"ROO's" BOOS - Notes from Kelly

Happy Holidays! John and I would like to wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday season. Even though the thought of ghosts is well behind many of you, I’ve been overwhelmed with phone calls from people who seem to be sharing their homes with uninvited visitors! I can honestly say that either via phone or internet, I have been contacted several times a week. Perhaps this time of year brings the spirits out of the woodwork? I’ll keep you updated on the cases as we investigate them throughout the upcoming months.

2008 is going to be a great year for the Spirit Society. Melissa, Craig and “Officer Deb” had a meeting to plan events for the group. See the handout on the sign in table tonight for our first event of the year. Please mark your calendars for the following activities. Exact times and details will be given in future newsletters. The events on March 8, May 3 and October 4 will be held at the Senior Center. There will be a small fee for the events in order to raise money for our monthly rent.

Thank you in advance to all of you who brought food and gifts for the Senior’s this month. I know they greatly appreciate our efforts with our donations to the center.

2008 SSP “Special Events” Calendar

March 8 - Saturday
Supernatural Sharing, Cinema, Supper & Spirit Circle

May 3 - Saturday
Spirit Day in May

May 24 - Saturday
History & Mystery Series
Codorus Furnace, Chickie’s Rock & Haldeman Mansion

June 21 - Saturday
History & Mystery Series - Gettysburg (Limited to 25 SSP members; details to come)

August 23 - Saturday
History & Mystery Series - Mechanicsburg

September 20 - Saturday
Harrisburg Cemetery Investigation

October 4 - Saturday
Halloween Party

Holiday Symbols

Bell – In ancient times all over the world, it was believed that evil spirits could put up with just about anything except the clanging of a bell. Over time, the bell itself, even when not ringing, came to be regarded as a powerful lucky symbol. Because it is suspended in a hanging position, it takes on the representation of all life suspended between heaven and earth. Its vault-like shape has become a symbol of heaven.

Bells are used in Christian churches as well as Hindu and Buddhist temples as a means of keeping evil away. The bell tolled at funerals is now explained as a signal to the living that a soul is passing to the other side and should be accompanied by prayers. But originally the tolling was intended to prevent evil forces from interfering with the soul’s heavenward journey.

Bells are often used as a warning of danger. Obviously, the fact they are easy to hear makes them perfect for the job. But just as important is the age-old belief in most European countries that the sound of a bell can turn away an approaching storm, deflect lightning or tame a tornado.

But why bells? Such things as gunpowder make more noise than bells, and the Chinese still routinely use it to frighten away harmful spirits. But after gunpowder was introduced into Europe, the English scientist Roger Bacon said he still thought bells were much better demon-chasers. In a thirteenth-century scientific report, Bacon concluded that it was not the sound of a bell in itself that had the power but the movement of the air caused by repeated tolling. In his opinion, it canceled out the turbulence caused by mischief-making spirits.

Coal – Children were often warned that if they are not good, they will probably find lumps of coal in their Christmas stockings. But in some parts of the world, it is considered lucky to find a piece of coal in the street, or to be given one by a friend. In Northern England, it is customary to place little piles of coal on New Year’s Eve picks up one of the lumps and carries it inside to bring good luck to the household.

Holly - Although it is one of the most enduring symbols of Christmas, holly was the gift of good luck among the Romans celebrating their midwinter festivals. The northern tribes, who eventually brought about Rome’s downfall, draped holly over doorways as shelter for friendly woodland spirits who (Cont. pg. 2)
could bring good luck to their house. In medieval Europe, it was planted under windows because people believed it repelled witches.

Sprigs of holly in the house at Christmastime will bring you good luck. Be careful to bring it indoors before Christmas Eve or your family will fall to squabbling. Be sure to burn it on the Twelfth night (Jan. 5) or the good luck will turn sour.

