

Close Encounters on Campus

By Regis Fields

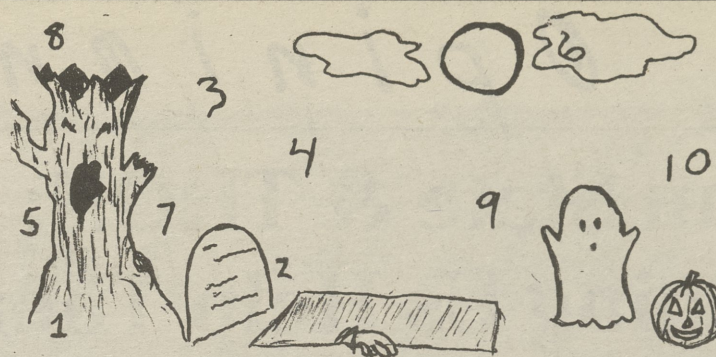
THIS IS ALL TRUE. There isn't much to be scared of on Penn State's campus. All the buildings are spread out leaving no dark corners or alleys. The staff is friendly to an extent, meaning they will smile when they help you but not if you get on their nerves. The Rio Delco offers tranquility to those that get close enough to hear its babbling as an official brook. And you really don't have to worry about the Nittany Lion jumping out of a tree and decapitating you. Yes, our beautiful campus offers no harm...not now anyway.

One day when I was walking to the library I noticed a man sitting on the rock closest to the steps that make up the Vairo amphitheater. He was all kinds of disheveled and looked like he was lost on his way to donating his body to science. As I walked by he asked me for a cigarette, I told him that I only had two left but since he looked like he was having a bad day I would hook him up. That meant the world to him obviously because next thing I knew he was telling me his story.

It was around 5:30 when I met this man, it wasn't cold outside but it really wasn't warm either. The sun had just begun its descent into the horizon and it made my new best friend look like he was a shadow person by the way his eyes, chin, and neck shaded to much like the trees around us. He asked me how long I had been attending Penn State, and I told him. He then asked me how I felt about the campus, I told him I really thought it was mega-awesome and super-duper...I wasn't being sarcastic. He must of thought I was because next thing I knew his face was more animate than Yakko Warner's in Animaniacs and he was calmly exclaiming how lucky I was to still be alive and attending PSU. He said, "Son...not everyone can be as lucky as you. Don't you understand the price paid to develop this university, the blood, the lives, the spirit? The men that died to make this real, the ones that were killed for the cause...the cause of education." It was then that I realized my new best friend was not quite right.

He just kept on talking and working himself up over something that I did not quite get. His cigarette just kept on burning, but not to the filter, it was just burning. He then said, "The time of retribution is now, the lives of the lost will be paid for ten fold. You and yours will know the pain, you will know the names the faces...the breath. Their night, Devil's night, on this campus will be extraordinary from now 'till the millenium. All will be accounted." His eyes were dilated in a manner of mysticism, it was rather freaky and beyond that rather inhuman. I heard all his words even though I wasn't paying much attention since this girl I wanted to hang with hit me up on my pager.

I said, "Peace to ya'," to my new best friend and left him on the rock while I headed towards the lower entrance of the library, watching him the whole time. He did nothing but smoke...until I reached the door, at that moment he screamed, "'Till Devil's Night friend," in a tone that was full of his pitch, and about twelve more, that sounded too unnatural for me. So I bounced, haven't seen my friend ever since, and that was about three weeks ago. But you know what, I'm sure he was full of it.



Superstition: Old and New Do You Feel Lucky?

By Lori Craddock
Lion's Eye Staff Writer

Why is it that people avoid encounters with objects such as ladders, umbrellas, and black cats? Probably for the same reason football players shave their heads and wear the same T-shirt under their pads throughout the whole season. The basis for these rituals, that have become habit, is superstition. Superstition is a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation.

For some, life is like walking on eggshells. They believe everything happens for a reason and they live cautiously carrying trinkets such as a rabbit's foot or a four leaf clover for good luck. Some people keep statues of elephants or gods nearby to ward off evil spirits. Although crosses, holy water, and Rosary beads are sanctioned by the Catholic church for prayer, some believe, along with Garlic these items can be used against evil beings such as vampires.

As we look at past eras and the superstitions that they spawned, we cannot help but wonder if superstition has a legitimate basis or if it is merely a byproduct of man's fears and insecurities. For instance, during the Salem Witch Trials, people were burned at the stake due to superstition. The accusers believed that if you could swim then you were a witch and other such signs that now hold no merit.

Along with the different eras, origin is important as well in interpreting superstitions. For example, in America it is considered bad luck to cross paths with a black cat. Many cats were killed during the witch trials. On the other hand, England and Egypt consider the black cat a symbol of good luck. In fact, the Egyptians treated these creatures as a sort of luxury for their leaders. The Egyptians also had a belief regarding sneezing. They believed that when you did this, your soul left your body. However, in the Middle Ages elsewhere, it was believed that evil spirits were exiting your body this way. Hence why we have our adapted rendition of this event as we say "God Bless You" after a sneeze.

The act of performing a ritual after a so called "unlucky" occurrence is seen more often than you think. Although, many are taken for granted due to habit. For instance, I saw a man in a restaurant spill salt and then he quickly poured some over his left shoulder to counteract the bad luck. Also, have you ever seen somebody drive through a yellow

low traffic light and kiss their fingers to the roof of the car for good luck? Or maybe you saw the ever so common ritual of flipping the lucky cigarette after opening the pack and then smoking it last. Again this is for good luck. Other good luck rituals include knocking on wood and saying "Break a leg" to a friend before his/her performance. Also, on New Years some people throw a brick through their open doorway for good luck.

For every good luck ritual or charm, there are two bad ones at least that we have come up with. Some of these are more widely known, such as a groom seeing his bride before the wedding, walking under a ladder, and opening an umbrella inside. Some of the consequences of these actions can be severe. In the old days, it was said that if you stick a pitchfork into a whirlwind, the Devil will pop out of it. Children's rhymes even carry on the evil legacy as they sing "Step on a crack, break your mother's back." Another children's game based on superstition is "Bloody Mary" in which children stare at a mirror and cry out her name five times. It is said Bloody Mary will appear to kill you. Speaking of mirrors, it is said upon breaking one, the person accountable will have seven years of bad luck to follow.

Numbers are important upon close examination of some superstitions. The number 666 is the most common number associated with the Devil. However, the number 13 is close to follow, being that it marks the most unlucky day, Friday the 13th. Also, this number is seen in the superstitious ritual in which a person circles a gravestone 13 times backwards to awaken the spirit of the dead.

The rituals above are most practiced on Halloween or a full moon, for these are supposedly the vilest days of the year. However, another date to mark on your calendar would have to be every seven years when the witches are said to come back. According to legend, this past seven years comes to a close this Halloween. You had better wish on some stars that it's not! Also, here are some quick words of warning: if you happen to see the New Moon for the first time over your right shoulder, you had better run. If you see a penny on the ground tails side up, leave it! And Finally, if you see something shining in the dark, by all means don't touch it! As you can see, the things that can bring you bad luck far outweigh the good, so beware, be careful, and have a bewitching Halloween!

THE LION'S EYE

Vol. XXX, No. 4

October 26, 1998

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Commonwealth College
Delaware County Campus

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The LION'S EYE is published monthly during the academic year by the students of the Delaware County Campus.

Submissions are welcome from all students, faculty and staff.

Material must be typed, double spaced, and submitted in the LION'S EYE mailbox located in the Lion's Den.