

Ghostly Encounters at the Grey Moss Inn, Part II

By Cynthia Leal Massey

From the beginning, Nell Baeten, who with husband, Dr. Louis Baeten, purchased the Grey Moss Inn in 1988, felt the presence of another person at the restaurant even when she was the only one there. A licensed professional counselor who became the restaurant's general manager, Nell often smelled a strong fragrance of roses and later learned that Mary Howell always wore rose perfume.

Over the years Nell caught glimpses of the former owner, as have the custodian, wait staff, and even customers. Mary is always wearing the same outfit: a long skirt and white blouse.

"Mary seems to be most concerned that we treat this restaurant with respect and our customers with hospitality." Baeten gestured toward a server during a 2007 interview. "Gabriel is very big, you see. He used to crash through the double doors into the kitchen. I warned him not to do that. This is an old building and I knew Mary wouldn't like it. Anyway, I had bought a frying pan size clock to put on the wall in the kitchen. We've had terrible luck with clocks around here. They're always breaking.

"So this was yet another replacement clock. I hung it above the computer just inside the doorway of the kitchen. Not long after, Gabriel kicked through the doors and the clock fell on his head. He was nowhere near the clock. The executive chef who saw it happen said it looked as if someone had lifted the clock from the wall and hit Gabriel. It didn't just fall."

"Mary didn't like it when we switched from hand written tickets to computer tickets," said Nell. "The computer simply would not work. We brought in an expert to fix it and he couldn't find anything wrong with it. I told him that Mary didn't like the fact that we changed to a computer. He asked who Mary was. When I told him she was the previous owner who had died many years ago, but was still around, he looked at me like I was crazy. He said he didn't believe in ghosts and didn't want to work in a place that had them. He left and never came back."

"Sometimes spoons and forks hanging from hooks on the wall will suddenly fly off," said Nell. "Wine glasses hung from their stems will fall off and break when nobody is near them."

Nell, who retired as general manager in the spring of 2010, is not the only person who has had ghostly encounters at the restaurant. John Shanks, who took over the position, has had his share of "Mary" experiences. Shanks, who had heard about the ghostly apparitions, said he was a "nonbeliever" until some unusual things began to occur, beginning on the first night of his employment.

"The very first night I was here," he said in a March 25, 2011 interview, "... I shut everything down. [Turned off] all the lights. I walked to my car, and looked up and all the dining room lights had come back on. I figured it was an old building... something was wrong with the electrical switch. I went back and turned it off again, and left again and nothing else happened.

"A few weeks after that, a couple took a picture with their digital camera. In the picture was a lady in a white dress standing next to them. Every week, more and more things would happen. She [the apparition] loved to come out on busy days: New Years, Valentine's Day.

“There was a young man from California who I hired. He’d been here about five days. I sent him out to the veranda [room] at the end of the night to close up. He blew out all the candles on one side of the room, and then turned to blow out the candles on the other side of the room. When he turned around, all the candles were burning again. He ran out, came into the main dining room, grabbed his backpack by the counter, and said, ‘I’m not working here.’ And we never saw him again. Never came back for a paycheck.

“About three months ago, I’m sitting here [in the front room] one night and out of my side vision, I’m seeing my lady in the white dress walking through the dining room door, walking this way. I saw her every night for four nights. I didn’t say anything to anybody, because they all think I’m nuts anyway. But then on the fifth night, Aaron, one of my servers, asked, ‘Has anyone seen the lady in the white dress walking in the dining room?’ I said, ‘Yeah, Aaron, I’ve been seeing her all week.’ He said, ‘Yeah, I’ve seen her a couple of times. I didn’t say anything either.’”

Shanks resigned a few years ago, and returned last spring to work as the new general manager. “The first night back, at 10 o’clock on the nose, every light in this place went out. The staff said, ‘That’s just Mary letting John know she’s still here. Welcome back’.”

“Mary lived across the street in the little cottage,” he said. “We often use it for small parties. About two months ago on a Saturday night, a man named Tom rented it for a family reunion, about 20 people. I saw that part of his group were three children, about four or five years old. They were running around the cottage, screaming, playing, just having a good time being kids. About 15 minutes later, their server came over and told me that I needed to get over to the cottage, that Tom wanted to talk to me. I walked over there and the adults were just being served and the kids were back in another section [of the cottage at their own table].

“Tom, are we having a problem? I understand you need to talk to me.”

“No problems at all, John. We were all just wondering something and the server said we should ask you about this.”

“Ask me what?”

“Who’s Mary?”

“Why do you ask that?”

“Well, these kids just came in and said Mary told them it was time to eat. Go into the house now.”

(Next month: Paranormal Investigations at the Grey Moss Inn.)

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