

THE NIGHT THAT HAUNTS

Ghost stories
Author's scariest
night ever was
at Santa Cruz
beach house

By CHRIS WATSON
Sentinel staff writer

ANTOINETTE MAY has walked through more than 50 haunted houses over the past two decades. She has assisted in a variety of exorcisms and seances and even thinks her own home might be haunted.

But the absolute scariest night of her life was the night she spent at the Red, White and Blue Beach, the home of Kathy and Ralph Edwards, six miles north of Santa Cruz on Highway 1.

"It scared me so much it was a long time before I could get myself to go to any more haunted houses," May said recently.

What May experienced that night at the Santa Cruz campground — and what others have experienced there — is spookily detailed in "Haunted Houses of California," a book so popular it is now in its third revision.

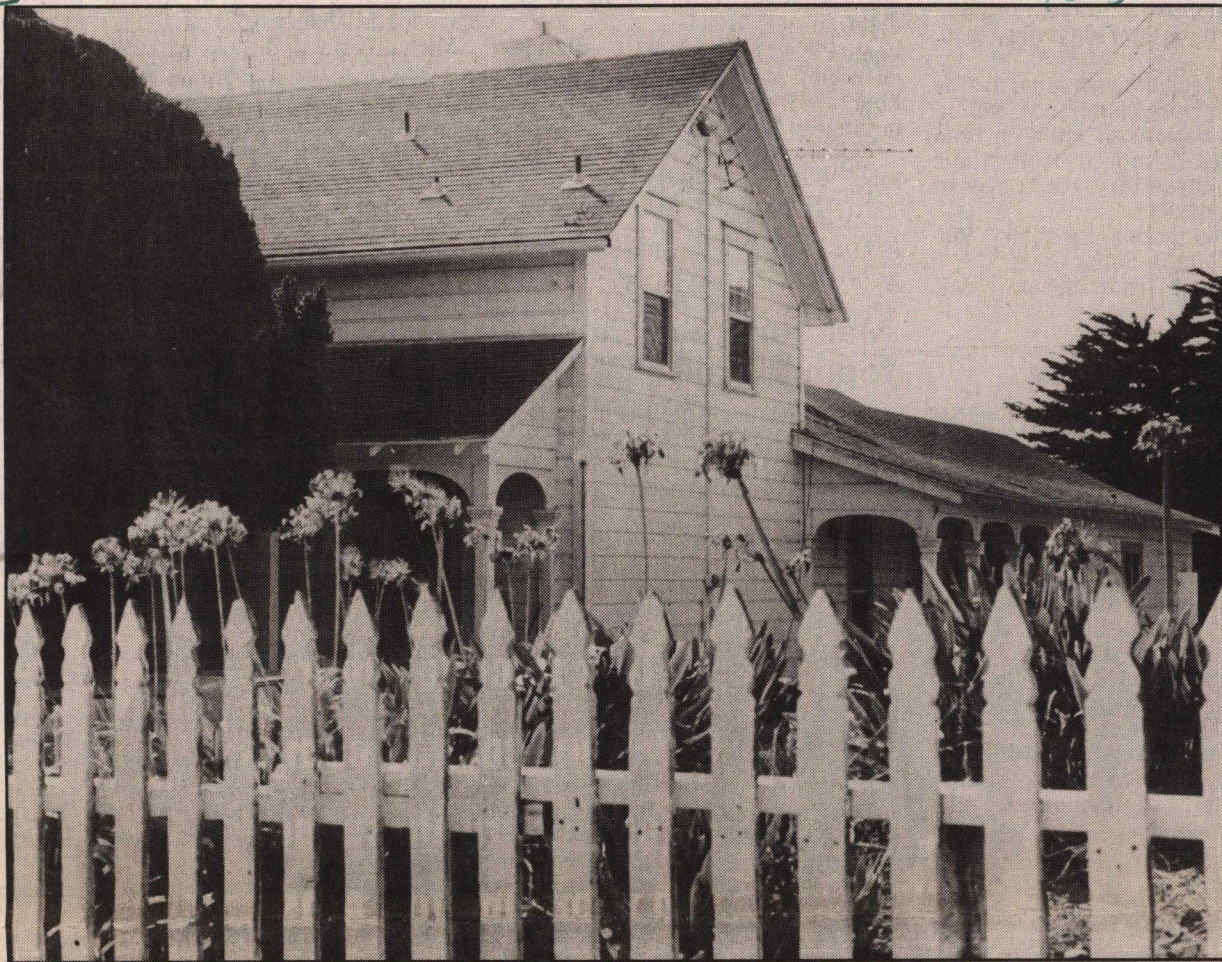
The Edwards' home is but one of the 41 haunted houses May describes in her book, a book that also includes profiles of the Robert Louis Stevenson House in Monterey, the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose and the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego.

