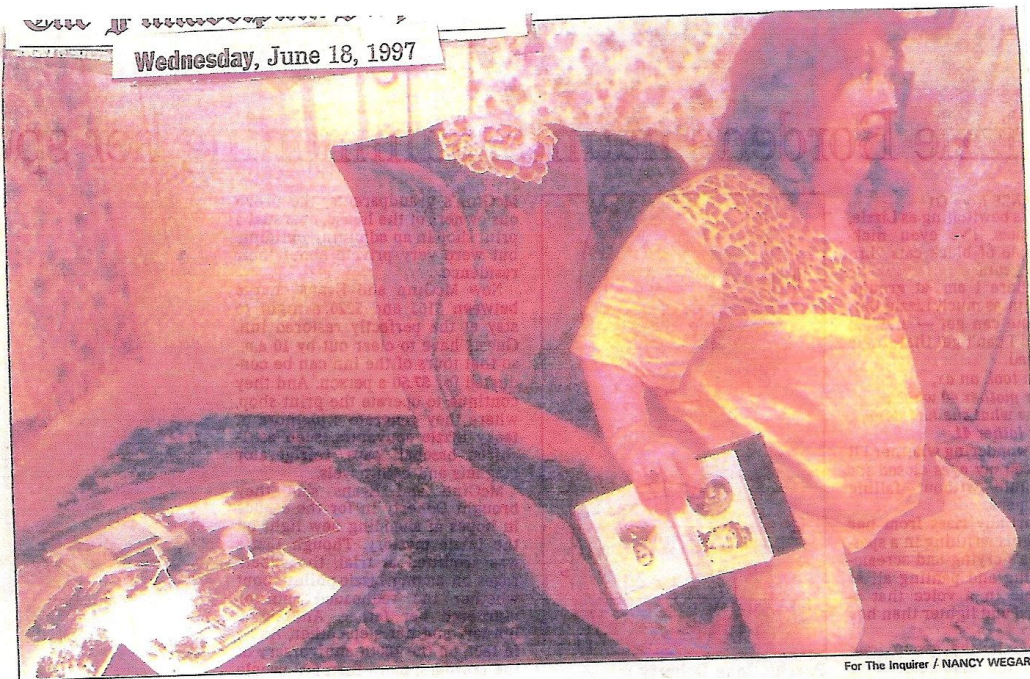


Wednesday, June 18, 1997



For The Inquirer / NANCY WEGARD

Clairvoyant Jane Doherty says she was physically jolted the afternoon before the seance while looking over Borden family photos. The scene was the Borden home, operated now as a bed-and-breakfast.

E-mail From Fall River, Mass.

At Lizzie Borden's house, summoning her spirit

A seance seeks the wielder of those famous ax whacks.

By Jacqueline L. Urgo
INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

FALL RIVER, Mass. — So there we were, 13 mortal souls, joined hand-in-hand, eyes closed and seated in a seance circle in the very house where Lizzie Borden is said to have taken an ax, and in a dysfunctional rage, whacked her way to infamy 104 years ago.

Raising the dead is hard work.

We'd been at it for two hours, seated in ornate Victorian chairs that clearly were built for looks rather than for comfort. As the clock neared midnight on Friday — the 13th — my hands were sweating and my arms had grown tired. We all were growing restless in the cramped front parlor of the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast Museum.

No one seemed particularly frightened by the prospect of encountering the spirit of an

innkeeper who supposedly did her evil

Half the people in the room were connected with the inn in some way. Others were invited by the inn's owners for the seance, conducted by clairvoyant Jane Doherty of South Plainfield, N.J., and two were paying customers staying at the B&B to celebrate a birthday. You could say I was more than a little curious. I mean, from the time I was a child and my grandmother recited that jump-rope jingle to me, I have wanted to know the truth about what went on in this wooden, three-story house on that steamy August day in 1892.

To me, it's as great a curiosity as who really killed JFK or where Jimmy Hoffa is buried. Or exactly what happened to Amelia Earhart.

I wouldn't call this Lizzie thing an obsession or anything. I've read a few books on the subject. OK, I've read a dozen books on the subject.

...and the movie in which Elizabeth

In Lizzie Borden's haunts, summoning her spirit

SEANCE from D1
Montgomery is bewitching as Lizzie, maybe 10 times. I've even nicknamed a couple of black cats "Lizzie" over the years.

And now, here I am, at ground zero, steeped in as much Lizzie Bordenness as one can get — and I'm yawning. And I can't get that jingle out of my head.

