

FAMILY GHOST STORIES

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Folklore 379  
Dr. Montell  
Fall, 1985

All the following were tape recorded  
stories of members of my family in the  
house we grew up in in Bowling Green,  
Warren County Ky.

It has been a good experience for me to interview my family on our collective ghost stories. I found that the house I grew up in is rumored to stand over the old slave quarters of the plantation that was there in the early to mid 1800's. My mother, also, grew up in that house and it was purchased by my parents from my grandparents about four months before I was born.

#### Safety Inside the House

I always felt that as long as I was in that house, nothing could ever harm us. If you will remember, none of us ever got really hurt inside the house. It was always outside those walls. All three of us were brought here as newborns and put in the nursery. Later, that was my room. It was safest of all.

(JHc) Narrative contains motif F482, "House Spirit."

#### The Lady In the Window

I was just sitting in my room one night and I got out of my bed which was my yellow canopy bed, you know, and for some reason, I stared at the window (the one next to the nursery) and I saw this lady. She was standing there and she had on a black dress and something white under it, and it had buttons down the front with a marriage veil on. It was white and it came all the way around her. Her hair was pulled back and she didn't look that old--about thirty.

I started laughing and jumping up and down because I was glad to see her. I had on a white diaper and my hair was short and blonde and curly. She was standing there and she did not fade away but stayed there with me.

(LH) Narrative contains motif \*E338(b), "Female Ghost," and though there is no specific reference to windows, this motif refers to E332, "Ghost Appears."

I saw her, too. You know how the light next door would shine on my window (in the nursery) and I could often see the shadows of the trees outside my room. One night, there was a shadow cast across my floor. She was slim. Her hair was pulled back and she had some sort of a hat on. I couldn't see the lower part of her. I felt very calm because she was there.

(JHc) Narrative contains motif \*E338(b), "Female Ghost," and though there is no specific reference to windows, this motif refers to E332, "Ghost Appears."

#### The Comforting Spirit

I would often be standing in the kitchen of our house in the evening. I would always be alone in there when this happened. When I was feeling especially burdened, I could feel something at my back. A warm feeling would come over me. and I would begin to smile slightly. My spirits were lifted, and the problem did not seem as big to me. Within a few seconds, I would feel the air move behind me to my right and I would turn to that direction, but there was

nothing there to see. This happened many times when the children were small, and my husband was gone a lot.

(VeH) Narrative contains motif F475, "Friendly Night Spirits."

Warning of Danger

Do you remember the night that the motor on the fish tank got real hot and Seiger (our cat) began screaming. I have never heard a cat do that before or since. It was about one in the morning and we were all asleep. All five of us jumped up and we smelled something like we had never smelled before. It was like an acid smell. We opened the windows. It smelled sort of like an old cellar. It was something got into the cat because I have never heard any sound like that from a cat. The house would have caught fire if she had not awakened us. She brought us right to the spot because we all went right to where she was making that noise. Maybe we tried to think it was the cat.

(JHc) Narrative contains motif B521, "Animal Warns Man In Danger or Saves Life of Man In Danger."

House Does Not Like Blacks at Night

We asked a black lady to stay with the children. There were just two of them then. The lady's name was JoAnn Sarver. It was afternoon and she stayed until dusky dark and the kids were outside playing. About that time she heard a voice telling her, "Get out of this house!" She got scared and left while the voice was still talking. She ran

off and left the kids there by themselves and ran home which was about three or four miles and said she would never be back again because the house had haints in it.

(JHI) Narrative contains motif F482.5.5, "Malicious Action of House Spirit."

There was a black feller who come to the house to fix the telephone and I asked him to set down and have a bite of supper. This was just last year. All at once he got violently ill and said he didn't know what was wrong, but he was sick and couldn't eat and he wanted to get out of the house and he left. Apparently, what ever is in the house doesn't like blacks. I like them. And the only explanation I can make of that is that across the road is the old Burford property and at one time this was sort of a large farming territory and the only thing I can figure might have happened is that there may have been some blacks abused on this piece of property or an individual died where this house is or it despised blacks and the spirit is hanging where the body fell.

(JHI) Narrative contains motif F482.5.5, "Malicious Action of House Spirit."

Punishment For Breaking Tabu on House

The Burford house, a preacher built that house back in the early 1800's. He was a Primitive Baptist and had blessed the house and had made an oath with God that nothing evil would ever be done in that house. After he died, someone bought it. One night they were playing cards which

was against the preacher's religion and a tornado came and took the whole roof off that house. The preacher had said that no one was ever supposed to do anything wrong in that house.

(VeH) Narrative contains motif M101.3.1, "Punishment by Elements for Broken Oath."

