

OCTOBER MUSINGS

An Assortment of Interesting Coincidences and Ghostly Matters

*Do you believe in ghosts?
In premonitions?*

*Are there logical reasons for unusual
coincidences? And what of ghostly
matters -- merely folklore?*

*Listed here are some interesting
coincidences, a few recorded
ghostly occurrences, and some
thoughts and quotes about these
matters from fairly well-known
people. They are presented here
for your October amusement or
for your October musing --
whichever you prefer.*

On his 63rd birthday, Henry Flagler wrote to his son, "It will take 30 more years to complete my projects in Florida. But I have only 20 more years to live. I will live to be 83." Henry Flagler died on May 20, 1913 at the age of 83. How did he know?

"It is possible that there exists emotions that are still unknown to us. Do you remember how electrical currents and unseen waves were laughed at? The knowledge about man is still in its infancy." Albert Einstein

Paul McCartney believes that he has seen the ghost of John Lennon. It was reported that he sensed the playful spirit of John Lennon when they were recording Lennon's song, *Free As A Bird*, in 1995. "There were a lot of strange goings-on in the studio - noises that shouldn't have been there and equipment doing all manner of weird things. There was just an overall feeling that John was around."

"Whatsoever that be within us that feels, thinks, desires, and animates is something celestial and divine and consequently imperishable." Aristotle

Harry Houdini, magician and investigator of psychic phenomena, died on Halloween night, October 31, 1926. His New York home is rumored to be haunted by the magician.

For who can wonder that man should feel a vague belief in tales of disembodied spirits wandering through those places which they once dearly affected, when he himself, scarcely less separated from his old world than they, is for ever lingering upon past emotions and bygone times, and hovering, the ghost of his former self, about the places and people that warmed his heart of old? Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*

"There are nights when the wolves are silent and only the moon howls." George Carlin

I don't believe that ghosts are "spirits of the dead" because I don't believe in death. In the multiverse, once you're possible, you exist. And once you exist, you exist forever one way or another. Besides, death is the absence of life, and the ghosts I've met are very much alive. What we call ghosts are life forms just as you and I are. Paul F. Eno, *Footsteps in the Attic*

Pop megastar Michael Jackson claims that he inwardly communicates with the flamboyant pianist Lee Liberace who died in 1987 - "I have my own secret room, with a moving wall and mirrors," said Jackson, "that's where I talk to Lee. His is the voice I hear in there. I feel his presence so very close to me." He added that Liberace "is like my guardian angel. He's even given me permission to record his theme song *I'll Be Seeing You*."

"I can call up spirits from the vasty deep. Why so can I, or so can any man; but will they come, when you do call for them?" William Shakespeare

After the first night in the family quarters of the White House, President Harry Truman, who hung a horseshoe over the Oval Office doorway for good luck, wrote to Bess, who was still in Independence, Missouri, the following letter: "I sit here in this old house and listen to the ghosts walk up and down the hallway. With the heavy drapes rustling back and forth, I can hear old Andy and Teddy welcoming the newly arrived Franklin."

At 4 o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by three distinct knocks on my bedroom door. I jumped up, opened the door and no one was there. I went back to bed and heard footsteps in the next room. I jumped up again and looked again, no one was there. This damn place is haunted, sure as shooting."

During his Presidency, Harry Truman received word that his mother had suddenly become very ill. On the plane to Missouri, he fell asleep and dreamed that his mother had come to him and said, "Goodbye, Harry, be a good boy." President Truman's mother had died just about that time in Missouri.

There are an infinite number of universes existing side by side and through which our consciousnesses constantly pass. In these universes, all possibilities exist. You are alive in some, long dead in others, and never existed in still others. Many of our "ghosts" could indeed be visions of people going about their business in a parallel universe or another time -- or both. Paul F. Eno, *Faces at the Window*

Dolley Madison started a beautiful rose garden on the White House lawn. During the Woodrow Wilson administration, Wilson decided to move it to another part of the grounds.

After pointing out the area that he wanted the rose garden moved to, President Wilson returned to the Oval Office and the foreman and his workmen walked to the rose garden and began removing the plants. Suddenly an angry woman, dressed in old-fashioned clothes, appeared and told the workers to stop immediately and not to move the rose garden.

The men rushed to President Wilson's office and told him what had just occurred. Wilson, a former American History professor, told the men that they had just described Dolley Madison. He then said, "I guess it's best to keep the rose garden where it is after all."

