

THE GHOSTS OF MIDLAKE LANE

I'd never heard of a haunted condo before, but when new neighbors began whispering about strange activity in their unit, I lent a sympathetic ear. Granted, if I hadn't grown up in a haunted house myself – my entire family has a special talent for picking spirit-infested homes – I don't know that I would believe in ghosts now, but I've had enough unusual experiences of my own to encourage an open and inquisitive mind.

Pat and Steven Brown moved into their new home on Midlake Lane this past April, after looking for a place close to public transportation where they could downsize from a larger house. As they were first moving in, the dial on the alarm clock went missing. After a search through packing boxes and around the floor, it could not be found. Several days later, the dial reappeared on top of the bed. Shortly thereafter, Pat found a new roll of toilet paper – on which she had not yet even unstuck that first square of paper – completely unspooled onto the floor, just a few minutes after she'd changed the roll.

Not long after, Pat was awakened in the wee hours of the morning by loud pounding coming from the wall. The next morning, the next-door neighbors came by to complain, assuming that the Browns had been hanging pictures on the walls. Both neighbors had heard the pounding on their common wall, but there was no accounting for its source. Later, that same neighbor revealed to Pat that a guest of the former owners of the Browns' condo had died in the unit.

Though it took several weeks before the Browns talked to each other about it, there were odd things going on in the condo from the beginning. Pat and Steven swear that they have not been playing practical jokes on each other. In an effort to get to the bottom of the disturbances, Pat has attempted to recreate these anomalies. "I try to test these things," she explains, but she has been unable to find any predictable cause. Pat admitted to her mother-in-law what was going on; Steven's mother had grown up in a haunted house, with a ghost she had named Oscar. "So we call [our ghost] Oscar," Pat says.

There have been other odd instances:

- The clock on the sideboard stopped keeping time, despite maintenance. It was replaced with a new clock, in the same place on the sideboard, which also will not keep time.
- The bathroom door closes on its own, but only when it isn't being observed.
- The golden retriever, Haley, kept going into the third bedroom and barking at the ceiling. Eventually, he just stopped going upstairs altogether.
- About two weeks after the Browns' arrival,

a sudden and very strong odor overtook the front of the house. "It was a damp, moldy smell," Pat described, and it had not been present when they were first looking at the unit, nor when they were moving in. "We just lit a candle," she said, indicating that the smell almost immediately vanished, and that other "activity" lessened as well.

- A deodorant cap disappeared from the medicine cabinet, only to turn up in an empty trash can; the cap had been chewed or cut, and had tissues stuffed down into it.
- One evening Steven left his wallet and checkbook on the sideboard, which is not his usual habit, and he later could not find his checkbook. It was eventually located, upstairs in Pat's dresser drawer, buried beneath her underwear.
- Another night, Steven came home from work quite late. Although Pat was upstairs asleep in bed, Steven found a single lit candle waiting for him.

It is possible that in all the activity of moving, energy within a house can get stirred up – much like long-dormant dust bunnies – so it may not be uncommon for such paranormal activity to occur shortly after a relocation. Having run into a few resident spirits myself, I am careful to do a house cleansing before I get settled into a new place. It is also a good idea to have a conversation with the house – and with anything that might already be there – before moving in.

After several weeks of Oscar's mischievous tricks, Pat decided to have a talk with him, indicating that she didn't have any trouble with him sticking around. "Just please don't scare the dogs," she requested. Thereafter, the activity in the house dropped off.

Pat has also been interested to discover that other Midlake residents have experienced the unexplained in their homes. A new homeowner in the same cluster of units as the Browns has felt a strange presence in his condo, and a long-time resident down the street has had unusual encounters from time to time. But Pat and her husband aren't fazed by the antics of their unexpected housemate. Says Pat, "There would have to be blood coming out of the plumbing before I'd leave!" She says that she feels very safe in the house, and that she isn't frightened of Oscar.

At the time of our interview, Pat admitted that the unusual activity "has died down, compared to when we moved in." But when I saw her just a few days later, Oscar had learned a new trick: her pay stub had disappeared from her purse, only to be found later tucked down into the napkin basket.



DO YOU HAVE A TANASBROOK GHOST STORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

PAT BROWN DECIDED TO COME FORWARD IN HOPES OF ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

CONTACT JEN WILLIS (REV.JEN@VERIZON.NET, 503-690-7293) TO HAVE YOUR TALE INCLUDED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE.

CONTRIBUTORS MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ARTICLES WRITTEN BY JEN WILLIS