The Nightmare

This story is about an old farm house that was originally part of the Burford property. The children's grandmother lives there now. There is a room in the back of that house that she will not sleep in. The room is always cold even though the heat is vented in there as into the rest of the house. She says the room is spooky. Laura has a story about some nights she has slept there as a small child.

I would go to bed pretty early and Nana would read me stories, you know, so that I would go to sleep and so I would be asleep and it would seem like I had been asleep about a half an hour and something like a voice would like smother me and it would be like my face would be down in the pillows, but I was on my back and so there was this voice that came to me that said, "Kick your feet until you wake up or you will keep on smothering." So, I started kicking my feet and I had to hold my eyes open and that would wake me up. And so, from then on I would always ask Nana to promise that I would not wake up still, because I didn't want to smother. And I said it every night.

So, I slept in the living room with Nana from then on. It was a scary room. It has a dim light. It was like choaking when this thing was on my face and it was like there was no air. It happened every night I slept in there. It was a pressure; it was very hot. It was like having a pillow over your face and keeping it there.

(LH) Narrative contains motif F471.1 Action of Nightmare "Presses Person in Dream."

Locked in the Room

When Keeta and I were playing in that room putting on real old clothes, the door locked and we would not get out. The door knob pulled off and I screamed for Nana because I was only a little kid. I always had on this one white dress that was Mama's when this happened.

There are a lot of things that happened to me in that room, but it is like if I tell anybody, something would happen.

(LH) Narrative contains motif F482.5.5, "Malicious Action of House Spirit."

Reincarnation Story

I have heard this story many times. When I asked my dad to tell it so I could record it, he seemed to hesitate. Our strong Christian beliefs prevent him from telling this outside the family, but the story is true.

This gets into an area that is not theology. . . it's an area of belief. You sure you want to get all this on tape?



It's a matter that I believe that I am one who is reincarnated from another life, and the reason that I know this is that when I was a kid four or five years old, I would get in conversation with people and I would say that I saw a plane crash up here in Allen County near Trammel and everybody would turn to me and say, "You couldn't of seen a plane crash. The plane crash took place six months before you were born." And I kept tellin' them that, "Yes, I could see the plane crash. I could hear the people screaming; I could see the flames; I could see the hole in the fuselage where the wing was tore off when it hit the ground."

This friend of mine who was Jim Wilkins, who was Wandl the Magician before he died, he did an age regression on me through hypnosis back to my birthdays, my teenage years, and on into my childhood. . . then, through a period of darkness and into another period and he told me later what I had said. Who I was was a man named James Alexander. We were able to get a photograph of a newspaper clipping and a list of the names of the passengers on the plane. There was a James Alexander listed as having died there but had gotten out one woman and one child before he died. But memory don't serve me that well. It's just as a kid, I always used the fictitious name of James Alexander. And all this took place in 1941 and I was born in February of 1942.

I had a hard time believing this when I was younger.

But a few years ago, I went out with my wife to where the plane crashed and it was a hot August day and we got out of the car and we walked up through the fields and there was a gully like that had been plowed out by the nose of the plane when it went in. Forty years ago and it was still there and we set foot into that little ditch like and a cold breeze blew up on both of us so cold that it made chill bumps on us and we both left there rather abruptly because we were not supposed to be there at this time.

(JHI) Narrative contains motif E601, "Reincarnation: Former Life Remembered."

I was glad to have gleaned this much information from my immediate family. There were many more stories that they told me. Perhaps the old times were better when families would sit around and tell stories at night after the day's work was done. Having taken the time to do this with my family gives me more of a sense of who I am and where I came from.

INDEX OF MOTIFS

References accompanying the beliefs are keyed to the numbering systems used in Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk Literature. All items found marked by an asterisk (\*) are found in Warren Baughman's Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America.

- \*B521           Animal Warns Man in Danger or Saves Life of Man in Danger. p. 84 (Text, p. 3).
- E332           Ghost Appears. p. 432, vol. 2 (Text, p. 2).
- \*E338(b)       Female Ghost Seen. p. 156 (Text, p. 2).
- E601           Reincarnation: Former Life Remembered. p. 482, vol. 2 (Text, p. 8).
- F471.11       Action of Nightmare Presses Person in Dream. p. 126, vol. 3 (Text, p. 6).
- F475           Friendly Night Spirit. p. 128, vol. 3 (Text p. 3).
- F482           House Spirit. p. 138, vol 3 (Text p. 1).
- F482.5.5       Malicious Action of House Spirit. p. 138, vol. 3 (Text pp. 4,6).
- \*M101.3.1     Punishment by Elements For Broken Oath. p. 30, vol. 5 (Text, p. 5).

INDEX OF SOURCES

Constant, Jenny Hodges (JHc). pp. 1, 3.

Hodges, Jack I (JHI). pp. 3, 6-8.

Hodges, Laura (LH). pp. 1,5,6.

Hodges, Vera Elliott (VeH) pp. 2, 4.

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