Campus ghosts, haunted buildings and creepy stories

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Spanning decades, students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette chronicled their experiences with paranormal activity.

Several students share stories in the documents about Griffin Hall’s elevator, staying in Griffin Hall overnight, or random sounds that can be heard on the top floor of Angelle Hall, and this supernatural open-mindedness can be traced back to well before the universities current crop of scholars.

Forty-three years ago, in the fall of 1975, a University of Southwestern Louisiana student by the name of Cynthia Cluse put together a folklore collection that chronicled the views of several fellow students at the time, specifically focusing on ghosts, superstitions and how dreams tie into the "supernatural."

Cluse’s collection can be found in the Dr. Patricia Rickels collection in the Center for Louisiana Studies. It features a range of personal stories of students from several cities, including Lafayette, New Iberia, Martinsville and New Orleans.

"Ghosts, witches and vast numbers of malicious conjurers of evil have pervaded the thoughts of humans from the most primitive times," Cluse wrote. "Human beings are always afraid of the unknown. Ghosts, according to the believers in them, are sometimes visible. Still, they are more frequently unseen, and therefore more terrifying."

Cluse focused her studies specifically on how her informants interpreted dreams, and any qualms or superstitions they had about them. In addition, the superstitions and paranormal beliefs that Cluse came across were equal parts frightening and curiously specific.

One standout survey participant listed as "Informant seven," said she believed that "if you leave a jar of water on the window sill on Halloween night, the dead will come and drink it." She also had theories about leaving a rocking chair rocking at...
night, saying that a deceased relative will come and sit in it.

“Sometimes at night, me and my sister, we see a lady sitting in the rocker in the living room,” Informant seven said. “It’s gotta be after 12 though. We don’t never see her before 12 though. She always got a white scarf on her head and when we go to touch her she disappears.”

Cluse’s findings are consistent with the thoughts of several current UL Lafayette students.

Romelo Williams, a junior music business major, said he believes in the paranormal, and that he’s probably experienced some odd things on campus, but subconsciously convinced himself that it was normal.

“I couldn’t tell you exactly what exists, but I feel like ghosts and spirits are present when they are called upon,” Williams said. “Paranormally, I probably have experienced some bizarre things but my mind tries to make sense of everything so I really wouldn’t notice.”

Philosophy professor Jesse Saloom sees a much simpler explanation for this mindset, but warned against the dangers of beliefs in the extraordinary, citing examples like the Salem Witch Trials as instances that have taken things too far.

“I think something like 60 percent...