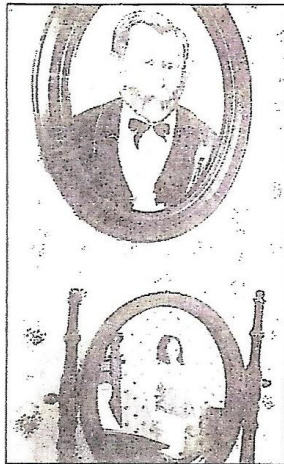
*Lizzie Borden took an ax,
and gave her mother 40 whacks.
When she saw what she had done,
she gave her father 41.*

Just as I'm wondering whether I'll be able to keep my eyes closed for another minute without falling asleep, it happens.

Doherty partially rises from her chair and begins writhing in a spasmodic fit. She's crying and screaming and talking and panting all at the same time in a voice that is higher-pitched and lighter than her own.

Some people in the group look away, almost too embarrassed to watch as the psychic twists and turns and seems to struggle with an unseen force that looks as if it's trying to pull her to the floor. Others smile nervously at each other and look as though they're on the brink of laughing out loud.

Others keep their eyes closed. One has tears streaming down her face. All this goes on for nearly 10 minutes, and then Doherty opens her eyes. She remembers bits and pieces of what just happened.



Psychic Jane Doherty is reflected in the mirror beneath a portrait of a Borden uncle, a possible murder accomplice.

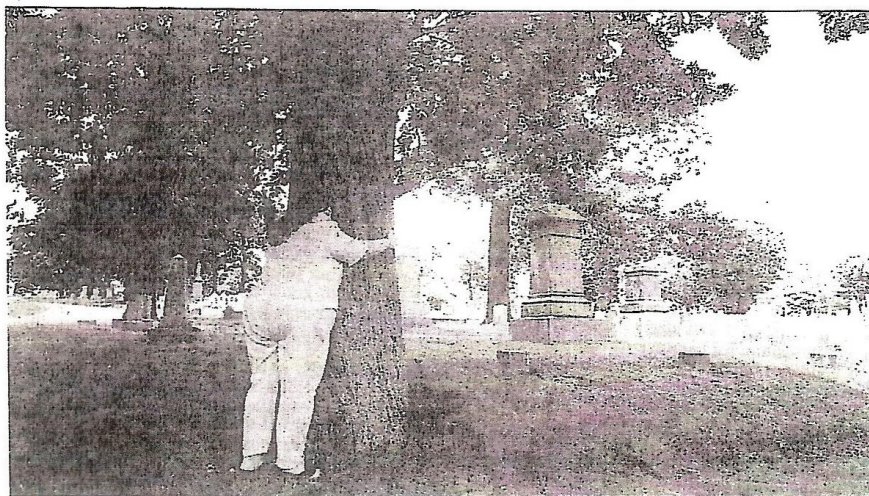
The owners of the inn, Martha McGinn and Ron Evans, invited Doherty, president of the New Jersey Society of Parapsychology, to be the first psychic to conduct a seance in the place since they opened it as a bed-and-breakfast nearly a year ago.

McGinn's grandparents, the previous owners of the house, operated a print shop in an adjoining building, but were very private about their residence.

Now McGinn and Evans charge between \$165 and \$220 a night to stay at the perfectly restored inn. Guests have to clear out by 10 a.m. so that tours of the inn can be conducted for \$7.50 a person. And they continue to operate the print shop, where they generate a plethora of tacky Lizzie souvenirs, such as T-shirts, baseball caps, refrigerator magnets and bath towels.

McGinn and Evans said they brought Doherty in for the seance in hopes of shedding new light on the Lizzie mystery. Though Lizzie was acquitted at trial, the debate rages on among Lizzie-philes about whether the redheaded spinster murdered her father, Andrew J. Borden, and her stepmother, Abby. In fact, on the 100th anniversary of the murders, more than 500 people gathered for a conference to discuss that very issue.

While she was in the seance trance last week, Doherty says, she felt trauma associated with Abby, but didn't contact Lizzie's spirit. She told us informally after the seance that she had learned that Andrew and Abby had been murdered in the house, but their bodies had been moved to confuse investigators. Doherty says there was a violent struggle between Abby and her killer,



and that more than one person was involved in the double murder, including one of Lizzie's uncles. Doherty also told us she felt that murder and incest were involved in the killings.

And the big news, she said, is that Lizzie wasn't responsible.

"I really feel that Lizzie didn't know anything about the murders," Doherty said.

"And her spirit is still here in the house because she wants to have her name cleared once and for all."