**Toasting** – In the good old days it was not at all uncommon to slip a bit of poison into someone’s drink. As a means of avoiding sudden death, people began requesting that their host take a sip or two from their glass. Eventually, it became necessary only to touch each other’s glasses together making a sound that would frighten away evil spirits. The touching was accompanied by a wish for health, which was another way of saying “I have not poisoned you.”

In the days when wine and ale were drunk almost as soon as they were made, sediment collected at the bottom of the glass. The problem was solved by dropping a piece of toasted bread into the glass to soak up the bitter bits. The result was a tastier drink if not a healthier one. And that’s how the term “toasting” came about.

(Excerpted from “The Good Luck Book” by Bill Harris, Ottenheimer Publishers)

**Cheers to each and everyone of you!**

- Kelly and John

**NEW! DVDs & CDs from Spirit House Productions**

The fascinating subject of After Death Communication, including interesting superstitions and historical facts about death, is the focus of, “Life After Life”, a new DVD from Kelly Weaver / Spirit House Productions. It includes a soothing meditation to help you connect with your loved ones on the other side. Life After Life (along with Kelly’s “Meet Your Angels” & “Discover Your Past Lives” Meditation CDs) is available at Mark Nesbitt’s Ghosts of Gettysburg HQ on Baltimore Street & through Kelly’s website, www.kellysmagicalgarden.com.

When first meeting Craig several years ago at haunted Sickman’s Mill, it was a time when many of us who had become immersed in “ghosthunting” with the then new digital cameras in the mid 90s were starting to question the validity of “Orbs” as evidence of paranormal activity. For some time, it was thought simply avoiding taking still digital photos in rainy, snowy or dusty conditions would avert capturing small particles and thus if those “protocols” were followed, any “Orbs” still captured would be something anomalous. Obviously, we’ve moved beyond that, by better understanding the camera processes through experimentation (so much of which is explained in outstanding graphics developed by Craig for his site).

Are all “Orbs” worthless as evidence? Frankly, the number of plausible explanations far outweigh the minute chance they represent something paranormal. There are some exceptions – notably those captured on video which show dimensionality (moving behind objects far from the lens) and are shown not to be insects thru a frame-level analysis. Looking back, I do feel “Orbs” have served a purpose: They’ve caused serious researchers to fully scrutinize non-orb photos claiming to show something anomalous and likewise better understand how cameras – innocently or intentionally -- can turn the explainable into something mysterious! - JDW

**O.F.E. The Orb Free Experience** – a phrase coined and appropriate logo designed by Craig Telesha -- is now displayed on the S.S.P. site (and linked to Craig’s overview of the “Orb Phenomenon” on his own Ghost-Tech site).

Unlike prior years, the 2008 event will focus fully on Ghosts & Hauntings, and Ghost Hunting/Research.

Doors open @ 8:30; Event is from 9am to 7pm.

Speakers include:

- Host Rick Fisher
- Rosemary Ellen Guiley
- Karl Petry
- Linda Zimmerman
- SSP’s own Craig Telesha

Door prizes and author book signings will be offered. Cost is $90 per person, and includes an excellent buffet for lunch. Payment is due by March 15; after March 15 the price is $100. Send checks to: Rick Fisher 109 South Second Street Apt. 2 Columbia, PA 17512

More details at http://www.paranormalpa.com/paconf.html
I spend a lot of time researching area haunts for an upcoming book I’m writing. Of course, everyone has heard of the infamous Blue Eyed Six of Lebanon County and including this fascinating tale in my book is a must. Not only is the true life conspiracy to murder for money (the first court case to challenge “graveyard” insurance) intriguing—but the ghost stories surrounding the tragedy are irresistible to ghost adventurers like myself.

Upon first learning of the ghosts of the Blue Eyed Six (BES) haunting the Moonshine Church graveyard, I was hooked! You can find tons of tales on the Internet about the area and the BES. Tales like if you go there at night, you’ll see six pair of blue eyes glowing in the surrounding woods—no doubt the mysterious, elusive conspirators who were hanged and/or buried in the graveyard (depending on which story you read). Tales of witchcraft, Satan worship, etc. all in the small area surrounding Moonshine Church.

