

Evergreen's Set To Host A Ghost

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Daily Olympian Ghost Writer

"Once upon a midnight dreary, While I pondered weak and weary . . ."

"The man across the table leaned over and said . . ."

"This is the hour when the graveyards yawn . . ."

"The last man alive on earth sat alone in his room. There was a knock on the door . . ."

There. That should do it. Your hair should be gently rising; your fingertips tingling; your palms clammy. Ready or not, here come the hoblins and goblins and ghosts.

Ah . . . Ghosts. Prepare yourselves, boys and girls, for a tale of wonders, seen and unseen, for a wonderful tale for HALLOWEEN.

. . . .

Our Halloween story manifested itself initially in an innocuous looking letter, typewritten on white paper.

We quote in part:

"To The Future Students Of Evergreen State College:"

"We, the Churchman family of the Lewis Road, west of Olympia, wish to leave a legacy to The Evergreen State College, which will occupy the land we have called home for the last ten years.

"We have left now, after a reluctant sale of our home to the State of Washington. We leave behind us one small member of our family whom we found it impossible to move. We leave you our household ghost.

"He came to us about four years ago and his presence has been a part of our lives since the day he entered our home unannounced. He is often heard walking about the house and gravel paths and he is often seen and heard opening the doors of the home and other buildings. He

seems to be quite at home and comes at all hours of the day and night. He has never attempted to harm any member of the family.

"Not only are we used to his comings and goings, but the family dogs now ignore him though he is heard walking within a few feet of them. Sometimes they will look when he opens a door but never make a fuss about it.

"We wonder why he chose our home. Was there something here we never understood?"

"We are going to miss him but we feel our friend will be a good member of the new college. We wonder which group of students he will choose for his new companions when the school is finished and occupied. We hope you will be kind to him, future students, and accept him as we have. Treat him well. He is our legacy to you.

"The Churchman Family"

How do you like that? A missive such as this throws wide the doors to a supernatural amount of speculation — and investigation. Even if you're not gullible about ghosts it's hard to shake the shivers when you think that in the West Olympia woods may prowl a real, live ghost — in a manner of speaking.

The investigation of The Evergreen State College poltergeist-to-be has been accomplished, insofar as one can investigate a psychic phenomena without psychic skills, without mediums and table tapping and without passing on the problem to the American Society of Psychical Research.

We make no claim that said ghost exists. We bear no responsibility for subsequent conjuring of said ghost as a result of our investigation. We, like the Churchmans, leave all this to those lucky future scholars. But —

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The Daily Olympian

Serving Southern Puget Sound

A West Olympia Ghost Is Going To College—

(From Page One)

We only report The Facts. And The Facts about this reputedly benign apparition are:

The former Churchman residence is a modest, white, ranch Rambler sitting on 22 wooded acres. It has no noticeable list to its floors, nor squeak nor leak. No eldritch shrieks emanated from its rafters during our inspection.

Mrs. Churchman, who now lives in the Wynoochee Valley with her husband George, who is retired, is a quick-witted, bright-brown-eyed, good natured woman and a most convincing ghost tale teller. She says she is three-quarter Cherokee plus Irish and Dutch and she would stake her life on that ghost. (Ulp!)

Mrs. Frank (Sharon) Gosser, present tenant of the house, is a sensible girl, not inordinately afraid to be left alone. When told that her happy home had held a ghost for four years she said, "Oh, no!" When told further that the ghost was a careless fellow with a propensity for opening doors and leaving them open, she said, "I'd get rid of him. The least he can do is shut his own doors." (Note: Authorities state that the range of behavior of spirits is relatively limited.)

But when she learned from Mrs. Churchman that the ghost would turn on the water tap in the kitchen and leave it running, Sharon admitted reluctantly, "I do have trouble with that water sometimes."

At this point facts on "this side" end and facts "beyond" begin. We have the testimony of Mrs. Churchman who says she has seen the ghost and knows without question that he is a he. She describes him as a solid-state ghost. She tells of her first brush with the spirit. "I knew he was a man even before I saw him. His footsteps, and hearing him walk you'd say definitely it was a man.

"My daughter, Juanita Dehm, she's seen him, too. It was in the afternoon. We were watching a TV show. I looked up and there he was, standing right outside that front window. I said to Juanita, who is that man? He looked to me like a little more than medium height though my son says he's close to a six-footer — he judges by the interval between footsteps. It takes him just nine steps from the entrance of the kitchen to go out through the back door that leads to the utility room. Well, anyway, when we saw him we tore outside and ran around the south side of the house looking for him. We didn't know then, of course, that he was a ghost. But he just wasn't there. And there was absolutely no place for him to go. He just — vanished."

Apparently Mrs. Churchman's ghost was not garbed in the traditional shroud.

She continued, "We got used to him. If the door was open we would shut it. If the light was on, we turned it off. He was very careless about lights.

"One night I looked out and the barn door was open and the wind was blowing on those ponies and the lights were on. I said to George, you sure like to pay a big

light bill. Well, it turned out he hadn't been out to the barn. "No," she responded emphatically to a query, "it couldn't have been any stranger sleeping in the barn, either. We checked.

"My husband didn't hear his noises as much. He's hard of hearing. But the dogs, the first time they heard him! My! One day I was sewing. Sitting on the couch, the dogs beside me. That door down the hall swung open. Both dogs bolted off the couch, their hair stood up on their backs and they snarled. We three scrambled to the door to see if there was anyone and sure there wasn't. You've never seen three sillier faces — mine and those two dogs.

"Another thing that happened. I was taking care of my grandson, little Carl Dehm. When Juanita left she said, 'Mama, don't let him eat after ten o'clock in the morning. Spoils his appetite for lunch.' Carl's a good boy but I heard the fridge door open about eleven and I called 'Carl, don't get into anything,' and I went into the kitchen. No Carl. Refrigerator door open. Carl was playing down by the road.

"Another thing. The lady who lives in the red ranch house over there swears she's heard music from over here. Not us. She says he likes rock 'n' roll.

"And Juanita. She always felt she had company coming down that hill over there back of the house.

"And then that last night we stayed in the house. I couldn't go to sleep. Must have finally dropped off because all of a sudden something woke me up. It was the sound of chains when you pick them up and drop them in a pile. You know?"

After relating all this Mrs. Churchman turned to Mrs. Gosser who is expecting a child. "But don't you worry too much, honey. If anything will scare a ghost out, a new kid will do it. One that cries 24 hours a day."

The Churchmans, as outlined in their letter, have wondered why Mr. Ghost chose their particular home. The facts of the history of the Churchman house are these: They bought the property ten years ago. "We cleaned all of that land ourselves and put all of those buildings there," Mrs. Churchman said. "The first place we built was just a small cabin."

Then an addition was built from material stripped from the Churchman's former house on Harrison Street.

Mrs. Churchman wonders if their friend moved to the college site from that house. Was the Harrison house possibly the spirit's former home in his life "this side" before his life "beyond" in keeping with the customary behavior of ghosts who return to haunt the scenes of their former existence?

She says, "I've got a friend in Portland who specializes in ghost research working on this. There would have to be a connection. Don't you think so?"

We don't know, Mrs. C. We don't know whether the Evergreen Ghost is bogy or bogus. We only report The Facts, Ma'am.