



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel file

Is it haunted? Spooky things have been happening at Brookdale Inn & Spa for years.

STIRRING UP SPIRITS

REMODELING AND REMOVAL OF ITEMS MAY HAVE ANGERED GHOSTS

Hotels and Boarding Houses

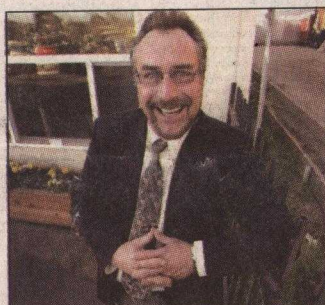
By ISAIAH GUZMAN

Sentinel correspondent

If somebody started looting your house, you'd be upset too, right?

That's how paranormal investigator Erich Breger says the spirits at Brookdale Lodge, now renamed Brookdale Inn & Spa, have been feeling lately. Breger, the lead investigator with California Paranormal Investigations, took his team to the famed Santa Cruz Mountains resort late Thursday night to see if they could draw the local haunt's hauntings out from the shadows and

BROOKDALE



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Car salesman Erich Breger moonlights as a paranormal investigator.

find out why all the ruckus.

Brookdale employees, particularly the cooks, have said they've

Coming Sunday

Brookdale's new owner says he wants to remake the historic property into a destination spa, but he hasn't gotten off on the right foot with county officials over garbage and permitting violations. Sanjiv Kakkar says he has addressed the concerns, but a Sentinel investigation shows there's a similar legacy of negligence at his hotel San Francisco.

seen increased paranormal activity since the previous owners sold the business and began taking with them old furniture, clip-pings and memorabilia.

"I think why it's happening

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Spirits

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is there is definitely a defiling that's going on here," said Breger, a Boulder Creek man with an intense stare, raspy voice, suit and black trench coat.

Brookdale Inn & Spa has long been thought to be haunted by the spirit of a little girl — among others — who drowned in the creek that runs through the dining area. During the 1940s and '50s gangsters made the lodge their home, and some legends say they buried bodies under the floor.

Opened in 1870, the lodge has been featured on "Ripley's Believe It or Not" and has hosted notables such as Marilyn Monroe and President Herbert Hoover.

In recent weeks, there have been reports of shadowy figures. Employees in the kitchen have reported hearing bangs. Chef Juan Diaz said he and a cook saw a pot do a full rotation while sitting on the burner about two months ago.

"It was all full of water so it was heavy," said Diaz in Spanish. "And we saw it spin around like somebody was moving it."

Then there was the incident this summer with the swinging doors



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Elaine Higbee, front desk manager at Brookdale Inn & Spa, says a couple dining at this table ran out of the room when they spotted a ghost in their photos when playing back the digital images.

to the kitchen, said Diaz.

"They opened like somebody was coming in but there was nobody there," he said. "Then they opened again like somebody was leaving."

Bartender Jonelle Badger, who

has worked at Brookdale Inn & Spa for a year, says she's only heard stories of strange occurrences from her co-workers.

"I've never had an experience here that would lead me to believe there was a ghost," she said.

But Breger, the fleet manager at Ocean Honda when he's not tracking spirits, said his team thinks something was definitely going on Thursday night. His fellow investigators include Ed Hayes, Ronaldo Williams and Shelly Crowley, all of Brookdale and Boulder Creek. The four walked the different levels of the lodge Thursday night with equipment such as an EVP [Electronic Voice Phenomenon] monitor, EMF [Electro Magnetic Field] monitor, infrared cameras and a Ouija board. Breger said he and his team will review their evidence in more detail tonight.

"Based on what we've gathered so far there is definitely something going on there," he said.

Breger said he's never been scared of anything he's experienced in 15 years of pursuit. He also takes his team out to wrecking yards to look for spirits involved in fatal vehicle accidents.

"It's a totally untapped resource," he said.

As for skeptics of paranormal activity and investigation, Breger said he doesn't blame them.

"Until you experience something," he said, "it's one of those things where you have to show me the proof."

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