

City's sleeping spirit: Legendary Pink Lady hasn't appeared since sighted in the 1980's
by Eric Johnson,

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There are no good ghost stories anymore.

The last good one in Yorba Linda wasn't just a story, it was a legend.

It was the legend of the pink lady of Yorba Linda, a woman so famous, or infamous, that she even has her own file of clippings in the public library.

Well, here's the next addition to that file.

The demise of the legend seems to have had a direct correlation with how much attention she received. A shy specter, the pink lady staged her final exit in the early 1980s after a decade of news stories had lured crowds of spirit seekers to her supposed resting site.

More than one believer blamed her absence on people's whimsical treatment of her spirit.

For decades, the legend went something like this: Alvina De Los Reyes was returning home from a graduation ball at Valencia High in 1910 when her carriage was involved in an accident on Kellogg Drive.

Her carriage tipped over, her head hit the ground and she perished -- memorably clad in a pink cotillion dress.

According to the legend, De Los Reyes appeared in the Yorba Cemetery, where she is buried, on June 15 every even-numbered year after her death. No one is certain why she chose those times or dates.

An article from the October 1980 Orange Coast Daily Pilot described why she kept returning.

"The pink lady is supposed to arise from her grave, nestled under a huge oleander bush, and make a triangular pattern, pausing at a few graves thought to be those of her mother and sister before returning to her own," the article said.

Unfortunately for those waiting in breathless anticipation, the pink lady hasn't been seen since 1982, when psychic Barbara Soblewski claims a sighting.

Soblewski said she channeled the spirit through a series of cryptic notes and drawings (these are also available at the library). She also said the spirit was a cream color, not pink.

So why the prolonged absence?

Fullerton psychic Harry Shepherd, quoted in the Daily Pilot article, said he knows why.

"Spirits don't like crowds, they like small groups, one or two persons," Shepherd said.

By the late 1970s, the legend had become a minor phenomenon, with hundreds of people gathering in the cemetery to view a real live ghost. The spirit, of course, became disenchanted, and stopped showing up."

It was a circus, Yorba Linda resident Denise Bell said in a 1982 Fullerton Daily News Tribune article.

"I think the noise kept her away," Bell said. "Only a few people were serious about waiting for her to return."

The Yorba Linda Star tackled the legend in June 1990, discovering members of the pink lady's family. What they had to say probably ended what little remained of the legend.

De Los Reyes' grand nephew, Arthur Peralta, explained the story behind the hype. De Los Reyes died in childbirth at age 31. No cotillion, no pink gown.

This revelation wouldn't prevent her spirit from rising every two years, but it did take the luster off the now-fading legend.

Even long-time Yorba Linda resident and historian Audrey Lakeman knows little about the legend now.

"Everyone who might know something about it is probably dead," she said.

Access to the pink lady's grave is possible only by appointment. The cemetery, which is designated as a historical site, is completely gated to prevent vandalism.

So, it appears that the legend of the pink lady has gone the way of poor Alvina De Los Reyes, who now may finally be able to rest in peace.

Sidebar:

According to the legend, De Los Reyes appeared in the Yorba Cemetery, where she is buried, on June 15 every even-numbered year after her death.

Photo captions:

PINK LADY: Local legend tells how Alvina De Los Reyes died in her cotillion dress and now haunts the city on even-numbered years. Decendants say she died at 31 while in childbirth, and most certainly wasn't wearing a formal at the time. Stan Bird --Yorba Linda Star

LOST LEGEND: The tale of the Pink Lady used to draw crowds of visitors to the Yorba Linda Historical Cemetery in hopes of spotting the spirit. Disappointment led to dwindling stake outs by the menacing mortals. The cemetery remains closed to the public today to protect against vandalism.