Sound a little too good to be true? It is.

Let’s start with the name “Moonshine Church.” Moonshine. Just SOUNDS like something illicit, something secret—doesn’t it? Absolutely. My bubble was burst after learning the name is derived from the man who built the church—Henry Moonshine. Seems a bit less sinister now, huh?

After some more Internet and archival digging at the library, it turns out that not only were the BES NOT hanged at Moonshine Church NOR are any of them even buried there—one of the men was not even hanged. George Zechman was acquitted of the crime and died of natural causes a decade later.

Why would the BES haunt Moonshine Church graveyard? Well, it is where their victim, 59-year-old Joseph Raber is buried. The murdered man’s grave is almost dead center in the graveyard across the road from Moonshine Church. Is this enough of a connection for the five hanged men to waste their time haunting? Maybe. Maybe not. Shouldn’t Raber be haunting them and NOT the other way around?

It didn’t make much sense to me either.

There is another locally-accepted reason the church area is to be haunted. In the early 1980s (or mid-1980s or was it the late 1970s?) a woman murdered her children and committed suicide at Moonshine Church. Wow! That’s an amazing story—is it true? Sure it is. Everyone says so. What was her name? What was the date? Where are she and her children buried? Well …. no one seems to know any real facts. That usually makes one suspicious. If an event that horrific happened a mere 25 years ago—someone would definitely know the answers to these questions. But, that doesn’t necessarily mean it didn’t happen.

I began researching in some newspaper archives that Craig had signed up for to research his own book—worth every penny of HIS $30, I might add—and I never did find any articles about the mom and her murdered children, but I was amazed at just how many bizarre deaths actually had occurred extremely close to Moonshine Church. These stories alone would be enough to give anyone the heebie-jeebies being in the area at night. And these stories ARE true. Why have I not heard about them before?

**October 10, 1973—The Lebanon Daily News**

The body of an unidentified woman was found “near Moonshine Church.” She had no clothes, jewelry or any marks that would lead to her identification. She was about 16 to 18 years old with light brown hair. No outward signs of what caused her death were visible, although foul play was suspected. Another news article in 1975 (two years later) reported that the young woman’s name continued to be a mystery. I did not find any articles claiming she was ever identified.

**December 5, 1955—The Lebanon Daily News**

Headline Reads: Lost County Hunter Finds Human Skeleton in Mountain on Gap Land

A hunter discovered the body of young man of about 20 years of age just southwest of Moonshine Church where a road branches westward to St. Joseph’s Spring. (That road is McLean Road and it’s probably not even ½ a mile from the church.) Authorities determined the body had probably been there for a number of years. The man had no wallet or means of identification and, strangely, was wearing brand-new, fancy, Florsheim shoes and a dressy hat was found about 10 feet away—not exactly an outfit for a hike in the woods. Again, I never found any more articles pertaining to this mysterious death.

**July 18, 1951—The Lebanon Daily News**

A 14-year-old boy named Lloyd Binkley, his brother and some friends found a practice grenade on a restricted area of the military reservation and decided to fill it up with gun powder. Using a firing pin they also found nearby, they made a makeshift live grenade. The only thing it didn’t have was the 5 second explosion delay. As Lloyd drew his arm back behind his head to throw the grenade, it exploded blowing out the back of his skull and taking off the fingers of his left hand. No doubt death was probably instantaneous for the poor, curious child. The accident occurred “between the main reservation and Moonshine Church.”

Also, in 1940 some stolen dynamite was found hidden near Moonshine Church just across the border of the military reservation. Okay, that’s not eerie or pertinent to ghosts—but bizarre nonetheless.

Are three deaths in almost less than 2 decades in such a small area unusual? I would think so—particularly the two unidentified bodies that apparently met with some foul play. Were they ever identified? Were the cases ever solved?

