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Go home, ghost!

\$bull; The tale of a haunted school continues Ñ in a writer's home

BY PAUL DUCHENE

The Portland Tribune, Mar 19, 2002

Some ghosts just don't get the message that they're dead.

That includes a deceased student from the Christie School in Marylhurst whom we disturbed by a visit last fall. His story continues, though in a different city.

Back in September, I visited the Christie School with psychic Janet Reiner from Olympia, Wash., and archaeologist-ghost hunter Jeff Davis of Vancouver, Wash.

Davis has written several books about Northwest ghosts. He was most intrigued by the Christie School because part of it has been condemned for almost 40 years, and there are numerous stories about child spirits that sleep there uneasily Ñ if at all. So we arranged a nighttime visit.

It was, literally, a dark experience. Reiner was extremely upset by the atmosphere on the abandoned top floor of the 1910 building, where there is no electrical power. She began to sense the ghosts of children in the darkness.

Reiner's observations corresponded with stories I'd heard from longtime school staff members about unexplained occurrences Ñ recollections I had not shared with her. She described a child playing whom I had heard that

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not snared with her. She described a child playing where I had heard that an administrator's dog would not walk, for example, and commented on children crying, a prominent feature in a number of other stories.

She also disturbed Tribune photographer Kyle Green Ñ who went in as an unbeliever Ñ by describing a little blue-eyed girl he could feel hanging onto his leg.

Reiner smudged us with sage and sweetgrass smoke at the end of the evening "so nobody would follow us home."

I closed my story by remarking that I had heard footsteps in my gravel driveway at 2 a.m. when I alighted from my car. I couldn't see anybody and attributed it to imagination, or maybe a neighbor walking a dog.

But I slept fitfully that night. I awoke tired, yawning and with gritty eyes. This continued for several days, until I got a call from Reiner, who had read the story.

"Let me guess, you're only sleeping

21Ú2 or three hours and then you wake up Ñ wide awake, right?" she said. "You took somebody home. I'd better come down."

She wasn't able to smudge my house for several weeks. By that time I was feeling rundown and thinking about the fact that tests show sleep deprivation seriously compromises the immune system. I had a flu shot Ñ then got the flu.

Oddly, if I stayed overnight elsewhere, I slept fine.

The other thing I couldn't explain was that somehow the house seemed darker. The lights weren't burning as brightly, and replacing bulbs didn't help.

I concluded that, whether the problem was real or in my head, something needed to be done.

When Reiner arrived, she shoed me away while she concentrated. On my return she had news.

"It's my fault," she said. "I should have smudged your car. You've got a 10- to 12-year-old boy here who hid in your car while I was smudging you. His name's Mark or Michael, and he feels an affinity to you. He's English or Irish. I think I mentioned him to you when we were up on the fourth floor of the school. He's kind of a ringleader. Not a bad boy, but stubborn."

"I'm not opposed to him staying here," I said. "But I have to get some sleep."

Reiner explained that the boy just stood in the corner of my bedroom and watched me. It didn't matter when I was awake, but when I went to sleep I entered his dimension in some way, and he prevented me from entering REM (rapid eye movement) sleep Ñ the level that revitalizes you.

"I've told him to go back to the school," she said. "We'll see if he does. Sometimes it takes several visits.

"By the way, there's an older lady here. Do you know anybody with gray hair that she piles up on her head? She's sort of bent over. probably in her



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hair that she pines up on her head. She's sort of sort over, probably in her 70s or 80s."

"That sounds like my grandmother," I said.

"She's trying to tell you something, but you're not getting it. I've told her she's in charge, in case anybody else shows up. She and the boy were just avoiding each other."

For a couple of nights things seemed better. The house was brighter. I slept through the night. But it didn't last. After 10 semisleepless nights I called Reiner again.

"I was afraid of that," she said. "I'll come back."

Reiner stopped by in late December, and I left so she could get to work. When I returned, she was sitting in her car.

"I think I have a solution," she said. "Michael says he won't go back to the Christie School, so I'll take him home with me. Monday I can drop him off at a grade school nearby. There'll be lots of children for him to relate to and he'll enjoy being in a learning environment. I don't think he knows astral projection, so if he doesn't like it he won't come back this far."

I called Reiner later to see if she had delivered her charge safely.

"I did," she said. "But Sunday was very busy at my house. The bathroom taps kept turning on, and my video collection was all piled up in the middle of the floor."

Reiner didn't discuss the delivery of Michael with anyone else. But the second week in February she was driving two of her children to the same school Ñ L.T. Brown Elementary School in Olympia Ñ when she heard a disconcerting question from the back seat of her van.

"Did you know our classroom is haunted?" said 7-year-old Joshua to his 8-year-old brother, Jeremy.

"Why do you think it's haunted?" Reiner asked with a sinking feeling, as she remembered where she had released the uneasy spirit.

"Because strange things happen in the room," he said. "The clock in the room does funny things. Things get moved around a lot, and some of the children felt somebody touch them."

This announcement posed a problem for Reiner.

"I know the spirit is there, and he likes it, but children tend to be psychic, and they understand something is going on," she said. "I don't want them to be freaked out."

And there's a larger issue, Reiner explained.

"If he ends up liking one of the children, he'll follow him or her home, and we'll have lost touch with him. I feel responsible, and I've been thinking about what to do. I think there's some unfinished business here. Before he causes any more havoc, I may have to convince him to go back to the Christie School."

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