Happy Holidays! I certainly hope that all of you will have a prosperous, family-filled great holiday this month. Always remember, it is not the material things but the love of your family and friends. Count your blessings every day!

In the past we always brought our seniors small gifts this time of year. I was so busy last month I totally forgot to advertise this to the group. What I’d like to do is ask members to please bring paper products for the seniors in January. We’ll set them up on a table with belated holiday wishes.

**Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer: 1939, Chicago**

From the book: Extraordinary origins of Everyday Things – Charles Panati Harper and Row Publishers

“Rollo, the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” Reginald, the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” Both names were considered for the most famous reindeer of all. And the now traditional Christmas song began as a poem, a free handout to department store shoppers.

In 1939, the Montgomery Ward department store in Chicago sought something novel for its Santa Claus to distribute to parents and children. Robert May, an advertising copywriter for the store, suggested an illustrated poem, printed in a booklet, that families would want to save and reread each holiday season.

May conceived the idea of a shiny-nosed reindeer, a Santa’s helper. And an artist friend, Denver Gillen, spent hours at a local zoo creating whimsical sketches of reindeer at rest and at play. Montgomery Ward executives approved the sketches and May’s poem, but nixed the name Rollo. Then Reginald. May considered other names to preserve the alliteration, and finally settled on Rudolph, the preference of his four-year-old daughter. That Christmas of 1939, 2.4 million copies of the “Rudolph” booklet were handed out in Montgomery Ward stores across the country.

“Rudolph” was reprinted as a Christmas booklet sporadically until 1947. That year, a friend of May’s, Johnny Marks, decided to put the poem to music. One professional singer after another declined the opportunity to record the song, but in 1949, Gene Autry consented. The Autry recording rocketed to the top of the Hit Parade. Since then, three hundred different recordings have been made, and more than eighty million records sold. The original Gene Autry version is second only to Bing Crosby’s “White Christmas” as the best-selling record of all time.

Rudolph became an annual television star, and a familiar Christmas image in Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, England, Spain, Austria and France – many of the countries whose own lore had enriched the international St. Nicholas legend. Perhaps most significantly, “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” has been called by sociologists the only new addition to the folklore of Santa Clause in the twentieth century.
Commentary from Troy Taylor, author & American Ghost Society Founder (reprinted with permission from his Dec. newsletter)

I have been thinking about adding this in to the newsletter for a couple of weeks now, but an incident that occurred last week really convinced me that it was worthy of mention. It’s been almost two years since I offered my “two cents” about the state of the paranormal community and frankly, it’s been a relief not to comment on it. My main goal – as stated in this newsletter two years ago – was to keep my head down, mind my own business and work hard to put out the best books and arrange the best tours and events for people that I could. I have continued (for the most part) to avoid the silly television shows, phony “paranormal celebrities”, and all of the outrageous behavior that has threatened to turn this field into a big joke. But, here are a couple of thoughts on the state of the field, so to speak. Accept them as just my opinion. It’s been a while since I made people mad with this newsletter, but if the comments here strike too close to home… too bad.

* A man and his wife call the police and tell them that their young son has lifted off in a giant balloon and is now flying over the countryside, although their son is actually safely hidden at home. The elaborate hoax, which made national news, is soon exposed. Why did they do it? They hoped to get a reality TV show.

* A woman and her husband show up at the White House for a state dinner with the President. They somehow get past the Secret Service and even though they have no invitations, manage to be photographed with the President and White House officials. Why would they do something like this? A burning desire to meet the President? No, they wanted to score a role on a reality TV show.

**What do these ridiculous “fame whores” have to do with the paranormal?** To answer that, I would only have to direct you to the unbelievably horrible “paranormal” television shows that we have recently been subjected to! I didn’t think that it could get any worse two years ago, but guess what – it has! At least the shows were somewhat original a couple of years ago when they first began airing. Now they were simply a re-hash of everything that has been done before with horrific writing, ridiculous “characters”, poor research, bad history and antics that make Scooby-Doo and his friends look like parapsychologists!

**And who are these people?** Or rather who were they before a production company gave them a trailer and sent them to alleged haunted places around the country? No one seems to know. We have been told that many of them have “years” of experience in paranormal research but no one seems to be able to find anyone who has heard of them. **Why would a production company want to use someone that no one knows for a show? That’s an easy one – because no one with any sort of a decent reputation would destroy their credibility with this crap!**

Which brings us back to my original question – what does a desperate need for fame have to do with the paranormal? It’s become painfully obvious that some of these people will do anything to be on TV. And if and when they do make it on screen, they will do anything to hold onto that fleeting moment of “glory”. It’s hard not to notice the “paranormal celebrities” who are still riding the coattails of a TV show that has long since been canceled. But since they really haven’t done have anything else, what else can they do? They did anything they could to get on TV and now want desperately to get back on.

Believe me, this desperation is not new. **It’s been going on for a while now and it used to be an inside joke with some of the people I know about how many brand new ghost hunting groups were “shooting a pilot”. It was obvious every time that I heard this that they didn’t get into this field to do something as mundane as ghost hunting. Oh no, it was more important to be “famous”.**

So, what’s my point here? I guess I don’t really have one. I have seen several commentaries lately about how reality television has so invaded our culture that people will hoax missing children and sneak into the White House in order to see themselves on screen. **Many of us in the paranormal field weren’t even surprised to see these events take place – we have been watching morons who will do anything to get on TV for a long time now! Is it going to change? Will we finally see the end of these stupid shows and the idiots who embarrass themselves in them every week?**

Sadly, I doubt it.