Why did folks perpetuate the probably untrue story of the mother and children when the truth is stranger than fiction?
Jean Harlow’s big break in Hollywood came about thanks to Howard Hughes’ fascination with Tinseltown. His film productions were well received in the movie colony and when he discovered Harlow, he already had a movie in the works called Hell’s Angels, starring Greta Nissen. Then, overnight, talking pictures became all the rage and Hell’s Angels had to be re-made as a talkie. Jean Harlow won the lead in the new picture and she quickly skyrocketed as an overnight sensation. The Hollywood publicity machine went into overdrive for Harlow. She soon became known for her signature look of platinum blond hair and her notable, low-cut necklines. The Los Angeles Times had one word for her: “Sexquisite”.

The gossip columns filled with news of Jean’s activities and it soon became apparent that despite her many outings on the town, she never went out with other actors. All of her dates were either directors or producers. It was suggested that she was smart enough to realize this was her ticket to the top. One of the men she dated was an assistant to Irving Thalberg at MGM named Paul Bern. He had been the man responsible for getting Jean’s contract purchased from Howard Hughes and for bringing her to MGM. It was apparent that he was attracted to the bland bombshell actress.

It would have been hard to find two people more incompatible that Jean Harlow and Paul Bern. Most of Bern’s contemporaries considered him a genius. He had been born in Germany in 1889 as Paul Levy, making him 22 years older than Jean. His formal education ended at age 14, but he went on to become of the most intellectual men in Hollywood. He had come to the movie capital in 1926 after first working in New York as a stage actor. He later took a job in Toronto with a fledgling film company and then moved west to California when he realized the potential for movies. After landing in Hollywood, he worked as a film cutter and a script editor before directing a few pictures and ending up as a supervisor at MGM. It was here that Thalberg spotted Bern’s ability and made him a general assistant.

While Bern may have been intellectually superior to Harlow, he certainly couldn’t measure up in the looks department. According to a writer of the day, Herbert Cruikshank, Bern was described as “a slight man, insignificant in stature, slender of shoulder, only as tall as a girl.” Regardless, he gained a reputation in Hollywood as a sensitive and compassionate person (a rare thing in Hollywood) and he began to be called “Hollywood’s Father Confessor”. Everyone took his troubles to Bern for advice, help and sympathy.

Bern was never much for the public life. He was something of a mystery man, especially to those who craved the spotlight and the lure of Hollywood’s legendary nightlife. So when he began appearing in local nightspots with Jean Harlow, no one thought much of it. They assumed that it could never last. Of course, that was what made the announcement of their marriage and even bigger surprise!
that she was “too hysterical to undergo questioning at this time”. She later spoke to detectives but was not called as a witness at the inquest, which is unusual to say the least.

According to the inquest, the following story was learned about Bern’s final hours. Bern had sent Jean over to stay with her mother, who was alone on Saturday night. On Sunday, Jean returned to the house and had dinner with her husband. However, Bern sent her back to mother’s, telling her that he would be along to pick her up after reading some scripts. When he didn’t show up, Jean assumed that he had fallen asleep while reading and thought nothing more of it. Needless to say, the inquest brought many unanswered questions. Why did Bern send Jean away again on Sunday night? Was he planning to meet someone later? And what was the motive for the suicide?

The official version of the suicide was that Bern had been suffering from a “physical infirmity” that made it impossible for him to have intercourse with his wife. The “comedy” referred to in the suicide note was Bern’s attempt to overcome his incompetence and carry out his marital obligations to Jean with a realistic, phony phallus. But why would a man with such an infirmity marry any woman, least of all a bombshell like Jean Harlow?

Surprisingly, this was not the most shocking information to come out of the inquest. It was learned that Bern had previously lived with another woman for many years. And, the day after Bern died, the other woman also died “under mysterious circumstances”!