The White House rose garden remained where Dolley Madison planted it.

Maureen Reagan said that she woke up in the Lincoln bedroom and saw a man who was wearing a red coat. She thought it was her father in his red bathrobe, but then noticed that the figure was transparent. The next morning, her father, President Reagan, said "If you see him again, send him down the hall. I have some problems I'd like to have him help me solve." Rex, the Reagan family dog, barked at the Lincoln bedroom door but refused to enter the room.

A spirit glided past my face; the hair of my flesh bristled. Anonymous

Olivia de Havilland walked home from a party with a friend whom she hadn't seen for some time, and learned the next morning that he had died before the party began.

When I see ghosts they look perfectly real and solid -- like a living human being. They are not misty; I can't see through them; they don't wear sheets or bloody mummy bandages. They don't have their heads tucked under their arms. They just look like ordinary people, in living color, and sometimes it is hard to tell who is a ghost. Chris Woodyard, *Invisible Ink* interview

"It is the secret of the world that all things subsist and do not die, but retire a little from sight and afterwards return again. Nothing is dead. People feign themselves dead, and endure mock funerals and mournful obituaries, and there they stand, looking out the window, sound and well in some new disguise." Ralph Waldo Emerson

Charles Lindbergh reported that on his 33-½-hour flight from New York to Paris in 1927, he became aware that the fuselage behind him was filled with ghostly presences. “The beings spoke with friendly and familiar voices, discussing the flight and navigation. They reassured me and gave me messages of importance unattainable in ordinary life.”

By November 1877, the telephone had been invented, but no one was rushing to Alexander Graham Bell’s or his assistant Tom Watson’s door to buy their product. Doubt set in because the words were not distinct enough. Watson consulted a spirit medium “to see if there was any help to be gotten from the Other Side.” After the medium experiment, the words did appear to be become more distinct.

Behind every man now alive stand 30 ghosts, for that is the ratio by which the dead outnumber the living.
Arthur C. Clarke, *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Henry Ziegland thought he had dodged fate. In 1883, he broke off a relationship with his girlfriend; out of distress, she committed suicide. The girl’s brother was so enraged that he hunted down Ziegland and shot him. The brother, believing he had killed Ziegland, then turned his gun on himself and took his own life. But Ziegland had not been killed. The bullet, in fact, had only grazed his face and then lodged in a tree. Ziegland surely thought himself a lucky man. Some years later, however, Ziegland decided to cut down the large tree, which still had the bullet in it. The task seemed so formidable that he decided to blow it up with a few sticks of dynamite. The explosion propelled the bullet into Ziegland’s head, killing him.

In 1877, Chief Crazy Horse came to Fort Robinson, Nebraska for peace talks a year after he had defeated General George Custer. But shortly after he arrived at the fort, angry soldiers stabbed the defenseless Indian chief to death. It is reported that the unhappy spirit of Crazy Horse is still seen at Fort Robinson.

The murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always -- take any form -- drive me mad! Only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!
Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

While American novelist Anne Parrish was browsing bookstores in Paris in the 1920s, she came upon a book that was one of her childhood favorites --

Jack Frost and Other Stories. She picked up the old book and showed it to her husband, telling him of the book she fondly remembered as a child. Her husband took the book, opened it, and on the flyleaf found the inscription: "Anne Parrish, 209 N. Weber Street, Colorado Springs." It was Anne’s very own book.
(Alexander Wollcott)

The British actor Anthony Hopkins was delighted to hear that he had landed a leading role in a film based on the book *The Girl From Petrovka* by George Feifer. A few days after signing the contract, Hopkins traveled to London to buy a copy of the book. He tried several bookshops, but there wasn’t one to be had. Waiting at Leicester Square underground for his train home, he noticed a book apparently discarded on a bench. Incredibly, it was *The Girl From Petrovka*. That in itself would have been coincidence enough, but in fact it was merely the beginning of an extraordinary chain of events. Two years later, in the middle of filming in Vienna, Hopkins was visited by George Feifer, the author. Feifer mentioned that he did not have a copy of his own book. He had lent the last one - containing his own annotations - to a friend who had lost it somewhere in London. With mounting astonishment, Hopkins handed Feifer the book he had found. “Is this the one?” he asked, “with the notes scribbled in the margins?” It was the same book.

