs again. Another incident happened during a Christmas or Thanksgiving break, when all the students were gone. Bailey and the sixth floor RA then came back from dinner and found all the faucets and showers on that floor going. "I know I had shut it (the building) down - known it was empty," he said. Also, when they went to the sixth floor, they found wet footprints going from the shower to the RA's door. But once they opened the door, the footprints stopped. There was no carpet inside and no set of prints retracing from the room. It couldn't have been the RA himself because he was with Bailey. The footprints seem to fit with Kuster's story that the RA killed had just taken a shower.

Not to be outdone, the ghost of the AZD house has and



still makes himself known to the girls living there.

Several women interviewed for this paper have mentioned the AZD ghost, but I'm going to use testimony from two who live there now and one who doesn't live there now, but is a sorority member. Marsha Lutz and Kathy Diemer live in the house now and told several personal experiences and those of others. They were interviewed in a downstairs room of the house in the late evening together. The ghost lives upstairs. Lutz did a recent paper on Steven, the ghost. She said Steven is between the ages of 7 and 12 and died in the house many, many years ago in a fire. Lutz and Diemer estimated that the fire occurred between 1920 and 1960. Both said they've heard both dates. Lutz said she checked for information in the Park City Daily News, but found none on the fire or a little boy being killed in a fire. Although they each have different stories, they do have some similarities and have experienced similar things at different times. They said Steven usually appears in the fall semester between 3:30 and 4 in the morning - supposedly the time he died. A lot of their information about him also comes from past stories passed down from alumni of the sorority. One incident they have witnessed themselves is being awakened - with every other girl on the second and third floors where the bedrooms are - for some unknown reason at that time in the morning and the room would be unnaturally chilly.

Diemer recalled an incident last semester. She was studying sometime past 2:30 a.m. when she felt as if someone was reading over her shoulder. So figuring she was tired, she went to bed. But before falling asleep, she

heard footsteps go across her room and the door open and shut. Deimer just figured someone was going to the bathroom. The next morning she asked around and found out from a girl studying on the second floor lobby below her that no one came down to go to the bathroom, which is on the first floor. No one else was awake then either. Similar to what Southard said about Mattie, Lutz said that Steven would play with her radio. One time she was studying in her room and her radio switched from FM to AM on its own. No one else was in the room (a factor that pops up in most stories). She went to investigate and found the radio switch turned to AM, which was playing organ music at the time. She also thought she had seen Steven herself about a month ago. It was around 3:30 a.m. - as usual - and she awoke for no reason and looked toward the mantle in her room. She saw something white there, but figured it might be a sweatshirt she had hung up to dry because she didn't have her contacts in and without them - she can see much, but dim shapes. But the next morning when she woke up, nothings was at the mantle.

Some stories about Steven (many on tape) could be made up or changed drastically from being passed down. Lutz and Deimer said sometimes, stories are used to scare the new pledges. There are no documents about Steven or these experiences, they said. One more story they recounted as heard from an alum happened in 1979. A girl had fallen asleep on the couch on the second floor lobby. When she turned to stretch, she saw the image of a boy at a window with his back to her. She described him as wearing blue velvet knickers. She yelled for her roommate. When she

opened the door to her room, the ghost was swept under the door and vanished. One girl has seen the ghost, but refuses to talk about and even moved out. Yet another saw the ghost wave to her from a window when returning from class. Apparently the ghost is friendly and helps the girls. Deimer and Lutz said there is a story that a few years ago, a cigarette started a trash can fire, that was put out by a girl awakened by Steven. Also, during this past summer, they said the house was rented to some girls from another sorority. The girls were talking bad about the AZD sorority members and were apparently driven out by Steven, who started making things fall from the walls around them. The girls packed their bass.

As I said before, I had so many interviews it was hard to put everything in this paper. So I am going to stop now and draw some conclusions. There is attached information on the Potter Hall and Van Meter ghosts from articles and transcribed interviews. One thing about all of the interviews is that many weird things don't start happening until the ouija board is used. It is played often on many campuses. The fascination may be that all campuses have their ghosts, and students are curious if they really exist. The weird happenings always appear to be banging, footsteps and ghostly forms. Except for Barnes-Campbell Hall, other happenings with the other ghosts are tied to the board - including Potter Hall's ghost. The ghost came about from a girl committing suicide by hanging herself. That really happened; there are records of it on campus police files. Mary Long, a Potter Hall resident, said it happened several years ago, and the girl hung herself from

pipes in her room in the Potter Hall basement - Room 7.