The woman’s name was Dorothy Millette and she was a struggling actress when Bern met her in New York. They lived together in both New York and Toronto for many years and she often referred to herself as “Mrs. Paul Bern.” Unfortunately, Dorothy fell victim to mental illness and she was institutionalized. Bern paid for all of her expenses. The love affair ended but Bern continued to provide for Dorothy, even after his marriage to Jean.

After being released from the mental hospital, apparently cured, Dorothy moved into a room at the Algonquin Hotel in New York. She lived quietly, spending most of her time reading and walking in the park. Bern always visited her when he was in New York. His 1920 will, in fact, left everything he owned to Dorothy. However, this was changed in a later will, which bequeathed his estate to Jean.

On March 17, 1932, Paul received a letter from Dorothy stating that she was moving to San Francisco. He suggested to her that she stay at the Plaza Hotel, which offered an “attractive rate” and that if she did decide to stay somewhere else, he would “find some way of supplying you with funds in a manner convenient for you.”

Once this new information became public, Jean’s stepfather, Marino Bello, issued a press statement saying that Jean knew nothing of Dorothy Millette. This was immediately contradicted by Paul’s brother, Henry Bern, who said that Dorothy was common knowledge in Bern’s circle of friends and that Paul had specifically discussed Dorothy with Jean prior to their marriage.

On September 6, the day after Bern died, Dorothy checked out of the Plaza Hotel and boarded a Sacramento River steamer that journeyed back and forth between San Francisco and Sacramento. An officer later found a woman’s coat and shoes beside the ship’s railing. Dorothy Millette was not on board when the ship docked at Sacramento. Her body was found two weeks later by fishermen. Her death was ruled a suicide.

It was said that Jean Harlow loved Bern so much that when his body was discovered, she too attempted suicide. Even though her attempt was not successful, Harlow’s days were numbered. Five years later, she died from kidney damage at the age of only 26.

A strange series of circumstances would shed new (and mysterious) light on the case a year after the inquest. At that time, a grand jury had been impaneled to investigate District Attorney Buron Fitts, who had handled the original Bern inquest. The jury foreman insisted that they were only interested in Fitts’ expenditures in the case and yet new revelations came to light because of it.

Important information came from Davis, the gardener and Miss Harrison, Bern’s secretary. Davis believed that he “thought it was murder. I thought so from the beginning”, he said. He believed that the butler had lied about what happened. He testified that the butler told the police that Bern and Harlow were always hugging and kissing and that he sometimes overheard Bern talking of suicide. The gardener said that the opposite was actually true. He never thought that the couple got along well and he had never once heard Mr. Bern talk about killing himself! He also said that he didn’t believe the suicide note was even in his employer’s handwriting.

Irene Harrison, Bern’s secretary, confirmed this and she also added that Jean Harlow, not Bern, had been the pursuer in the relationship. She also added that she didn’t think that Bern looked “particularly happy” at the reception after the wedding ceremony.

The most exciting testimony came from Winifred Carmichael, Bern’s cook. She stated that the household staff had seen a strange woman on Sunday evening. The cook stated that a woman’s voice, which was unfamiliar to her, was heard. The woman screamed once. She also said that she later found a wet woman’s bathing suit on the edge of the swimming pool and two empty glasses nearby.

There is no record of whether or not the police ever “dusted” the glasses for fingerprints or whether or not they followed up further testimony from Davis the gardener who said that he told detectives of finding a small puddle of blood near Bern’s favorite chair by the swimming pool.

Even after all of this, Bern’s death was still ruled a suicide. It remained that way until 1960 when writer Ben Hecht published an article that stated Bern’s death was actually a murder. “Studio officials decided,” Hecht wrote, “sitting in a conference around his dead body, that it was better to have Paul Bern as a suicide than as a murder victim of another woman.” He wrote that it would be better for Jean Harlow’s career that she not appear as a woman who couldn’t hold a husband.”
The Los Angeles District Attorney got in touch with Hecht, who told him that director Henry Hathaway had told him about the tragedy. But Hathaway, who was living in New York, claimed to have no first-hand knowledge of the case. He had no information to say that the suicide note was not real or that it had been planted by the studio heads.