At 2:00 p.m. on December 5, 1945, five Navy torpedo bombers with 15 men aboard took off in perfect flying weather from the Naval Air Station at Fort Lauderdale on a routine training mission over the Atlantic Ocean. A message from the flight off the Florida Keys reported no trouble. A short time later, however, the flight commander radioed that he was “completely lost.” Then there was silence.

A Martin PBM rescue plane with 12 crewmen aboard was dispatched to search for them from a naval base in Melbourne. It too disappeared without a trace. In all, 6 planes and 27 men vanished that day. These unexplained events gave rise to the legend of the Devil’s Triangle or the Bermuda Triangle.

“Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that’s on its mind and can’t make itself understood, and so can’t rest easy in its grave, and has to go about that way every night grieving.”
Mark Twain

“An idea, like a ghost, must be spoken to a little before it will explain itself.” Charles Dickens

Telly Savalas was on his way back to the airport in the late 1950s when he came upon a man wearing a white suit and standing in the middle of the road. Telly stopped his car, and the man came to the window and told him not to take his scheduled flight. With little hesitation, Savalas turned his car around and returned home.

A short time later, news reports told of a plane crash -- Savalas' plane. Telly Savalas later said that the reason he obeyed the man in the white suit was because he recognized the man as a famous Greek athlete who had died some time before.

In 1926, Rudolph Valentino bought a ring in San Francisco, despite the warning of the jeweler of the ring's supposed curse. Valentino wore the ring in his last film before he died.

Pola Negri became the ring's next owner. But after recovering from a sudden near-fatal illness, she gave the ring to singer, Russ Columbo. A few months later, Columbo kept an appointment with a photographer in his studio. The photographer, in lighting a cigarette, struck a match on the barrel of an antique French gun and a ball was fired. It ricocheted off a table and struck Colombo in the forehead, killing him instantly.

Joe Casino, a friend of the singer's, inherited the ring, and one week later was hit by a truck and killed.

The ring was then purchased by a movie studio for Dick Dixon, who was to play Valentino in a film biography. But Dixon died of a rare blood disease ten days after his screen test for the film. He was only 21 years old.

The ring was then bought by an unknown Valentino fan, and has never been heard of since.

Do I believe in ghosts? No -- but I'm afraid of them." Marquise du Deffand, 1697-1780

Major Summerford, a British officer, was knocked off his horse by a flash of lightning and paralyzed from the waist down while fighting in the fields of Flanders in February 1918. Summerford retired and moved to Vancouver. One day in 1924, as he fished alongside a river, lightning hit the tree he was sitting under and paralyzed his right side. Two years later, Summerford was sufficiently recovered that he was able to take walks in a local park. He was walking there one summer day in 1930 when a lightning bolt smashed into him, permanently paralyzing him. He died two years later. But lightning sought him out one last time. Four years later, during a storm, lightning struck a cemetery and destroyed a tombstone. The deceased buried there? Major Summerford.

If you address a ghost as "Thing!"
Or strike him with a hatchet,
He is permitted by the King
To drop all formal parleying—
And then you're sure to catch it!

Lewis Carroll [Charles Lutwidge Dodgson]

Jules Verne wrote *From the Earth to the Moon* in 1865. It told the story of retired Civil War artillery veterans who fired a projectile with a crew of three from a point near Cape Canaveral, Florida. The projectile was launched into orbit successfully, where the crew members experienced weightlessness. But when they fired the recoil rockets to take them to the moon's surface, a miscalculation caused the projectile to head back to earth. It splashed down in the Pacific Ocean and the crew and the projectile were retrieved by a United States naval vessel.

Remember, this story was written in 1865.

"All that we see is but a dream within a dream."
Edgar Allan Poe

Mark Twain was born in 1835 on the day Halley's comet appeared. He died in 1910, the day the comet reappeared. He himself predicted this in 1909, when he said: "I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming in again next year, and I expect to go out with it."

"Look for the stars, you'll say that there are none;
Look up a second time, and, one by one,
You mark them twinkling out with silvery light,
And wonder how they could elude the sight!
William Wordsworth

The above quotes and excerpts appear as they were spoken or written or reported. The quotes were gathered from various sources on the Internet that display quotations of interest. Most of the excerpts are from a book entitled *Celebrity Ghost Stories of the Rich and Famous* written by Frank Morgan, who was a college history professor as well as a columnist for many South Florida newspapers. The book is part of Broward County Library's collection.