

Spirits shake things up at go-go bar in S. Plainfield



The spectral figure is visible in upper right of this frame of film. Doherty theorized the mysterious image may be the spirit of a bootlegger who ran the inn as a speakeasy during Prohibition.



JOHN O'BOYLE/THE STAR-LEDGER

Jane Doherty, a noted parapsychologist, looks over security camera videotape recorded at Liquid Assets Gentlemen's Club in South Plainfield. The tape shows an unidentified image flitting around the go-go bar's parking lot.

BY PATRICK JENKINS
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

New Jersey already has its share of unexplained mysteries, like the strange jingling noises and children's screams heard inside the vacant Blairsdon mansion in Somerset County. Or the eerie apparitions people claim to see walking in the morning mist along Shades of Death Road in Warren County.

Now there's a new ghost story making the rounds — at an unlikely place: the Liquid Assets Gentlemen's Club in the Middlesex County borough of South Plainfield.

"This place has got to be the only haunted go-go bar in North America," said Jane Doherty, a New Jersey psychic, parapsychologist and ghost hunter.

On four occasions since a security system was installed in July, a camera has recorded an image flitting around the go-go bar's rear parking lot, rising, falling and whizzing in and out of camera range.

Bar owner John Colasanti doesn't have a clue what it is. The company that installed the system can't explain the image or duplicate it. They simply classify it as "an unexplained occurrence."

It's only visible on the security screen and never by anyone outside. In fact, it seems to hide whenever a person enters the lot, be it the bread deliveryman, patrol car or patron coming or going.

Doherty — a South Plainfield resident who heads the New Jersey Society of Parapsychology and hosts two psychic call-in radio shows — thinks the mysterious image is the spirit of a bootlegger or moonshiner, someone who ran the inn as a speakeasy during Prohibition in the 1920s.

"That would explain why it hides," she said during a recent visit to the site.

While the area appears to be outside, to the spirit it is still inside because the bar is now a smaller, one-story building rather than the larger, two-story inn that covered much of what is now the parking lot, Doherty surmises.

This psychic, who has investigated the mystery using infrared cameras, believes the image is one of several spirits haunting the bar.

Ghosts in a go-go bar?

Colasanti, who has owned the bar with his wife, Madeline, and son, Phil, since 1999, never thought so. Neither did Rich Parachini, the co-owner and night manager.

Initially, they were complete skeptics. Now they don't know what to believe.

"When we first saw it, we thought it was a malfunction or somebody was playing around outside," said Colasanti.

Bartenders Marci and Vikki and the chief cook, Don, said ghosts were as good an explanation as anything else for some of the things that go on at the bar.

Ever since they've been working there, they've experienced occurrences so strange they began to think they were imagining them.

Bar stools moved. Glasses, too. A soda spigot once flew out of its holder and onto the bar. It put itself back, Don swears. Somebody who wasn't there poked Don in the back as he cleaned the grill. Marci got poked as she pulled a mug out of the freezer. No one there, either. And somebody not there is always gently tugging on Vikki's long hair.

Imagination? Maybe.

But the security tape is concrete. Well, visible.

First of all, it's not a standard videotape but

a digital recording, said Jason Gonzalez of Freedom Systems, a loss prevention company based in Garden City Park, N.Y.

Nor is it an apparition, technologically speaking.

"It's an unexplained occurrence," Gonzalez declared.

He said his company technicians thoroughly tested the system and were unable to explain the image or reproduce it.

"We know it's not light, a defective camera, smoke, a bird, a bat or a bug. It was not produced by anybody. It was captured by the computer," Gonzalez said.

He also said the digital recording is time-stamped, dated and impossible to alter.

"Our official position is we don't know what it is or explain how it got there," he said. "But I'm glad my client is having fun with this. I hope it is a ghost. I think it's cool."

Doherty, the subject of numerous magazine and newspaper articles, a personality on radio call-in psychic shows and frequent guest on television shows like "Sightings," is convinced it is.

Doherty said she believes several spirits inhabit the go-go bar, including a young woman who may have been a dancer and a young man who's simply sitting around enjoying the goings-on.

The bartenders and the cook say Doherty's conclusion the bar is haunted isn't scary. At least for now.

"I guess I can handle it if things stay pretty much as they have been," the cook said. "But if pots and pans start flying at me, I'm outta here."

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