

**More Ghosts
of
Upstate South Carolina**

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Shelor & Son Publishing, LLC

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The Ghost on the Square

Greenwood Hotel Has More Than Just Great Service

Some people get buyer's remorse pretty quickly after purchasing a property. They don't like it. It's the wrong color. It will take more money to restore than they originally expected. And people really couldn't have blamed John Huffman for feeling that way when he purchased the Inn on the Square, which is located in downtown Greenwood, in January 2005. The hotel was pretty run-down. Huffman fired most of the staff because he didn't think they were up to the task of turning the business around, but one longtimer who wasn't quite up to snuff stuck around. As Huffman would soon find out, he had a ghost that was quite unusual.

"It's one thing to be haunted," Huffman said. "But I have probably the world's most defective ghost."

"Bill," as he has come to be dubbed for no other reason than it sounded good, is quite a character, Huffman said. He can't walk through locked doors (or at least doesn't like to), he likes watching the Weather Channel, he prefers Scotch, and he gets a little testy when things don't go his way. And while Bill is the most recognized ghost at the Inn on the Square, he is not the only one. There have been at least three ghosts spotted on the third floor, and another "thing" that once made its presence known in the lobby, much to the annoyance of a clerk, who quit on the spot, and later another clerk refused to work the late shift ever again.

It is not uncommon to find a haunted hotel, inn, or bed and breakfast in the Upstate. They seem to be almost everywhere. Something about the semi-transiency of people coming in and out over the decades just seems to attract ghosts. In many cases, the lodgings can trace their ghost stories back generations, as the buildings have long provided temporary shelter for visitors.

The Inn on the Square is a little different. The yellowish-tan building is located on the edge of Uptown Greenwood. The inside has all the comforts of a modern three-star hotel, but also that certain regalness of a classic downtown hotel, with an authentic English pub and ornate moldings in the lobby. Looks can be deceiving. Huffman said the original buildings date back to the early part of the twentieth century. Yes, buildings with an “s.” It originally was a two-story building with an adjoining one-story structure. A small alley split the two. At least seventeen businesses were located in the buildings over the years, including a funeral home, a grocery store, a furniture store, and a garage. The buildings went vacant in the 1970s and began to deteriorate. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a major push to revitalize Greenwood, and one of the plans called for a new hotel. It wasn’t until 1985, though, that two local developers were able to make it happen. They got the city to condemn the alley, then united the buildings and opened a forty-eight-room hotel. The hotel’s lobby is located where the alley used to be. Eventually, though, new out-of-town owners purchased the property and let it fall into disrepair.

That is where Huffman and his wife, Misty, came into the picture. He had retired from the real estate business to do some writing, and she decided it might be fun to open a bed and breakfast. Huffman asked some of his former real estate associates to keep their eyes open for a good place in the Upstate. Someone recommended the Inn on the Square. It was much bigger than a B&B, but offered much better value down the road. Huffman checked it out, and despite the problems with staff and the building’s appeal, he saw the potential and purchased it in 2005 with the idea of renovating.

However, he may have had second thoughts two weeks after buying it. He was staying on the third floor of the hotel and working pretty much nonstop. One night, he was sitting at the bar in the hotel's pub talking to the female bartender. It was around midnight and no one else was there. He decided they should just close up. They turned off the lights and closed the two very large wooden doors that lead into the bar. The bartender stopped to talk to the night clerk, and Huffman got on the elevator to go to his room. The third floor opens up over the atrium, and as he glanced down he could only see the clerk and the bartender sitting in some chairs chatting. No one else was there. His feet only had to shuffle a few more steps and he would be in his room and done for the day.

BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM!

The noise jerked Huffman out of his daze. He leaned over the railing to look down into the lobby. The bartender and desk clerk were on their feet staring at the bar's large doors. The clerk hollered up that Huffman must have locked "Bill" in the bar.

Huffman headed for the elevator, wondering who Bill was and how come he had not seen him just a few minutes before. He got back to the first floor after punching the numbers frantically, and strode across the tiled lobby. He pulled his keys from his pocket and turned the lock. The doors swung open on their own with a gust of air that blew the hairs on his arms. Huffman said it was almost like a sonic boom in force. And when Huffman flicked on the lights, no one was there. He turned to the night clerk and asked who and where Bill was, and the night clerk told him that Bill was the resident ghost. Huffman was incredulous. Ghosts, if they are real, should be able to get through a locked door, he said. Not Bill, he was told. Bill didn't like being locked in the bar.

"Of all the luck," Huffman thought, "don't tell me I have a defective ghost as well."

