

Ghost story—Yorba Linda style

by Lance Igonn,

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It's been said the camera is quicker than the eye; that it can capture a moment of life too elusive for human perception

Greg Millett saw nothing through his 50 millimeter camera lens at midnight, June 15, as he stood outside the Yorba Family Cemetary.

But just for fun, he snapped off three shots in the direction of the historic graveyard. Afterall, this was the night when the celebrated "Pink Lady" was supposed to make her semi-annual haunting.

Legend has long held that the ghost of Alvina Yorba de Los Reyes walks the 138-year-old graveyard on June 15 during even-numbered years dressed in the pink gown she wore on the night of her death in 1910, whe she was thrown from a buggy on Kellogg Road.

What showed up on one of Millett's photos has added one more story, one more shiver, to the tale.

In the middle of the color photo, which was taken from atop a motorhome about 30 feet from the edge of the cemetary, there appears a large light-orange blob suspended in mid-air outside the perimeter of a fence surrounding the graveyard.

Roger Guzman, a former professional photographer and member of the Orange County Society for Psychic Research, saw the picture on July 21 and said the image represented the energy from a spirit—in laymen's terms, a ghost.

"You've got an energy field there," Guzman said in a telephone interview last week. "From all we could determine (the negatives) were not doctored or touched up."

The Star took the negatives and pictures to Pound Photography in Placentia for an outside opinion. John Walcek, photographer and lab technician, confirmed that the negatives had not been altered. Moreover, by printing the negatives at various exposure rates, he determined the orange blob was not a light leak.

Light leaks occur when the film is accidentally exposed to light either by opening the camera before winding the film back into its canister, in the developing stage or through a malfunction in the camera shutter. The leaks often look much like what appeared on Millett's photograph, Walcek said.

But Walcek and Ray Pound, a professional photographer since 1930, stopped short of saying the camera's aperture captured an apparition. They said the manifestation could have been caused by fog or smoke.

"I'm skeptical, but I can't deny that there's something exposed on that film," Walcek said. "That something looks like smog or smoke or haze."

But Millett said, "It was a warm, not overly hot night. There wasn't any fog or smoke I could recall. It was a fairly clear night."

Millett, a former Yorba Linda resident who now lives in Huntington Beach and works for the Fountain Valley School District, also remains skeptical, but only slightly.

"I could definitely [sic] understand if it was explained as something else," he said. "But 50 percent of me could believe that it's a spirit."

Guzman, who is an operations manager for a fire alarm company, while not investigating other-world phenomena, said spirits do not like having their pictures taken and that Millett "got lucky."

Harry Shepherd, president of the Psychic Research Center, said Millett was unable to see the spirit because his conscious mind was unprepared to accept a vision from the spirit world.

"Your subconscious mind will not allow your conscious mind to accept this because you can't handle it," Shepherd said. "But your camera has no subconscious mind."

And there may be another explanation. Millett might be what psychic researchers call a "photographic median"—someone who has an innate talent for contacting the spirit world through a camera, Millett said.

Shepherd said research center members have made several visits to the cemetery to look for the Pink Lady, which can appear anytime between May and June, not just on June 15 on even-numbered years, Shepherd said.

During one of those visits several years ago in June, a camera mounted on a tripod snapped a picture by itself, Shepherd said. When the film was developed there appeared the picture of the back of a man wearing a long coat and a hat, Shepherd said.

"Every cemetery has various phenomena in it," Shepherd said. "Every house has phenomena. It just depends on whether they decide to act up or not."

Shepherd has invited Millett, an amateur photographer who prefers taking pictures of trains, to bring his photographs to the research center's January meeting. Millett said he will accept the invitation.

"The bottom line," Millett said, "is everyone likes a good ghost story. "Last June 15, Orange County park rangers closed the cemetery to spectators because previous crowds had left mountains of trash as well as defacing and taking gravemarkers. The cemetery will remain closed until the site is refurbished and a ranger can be hired to give guided tours, county officials have said.

Photo caption:

AN APPARITION?—Former Yorba Linda resident Greg Millett displays what some are saying is the image of a ghost captured on film. Millett shot the film on June 15 while waiting for the famed "Pink Lady" to return to the Yorba Family Cemetery. -Photo by Lance Ignon