Still, many believed that Bern might have been murdered. But if he was, who killed him? Could it have been Dorothy Millette? There seems to be no reason for it and besides that, she vanished (to be found dead) the day after Bern’s body was discovered. In those days, the fastest transportation between Los Angeles and San Francisco was the Southern Pacific daylight train or the overnight Lark. Either journey took almost ten hours. For Dorothy to be able to catch the 10:00 pm train, she would have had to have called a cab to pick her up at Bern’s home by at least 8:00. No trace of any such call or taxi driver was ever located.

But if Dorothy did kill Bern, was she the woman who was heard in the house and left a wet swimsuit behind? If so, why did she bother to go all the way back to her San Francisco hotel after a ten hour train ride, pack her things, board the river boat and after all of that effort, commit suicide? If this was a crime of passion, why didn’t she just kill herself there, next to the body of her dead lover? And if not Dorothy, who did the wet swimming suit belong to? Whose blood was on the tiles near the swimming pool? Who did the second glass belong to? Why was it never dusted for fingerprints?

These questions remain unanswered and for many crime buffs, the death of Paul Bern remains unsolved. Could this be why his ghost is still reportedly haunting the Harlow House? Perhaps, but many believe that Bern’s first otherworldly appearance in the house was actually meant as a warning. It was an advance premonition for another beautiful blond actress that, if she had heeded it, might have saved her life. That woman’s name was Sharon Tate.

In 1969, Sharon would fall victim to one of the most savage slayings in Hollywood history. But three years before she was brutally murdered at the hands of the Charles Manson “family”, she glimpsed a ghostly image of the horrific fate that awaited her. Could the glimpse into the future have been provided by the phantom of Paul Bern?

Sharon was a struggling actress, hoping to make a name for herself, when she met Jay Sebring, who would soon become known as the premier men’s hair stylist in Hollywood. The two dated for three years and even announced their engagement at one point, but Sharon broke it off with him in 1966, when she met her future husband, Roman Polanski. The break-up was not bitter and the two of them stayed very close friends. In fact, it was Jay who was keeping Sharon company at the Cielo Drive house while Roman was away filming. And it was Jay who died trying to protect her from the Manson clan.

Jay lived in Benedict Canyon in the former home of Jean Harlow. He loved the house but was always concerned about the fact that it was supposed to be “jinxed”. He knew the stories about Paul Bern’s death but he also learned that two people had drowned in the swimming pool as well. He shrugged off the idea that the house was “cursed” though, but perhaps he shouldn’t have.

One night in 1966, Sharon stayed alone at Jay’s house. Unable to sleep, she lay awake in Jay’s room with all the lights on. She was very uncomfortable, although she couldn’t explain why. She felt “funny”, she later told reporter Dick Kleiner, and was frightened by every little sound that she heard.

Suddenly, a person that she described as a “creepy little man” came into the bedroom! She was sure that this man was Paul Bern. The man ignored her though and wandered about the room, apparently looking for something. Sharon put on her robe and hurried out of the bedroom.

What happened next would be especially chilling in light of events to come. Sharon started down the stairs but halfway down them, froze in shock. There was a figure tied to the staircase posts at the bottom of the steps. She couldn’t tell if it was a man or a woman. However, she could clearly see that the figure’s throat had been cut. Then, the apparition vanished.

Shaken, Sharon went into the living room to pour herself a drink but she couldn’t find where Jay kept the alcohol. She felt an inexplicable urge to press on a section of the bookcase and it opened to reveal a hidden bar. Not thinking, she tore away a piece of wallpaper at the base of the bar as she nervously poured herself a drink.

In the morning, Sharon was convinced the whole episode had been a terrible nightmare — until she saw the wallpaper that had been torn away from the bar. She had indeed seen Paul Bern and at that time, had unknowingly seen a vision of her fate.

Regrettably, it would not be enough to save her just a few years later.

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