Huffman relocked the doors, went upstairs, and thankfully nothing else happened. At least not that night.

Huffman would soon learn a lot about Bill and his prankish ways, which run from simply juvenile to downright mean. Huffman has spent more than \$600,000 on renovations, which apparently have not been to Bill's liking. He has caused leaks in the walls when no water pipes were busted. He has torn up the bar and ripped a television off the wall.

"He can be very destructive when he is all wound up," Huffman said.

But he has a playful side as well. He flickers lights around the bar and likes to make noises when no one else is there. All of the waitstaff pin their aprons to their clothes because Bill likes to untie their knots while the employees are taking orders. A fun game for regulars at the inn's Fox and Hound bar is to look for the person Bill decides to tap on the shoulder. Regulars know about Bill's game, and don't pay heed. A newcomer doesn't and naturally reacts to the tap and turns their head to see who is there. The crowd breaks out in laughter at Bill's victim, who is then let in on what just happened.

And while the bar was once where the chapel was located when the building was a morgue, that has not stopped Bill from knocking down a different kind of spirit from time to time. One night another female bartender was working by herself and the main doors were closed. It was getting close to last call and no one was in the bar when she looked up to see an elderly, very distinguished man with gray hair and wearing a crisp, three-piece gray suit sitting at the end of the bar. She went over to get his order. He politely asked for a scotch and water. She soon mixed the drink in an ice-filled tumbler and brought it to the man, then walked to the other end of the bar to get the man's tab going. When she turned back around to look at him, he was gone, but the untouched drink was on the bar. Her eyes scanned across the room, but no one was there. She looked at the doors. She hadn't heard them budge. The bartender quickly went to the desk clerk in the lobby. Had an elderly man just walked by? No.

The girl quit the next day, Huffman said.

Bill soon showed another odd habit that Huffman and others would experience at various times. They would be watching television in the bar, and the wine cellar door would swing open. This is a very heavy door that really has to be pushed to get open. It would take an extremely powerful wind to open it on its own, and no breezes were ever felt when it happened. Then the television's screen would start flipping until it got to the Weather Channel. Then, most eerie of all, a chair in front of the television would turn around to face the set. Huffman was telling this story one slow evening to some friends at the bar, but the bartender was a skeptic. He kept saying it was a hoax or the child of an overactive imagination. The bartender had made this rant before, and Huffman said Bill was going to get him one day. The bartender kept saying there was no ghost. Just then, the cellar door flew open, the television changed stations, and the chair changed directions. Huffman pointed to that as proof and his guests looked on in amazement, but the bartender still was in doubt. He said it was somehow a trick and that the whole thing was akin to something male cows leave in grassy fields.

Just then a small, metal door from one of the refrigerators came sailing across the bar and hit the bartender in the leg. It was a small door, but it weighed about forty pounds and had been ripped from the hinges. The man quit immediately.

With all of this going on, Huffman wondered if Bill was making the rounds on the third floor as well. One of his cleaning ladies refused to go on the third floor, but wouldn't tell him why. She said she would do anything he asked of her, but don't send her to that floor. Huffman also noticed that some guests would stay on the third floor, but then come down to get a new room during the night. They would give evasive answers as to why they wanted to leave their room, but insisted it be on a different floor. They too wouldn't say what had scared them.

Finally, a woman came down one morning and called for the manager. Now, it's never a good thing when someone calls for the manager at a hotel, and Huffman went to the front with

a sense of dread. The woman introduced herself and said she was a psychic. She asked if he knew the hotel was haunted. He replied affirmatively. Maybe she felt he was a little too glib and intoned that she was serious. Huffman looked back at her and said so was he and mentioned some of Bill's antics. The woman smiled, and said Bill was not alone. She told Huffman that she and her husband were lying in bed in one of the third-floor rooms when she awoke around 3 a.m. There at the foot of the bed was an elderly woman, a younger woman, and a child. They just stared at the hotel guest before they vanished. The psychic also said she felt the presence of an older, distinguished gentleman, but did not see him.

Huffman quickly realized this may have been the reason the one maid wouldn't go on the third floor. Some of the maids later said they, too, had seen the distinguished man walking along the third floor. When they got close to him, he would vanish into thin air. The maids also reported things such as someone unraveling all of the toilet paper in locked rooms, which they soon attributed to the ghosts. Huffman kept the story of the three ghosts to himself, but soon another person would confirm it. A young woman who liked to sing karaoke at the bar stayed at the hotel one night. She had never claimed to see ghosts before, but told the staff that she had seen three figures standing in her room that morning. When she tried to get a better look, they were gone. The young woman would return to the bar, but would never sleep in a room there again.