While the Edwards declined to be interviewed about what the ghosts are up to 15 years later, Ralph Edwards did admit that some of their visitors still see and feel some strange vibrations at the house.

But May remembers that night in 1977 like it was yesterday.

"There was such a sense of evil about the Red, White and Blue Beach in 1977," May said.

... footsteps in the night ... doors slamming ... perfume bottles dancing ... pictures flying off the wall ... glasses flying through the air ... the specter of an old sea captain in a



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The seemingly innocent house at Red, White and Blue beach leaves some with a creepy feeling.



'It scared me so much it was a long time before I could get myself to go to any more haunted houses.'

— Antoinette May

raincoat and hat walking to the beach, walking back ...

At the time May wrote the book, more than a dozen people a year

were claiming to have seen the old sea captain.

Who was he?

Could he have been involved in

the smuggling and bootlegging that allegedly took place in the area long ago? Could he have been the scion of the family that once owned the property, the man responsible for all the family violence that psychics feel when they visit the place?

Nothing is known for sure about this sea captain. And few facts are known about the former residents at all.

What is known, however, is that a girl named Gwendolyn *did* disappear while visiting her uncle there in the early 1900s. And bones found on the property have been dated to that time period.

Little else is known, although Kathy Edwards told May in 1977

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It takes talent to be an expert ghostbuster

YOU DON'T have to go to college to learn how to be an exorcist and rid a house of ghosts, but to do it properly, it might be a good idea to take a couple of classes, says Nick Nocerino of the Institute of Hypnotic and Psychic Sciences of San Pablo.

"Anyone can do a simple exorcism by inviting the energy — either verbally or telepathically — to go toward the light."

But because psychic energy can only be redirected or subdued but never disposed of, Nocerino says you have to be careful how you do your exorcism.

"There have been cases where

people have screwed it up and the house has been loaded with violent energy."

To help avoid the pitfalls associated with novice ghostbusting, Nocerino suggests that you take the institute's 12-week course.

There you will learn the correct way to make a pentagram and the best symbols (Greek or Hebrew? From the Bible or the Torah?) to inscribe around the circle or in the air. You also will learn when to use holy water and holy ashes and what to say — either verbally or telepathically.

In the case of the Red, White and Blue Beach, Nocerino and his team

of psychic researchers found no reason to exorcise the house itself.

"No one was violent at the house. We saw the energy of a woman, a child, an Indian, another woman and then we followed the sea captain who came out the back door and headed for the beach."

But the team did find it necessary to do exorcisms at the beach, at the site where bones were found and at a shed near the main house where they felt an uncomfortable amount of leftover energy.

And to assess the efficacy of their work, they took before and after photographs to see if the energy had lessened.

It had: the unaccountable blobs and streaks of light were gone.

For the time being.

"You're dealing with a thought form and you have to alter that form so it won't bother anybody. But even if it's OK for 50 years, there's always the chance that someone will come along and awaken that energy."

And then you'll need, once again, to call a credentialed ghostbuster to do the job.

To find out more about exorcism classes, write to The Institute of Hypnotic and Psychic Sciences, P.O. Box 302, Pinole, Calif. 94564.

— Chris Watson

Haunted house

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that she had talked to a former resident who remained bitter about her father and her life at the house.