*To no surprise, Troy has pretty much nailed it! Kelly and I have known him for almost 15 years and as his fame as an author and researcher has grown, he has long trained a wary eye on Television producers and how they portray paranormal investigators. This subject was frequently brought up between Troy, Rosemary Guiley, Rene Kruse, Kelly and I during his November visit to Gettysburg and the commentary above is a nicely crafted overview of many things we discussed. – JDW*
When the Weather Outside is Frightful!

Classics
The Thirteenth Guest
The Ghost Breakers
Topper
I Married a Witch
The Uninvited
Gaslight
The Picture of Dorian Gray
The Ghost & Mrs. Muir
Scared Stiff
Ghost Ship
Bell, Book & Candle
House on Haunted Hill
The Haunting
The Ghost & Mr. Chicken
The Canterbury Ghost

Disney
When Good Ghouls Go Bad
Under Wraps
Tower of Terror
The Scream Team
Hocus Pocus
Halloweentown
Don’t Look Under the Bed

Stir of Echoes
The Lady in White
The Haunting of Sea Cliff Inn
Silver Bullet
The Hollow
The Legend of Lucy Keyes
Ghostbusters
The Sight
Ghost Ship
I’ve Been Waiting for You
The Lost Boys
House
American Haunting
The Haunting
Warlock
Rose Red
The Sixth Sense
The Witches of Eastwick
A Haunting in Connecticut
Pet Semetery

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow
Beetlejuice
A Haunting in Connecticut
Ernest Scared Stupid
Grave Secrets
The Haunted
Blair Witch Project
Rosemary’s Baby
The Sentinel
Carrie
The Dead Don’t Die
The Exorcist
Children of the Corn
Poltergeist
The Amityville Horror
The Fly
The Haunting of Julia
Christine
Pumpkinhead
The Fog

Come in from the cold with a mug of hot cocoa, cozy blanket and a spooky movie!
NEW FROM WHITECHAPEL PRESS:

Troy Taylor and Rob & Anne Wlodarski have collected 13 spooky cases from ghost hunters from all across America, detailing their experiences with ghosts as a real-life haunted location – and their eerie contact with the spirits of the dead. Contributors familiar to most SSP members include Troy himself, Dale Kaczmarek, Rene Kruse, Rosemary Ellen Guiley and Kelly & John Weaver. (Our story involves the many years of experience investigating and doing programs at the very haunted Alfred’s Victorian. Copies of Talking with the Dead can be purchased from us at a special discount for SSP members. - JDW)

Excerpt from:

Weird Insurance
Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine, October 1998
by Kimberly Lankford

Worried about being kidnapping by aliens? We didn't really think so. But fears of alien abduction plague enough people that at least one insurance company offers a policy that will pay if little green men come to take you away. Or maybe An American Werewolf in Paris has you nervous about turning into a hirsute creature of the night. No problem. The same company writes a policy to guard against such a metamorphosis. You can also buy coverage against being injured by a ghost, eaten (as opposed to abducted) by an alien, or hit by an asteroid (hey, it could happen).

Perhaps even weirder than the risks the policies insure against is that so many people have purchased coverage—some 20,000 alien-abduction policies, for example, have been sold. Who buys this stuff? "Normally, they're feeble-minded," explains Simon Burgess, a former Lloyd's of London underwriter who is now managing director of Goodfellow Rebecca Ingrams Pearson (GRIP), the London insurance brokerage that has tapped the Twilight Zone market.

GRIP, which specializes in disability coverage, has also sold about 4,000 immaculate-conception policies, which pay if paternity is ascribed to You Know Who ("very popular with girls called Mary," says Burgess), and 4,500 of what he calls John Wayne Bobbitt policies, which pay if a knife-wielding wife... well, you remember the story. (In case you were wondering, policies for any of the above cost $150 a year for $1.5 million in coverage.)

But you wanna know what's really weird? GRIP has actually paid one alien-abduction claim, to the tune of 1 million [pounds sterling] sterling, says Burgess. He's a bit vague about the details, but according to the Sunday Times, an electrician from London said he was taken aboard an alien ship for about 40 minutes while looking for UFOs in Wiltshire. Burgess admitted to the Times that the electrician was actually his business partner, but insisted that the story was true nonetheless.

Coming FEB. 19-21, 2010*
*Note new date

MARK NESBITT'S SUPERNATURAL SUMMIT
A Virtual Paranormal Gathering - Gettysburg and Beyond

Mark Nesbitt has announced a date change for the Supernatural Summit Virtual Paranormal Gathering, originally set for Nov. 13-15. The new date will be Feb. 19-21, 2010. As this will be a virtual event (online) there is no need to worry about travelling in the winter!

SSP presenters include Craig Telesha, Kelly Weaver and John Weaver. Other confirmed presenters familiar to many SSP members include Rosemary Ellen Guiley, John Zaffis, Eric Altman, Dr. Charles Emmons, Mark Nesbitt himself and many more. Details can be found at http://www.supernaturalsummit.com/read_more.php?tab_id=2