"That scared the hell out of her," Huffman said.

Bill, though, apparently didn't want to be upstaged by the third-floor ghosts and decided to make himself more of a known entity. A popular band played the bar one night and the local newspaper was there to cover it. Plenty of pictures were snapped, and Huffman looked forward to reading the article about his hotel the next day. The story was good, but there were no photos, which perplexed him. He called up the photo editor to see if there was a way he could get copies of the unused photos. The editor said there was a reason none of the

photos were used. Strange lights and blurs appeared in each of the photos, rendering them unusable for print. Two of the pictures showed flames inside the bar, which left the photographer completely perplexed.

Bill soon branched out into the world of video, as well. Huffman had begun installing cameras in various parts of the hotel for security reasons. Two of them were placed in the bar and were motion activated. After the night clerk described an unexplained disturbance in the bar after closing hours one night, Huffman went to the tapes.

The cameras captured images of the bar staff closing up, and the video went black with a 2:30 a.m. time stamp because no one was moving around the bar area. However, the camera behind the bar kicked back on at 4:54 a.m. At first nothing was visible in the frame, but soon a light started to build. That was followed by what looked like sparks coming from a campfire, and finally the sparks came together to form a lighted ball. That orb began thrashing around at high speeds behind the bar before whipping out of the view of the camera. At that point, the second camera picked up the motion. The ball could be seen flying around the restaurant and lounge area in the near complete darkness. Tables and chairs went flying out of the way as if a demolition derby were going on inside the room. The ball then made an abrupt turn and headed straight toward the camera lens. Just then, the two big doors on the other side of the room opened and the night clerk could be seen rushing in, frantically trying to figure out what was going on. And just over the clerk's shoulder, a gray man-like blur could be seen heading from the bar into the lobby. Bill strikes again?

The damage to the room was extensive, including a television ripped from the wall. Huffman was reduced to having a little chat with Bill one night. A couple of friends came over for a "séance" and did things such as drink some shots of tequila in Bill's honor, but then Huffman got down to brass tacks. He didn't mind Bill hanging around and playing little jokes. The violent side, however, was not welcome. If Bill didn't stop de-

stroying equipment, he was going to get a real paranormalist in there and kick the ghost out to the street.

Since then, Bill has been mischievous, but not malevolent. As an added precaution, however, anyone closing up the bar at night yells out a little reminder to Bill that they are done for the evening and that he needs to leave as well. Thankfully, that has helped put an end to Bill's banging on the doors at night. Bill may be a defective ghost, but he knows the rules about closing time.

There is one last unexplained tale from the Inn on the Square. It started when Huffman was looking for the video image of a guest who had provided a false identification card when he had checked in the night before. The cameras would have gotten a good shot of the culprit. As he flipped through the speeding images, Huffman saw an employee talking to the desk clerk, and then something odd in the picture. He stopped the tape, rewound it, and played it back at normal speed. The first few images showed both people chatting, but then the face on the employee who was not behind the desk began to change. The eyes bulged and the tongue protruded. It took the shape of a gargoyle's mask. And as the man turned to walk away, the hideous visage remained suspended in midair just staring at the clerk until it simply vanished.

When Huffman showed the clerk the video and asked if anything odd had happened, the clerk simply walked out and never returned.

"It was very frightening," he said. "We haven't been able to explain it."

But another clerk had experienced problems while working the third shift as well. One morning Huffman came in to find the young woman's eyes swollen from crying all night. She said something—she believed it was Bill—had been playing tricks on her all night long. Things such as whispering unintelligible words in her ear and making walking noises across the floor. The young woman also said she had heard doors opening and closing through the wee hours of the morning. Unlike

other employees who had bad experiences with the ghosts, the girl didn't quit. But she did refuse to work the overnight hours again.

Huffman has spent a lot of time researching the history of the building to see if he can figure out who his nonpaying guests might have been during their mortal lives. He can find no record of anyone dying or being killed on the premises. And while the property was a funeral home, those are places not often associated with ghosts because the dead tend to have found peace by the time they reach that stage or to stick around where they died. He is somewhat at a loss as to who Bill and his cohorts might be. And despite some of the more vicious pranks and the frightening gargoyle face that appeared in the lobby, Huffman doesn't seem like someone who is going to be scared off by ghosts. He knows Bill is a prankster and has come to appreciate the ghost to some extent.

Even if he is defective.