Jill Sellers, a director at Bemis and former Potter director, told a similar story, but added that a friend who was with the police at the time of the investigation said the police weren't too sure if it was a suicide. Sellers' interview is one that is lost, but Long's was redone so I'll use hers.

Long said the basement is supposed to be haunted and strange noises and banging sounds can be heard. And people have contacted Allison or Number 7. The stories Long heard have been from the RA and Potter Hall staff members, just like they have been passed down from the staff in McLean, Barnes-Cambell halls and the AZD house. One story she heard from a friend follows. Her friend told her she took some people to the basement room, which is locked and used for storage. One guy, as a joke, began banging on the door, but the group got spooked and decided to leave. When her friend got to the steps, she looked back and found the door shaking and banging on its own! Another story Long told that she witnessed also dealt with the popular ouija board. Long and her roommate and others were talking to Number 7 or Allison through the board and they asked her to give them a sign that night that she was there, just like the girls in McLean hall wanted a sign. Allison said they would set the sign late that night. When Long and her roommate were asleep, the desk on her roommate's side slid across the floor and rammed into the roommate's bed. Long heard it and her roommate felt it. A point that others have stressed

in their stories, Lons said the door and windows were closed and there was no wind.

Most people I interviewed didn't know each other, yet there were similarities in stories. Many of them have contacted - at different times and places - Number 7 and some evil spirit named Thomas who apparently just roams the whole campus. And even the ones who don't know each agree that Thomas is evil, has fast jerky movements and says hateful things. Allison or Number 7 always circles 7 and talks occasionally - she can and can't be mean. Some stories seem believable; some don't. They are all stories handed down from past and present students - a character of folklore. They are also transmitted informally and strictly orally. Except for the newspaper articles and past folklore projects on this subject, there are no other recorded documents of these stories. Most stand the test of time, and some others change a little or a lot. For example, the Van Meter ghost has so many versions of how the ghost came to be and ghost sightings, that it is hard to believe the place is haunted except in people's minds. There are different versions of how a construction worker died when the building was being made and that his ghost roams its halls and stage. There are other versions of actors and/or audience members killing themselves during a dramatic scene of a performance. There is supposedly a bloodstain on the stage's original floor, which has been remodeled a few times. The stain is supposed to appear during dramatic scenes of a play or when it rains, supposedly in one version because the worker was killed while it was raining. One girl, Cyndi Grice, claims to have seen the bloodstain

before coming to Western during a dramatic scene when seeing a play there. Others, who preferred not to be interviewed or whose interviews were ruined (including former Western presidents Kelly Thompson and Dero Downing who gladly talked, but the microphone didn't work), said they have only heard of the bloodstain or say the ghost stories are completely untrue. The two presidents had offices in the building for years and heard and saw nothing. They never even heard of the ghost legend itself. But they said a construction worker really was killed during construction.

It's hard to classify the stories as totally elite or popular culture because they contain a bit of both, yet don't follow some aspects of the definitions. The stories are similar to the regular horror movie and novel stuff, suggesting the migratory motif comes into play here, but the interviewees genuinely believe their experiences are real. And they actually are unique in some way; some things I've never heard of before. Although the bloodstain and helpful and playful ghosts are similar to ghosts stories I've heard here and there. The people interviewed are members of a primary group. They share a significant amount of in-group knowledge, as the definition says. Each dorm and sorority group see themselves as set apart from the rest and their stories as unique. The stories are legends, passed down from generations of students, RAs, some administrators and sorority members. The only things verifiable are some of the actual deaths. But can ghosts be verified. So far they can and can't depending on what you believe. And depending also on what you believe, Western

may or may not be haunted.

As stated earlier, I merely wanted to collect stories and see how different or similar they are and how many of them are around. I was overwhelmed with the varieties, similarities and volume I received. Now, here they are for you to read and enjoy.