

Wally Trabing's Mostly about People

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Old Santa Cruz Ghost Story

"From ghoulies and ghosties and long - leggety beasties; And things that go bump in the night; Good Lord, deliver us!"

Santa Cruz is not a very ghostly area.

Possibly our atmosphere is not ectoplasmically amenable to their sense of non - being.

But years and years ago, when the air was pure as the new governor of California, there was a ghost.

I state this adamantly, because Jennie Romano said there was a ghost.

She is 87 and has lived in Santa Cruz since 1907 and if you want to face her challenging eyes and pursed lips and sharp tongue and say, "Pawsh!!" be my guest.

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Well, I drove (I'm sorry, Mr. Ford) out to her mobile home in Alimur Park yesterday morning to hear her out. I can usually see through most ghost stories but not this one.

"We had just moved into the big old two - story house off Mission on Towne Terrace—I don't know if it's still there—it was behind the big house on the corner that used to be owned by the people who owned the Seaside Clothing store (now the site of Leask's).

"It was our first night. I was in bed with Joe, my husband. In another double bed in the same room were our two little ones.

"They started to cry that something was choking them—pressing down like. Joe said they were just restless but I got up and took them in bed with us."

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"All of a sudden Joe yelled that something was trying to kill him and he leaped up like a frog and jumped back into our bed.

"And then we smelled something—kind of like burning sulphur. I know it's funny to hear a person talk like this but it is the God's honest truth," she said.

Mrs. Romano believes that the children's bed was once the ghost's because it didn't bother them in the other bed.

They also concluded that there was money buried in the basement. That's why the ghost was still hanging around, Mrs. Romano believes.

She sent Joe down to dig for the money, but a snake jumped him and he ran up faster than he went down.

The Romanos moved out a few days later. Another family moved in. They got the same treatment, she said, and moved out.

"It happened so often that the landlord told me that all he did was to pay taxes on the house. Nobody would live there."

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What gives an eerie authority to this incident is that I was curiously asking for ghost stories in the newsroom and Pam Aitkens, our librarian, told of her only experience.

She was awakened three times one night while living in Scotts Valley two years ago, by a feeling of being pressed down, as if "by a heavy X-ray anti-radiation blanket."

Same MOD (method of operation) as the Romano ghost. Maybe Santa Cruz became too crowded.

The reason Mrs. Romano favors the buried money theory is that the Towne Terrace ghost "musta died unexpected—you know, like a lot of people do."

Well, Mrs. Romano is not likely to join the ghostly throng for a long time.

Her grandmother went to her reward at 107.

"Cigaretes killed her," she said with a pursed lip nod.