In May's book, Sylvia Brown, a medium who visited the Edwards' home along with May that night in 1977, described the dysfunction and sadness of the place.

Brown said, "I see an older man. ... In his life he killed an intruder. ... There was a lot of hatred, a lot of unresolved problems. I see unhappy young people ... a beautiful girl ... blood. There was a stabbing here. A baby died here, too. There were evil acts committed in the past."

But Nick Nocerino, an exorcist and psychic who visited the house with May and Brown, said the bad vibrations are outside the house, not inside.

And Ralph and Kathy Edwards, residents since the early '60s, have never been much bothered by the lights going on in the middle of the night or by the objects flying through the air — although their children endured years of having their beds shaken at night, years of having the sheets yanked off them while they slept.

Today, according to Ralph Edwards in a one-sentence interview, the family is not much bothered by ghostly goings-on.

But May's own memories of her evening spent at the house remain clear.

"It's difficult to describe exactly what I felt, but everyone was frightened.

"To begin with, two large dogs owned by the Edwards ran into the house. The hackles on their necks were up and they tried to hide under their master's chair.

"And later in the evening, when we had all the lights turned off and were sitting in the dark, I saw blobs of light outside the window where there was no light. I saw lightning bolts, too. And the woman sitting under the window said she felt that something horrible was going on behind her back.

"Even my boyfriend, a real skeptic, who had gone to one of the bedrooms to take a nap while we examined the house, came rushing down the stairs three minutes later and said he felt like something had been sitting on his chest."

May and her boyfriend got there sometime around sunset. May refused to stay past midnight.

"I didn't want to stay the night. We left. But when my boyfriend started the car, a big bird with a large wing-span flew up in front of us and preceded us all the way back to the highway.

"And all the way down the highway, I continued to see streaks of light. I had the feeling I had been followed."

Which could have been so, May said, since some ghosts haunt people and things as well as houses.

"Sometimes a ghost will follow a visitor. Some ghosts haunt graveyards or parks, or prisons."

Ghosts, May says, can be found anywhere. But despite the many scary ghost stories our culture spreads, she added, the majority of ghosts are friendly.

For her book, however, May chose only the most sensational haunted houses, houses that readers could visit and experience for themselves.

One sensational ghost story concerns the haunting of the Brookdale Lodge as described by Kim Gilbert, the manager. It is a sad, eerie tale of mysterious cold spots during hot summer days, a disembodied voice calling Gilbert's name, big band music coming from a storeroom, the ghost of a little girl who drowned many years before.

And another tale concerns the Sunshine Villa on Beach Hill, the apocryphal archetype for Hitchcock's house in "Psycho," the one-time home of mass-murderer Herbert Mullins, the supposed site of an ancient Indian burial ground.

May reports the findings of Jan Kertz, a psychic who investigated the place:

"There was mental illness in the old McCray Hotel. It got so heavy that even the drug addicts were uncomfortable there. A woman was murdered in the hotel but it was covered up somehow. She's still hanging around, hoping someone will find out about it."

But May says most psychic energy isn't bothersome. It is, after all; just leftover vibrations from some long ago event, and could be as simple as a woman from a hundred years ago walking through her house closing the windows.

May's own interest in psychic phenomena was pricked by a near-death incident that happened to her when she was younger.

"I was at a party and I very nearly drowned. My life passed in front of my eyes and I had the sense of being 10 feet above the pool, looking down at my form in the pool. I could see so clearly, I could hear each individual conversation and I wasn't frightened; just angry.

"I had the feeling you get when you walk into a place you haven't been to before and know that someone will give you directions. I felt anticipation.

"After it was all over and I had a chance to be alone, I realized I had been given a gift. And I haven't been afraid of death since. Oh, I have fears and problems, but death, a biggie, isn't one of them."

"I know there is a continuity of the human spirit. It's changed me philosophically."

While ghosts may seem like invited party guests around Halloween, May is convinced that the most intriguing aspect about them is their popularity with those who aren't especially sensitive to psychic energy.

"The interest in ghosts, is, basically, just an interest in the beyond, in understanding messages from the beyond."