

# RANDOM LENGTHS

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## Is Local Museum Haunted?

by Eric Wilhelmus



Are a colonel and a corpse, an Indian tribe and an Irishman haunting the Wilmington Drum Barracks Museum? Photo by Victor Carvellas.

From all external appearances, the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum in Wilmington doesn't seem to be haunted by spirits, phantoms or ghosts. But appearances oftentimes can be devilishly deceiving.

A resounding thump *thump thump* is sometimes heard in the museum's dark, narrow second-story hallway, throbbing like the beat of a telltale heart.

But Barbara Connor, a professional psychic from Anaheim, thinks it's the sound of a ball being bounced against the hall's walls by the ghost of a young boy, rather than a heartbeat.

In a recent interview, Museum Director Marge O'Brien said Connor told her to order the young boy to stop bouncing the ball. "We did," O'Brien said. "And the noise has stopped."

O'Brien added, "I've never actually seen any ghosts, but I've felt their presence."

Connor, who has been featured on several television shows, radio programs and in several newspaper articles, claims she can mentally communicate with spirits and see them in outline form.

After O'Brien and Connor met during a guest appearance on a local television program in January, O'Brien invited Connor to tour the Drum Barracks Museum. At the end of Connor's visit, during which she felt and saw many ghosts, O'Brien corroborated the names and incidents described by Connor through researching historical records and archives.

During her visit, Connor also saw someone dragging a corpse into the hallway, and up the stairs to the third floor. O'Brien said it could be the

ghostly image of a man who wound up on the wrong side of a gun, and whose bloodstained body was stored in a room upstairs during the Civil War.

Several other spirits haunt the Drum Barracks Museum, including a tribe of Indians who spend most of their time on the porch, and an energetic Irishman named

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## War in Yugoslavia Hits Home in San Pedro

by Carol Tice

Most weekday afternoons, Regina Herceg sits amidst mounds of clothing and canned food in the dark main auditorium of San Pedro's Croatian Hall, packaging the items for shipment to war-torn Yugoslavia. As she tries to explain how the ongoing war in her original homeland has affected her, friends join in, all talking at once, their voices growing progressively louder, angrier.

Finally Herceg silences the others. "I'm sorry we are all talking so much," she said, stubbing out her cigarette. "But we are so upset. Croatia is being devastated. It's reached the proportions of Iraq and Kuwait."

For more than two months, Herceg has been deeply affected by the war in the Yugoslavian republic of Croatia. Ordinary life has stopped. Dark circles have formed under her eyes from spending long days preparing eight immense shipping containers for the sea journey to Croatia, where ships must run a Yugoslavian naval block-

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## Diary of the War

Spanish Journalist Challenges  
CNN's Exclusive Gulf War  
Coverage

by Andrea Adleman

During the initial days of the Persian Gulf war, the American public was led to believe that Cable News Network (CNN) was the only Western news organization with a correspondent in Baghdad. Alfonso Rojo, a Spanish journalist, challenges this assertion in his book *Diario de la guerra (Diary of the War)*, published in Spain in April, 1991.

Rojo is an assistant editor of the

### EXCLUSIVE

Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*, one of several major dailies to emerge in Spain in recent years. He reported from Baghdad throughout the war, including 10 days in January when CNN claimed it had the only Western correspondent in Baghdad.

Soon after the war broke out, foreign journalists in Baghdad decamped to the Jordanian capital of Amman. By Jan. 21, Rojo and CNN's Peter Arnett were the only Western correspondents in Baghdad.

In his book, Rojo claims CNN saw him as an impediment to the network's potential information monopoly. On Jan. 21, Iraqi chief of protocol Sadun al Janabi summoned Rojo to the telephone: "They're calling you from Spain! They want to know why you are staying in Baghdad."

When Rojo reached the phone, the line had been cut.

"Apparently they weren't calling from Spain but rather from [CNN headquarters in] Atlanta," writes Rojo. From what al Janabi whispered to him, he came to the conclusion that "one of the CNN big-wigs had the brazenness to ask who is 'that Alfonso Rojo' and if he is 'bought by the Iraqi government.'"

*El Mundo* editors suspected that CNN sought to keep Rojo's presence in Baghdad a secret. As Rojo explains, "a few hours earlier, the Madrid newsroom, hearing that CNN said Arnett was 'the only Western journalist in Baghdad,' began to worry about my well-being and called

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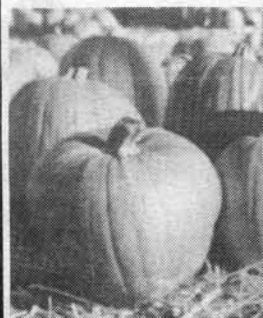
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# Spirits Haunt the Drum Barracks

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Patrick, whom Connor says will celebrate his 57th birthday on All Hallows Eve.

Originally a tent encampment, the 60-acre military base had a total of 19 buildings by 1862. It was the main training, staging and supply base for military operations in Southern California and Arizona, mostly against the area's Indians. The Drum Barracks Civil War Museum is the only intact U.S. Army building from the Civil War era in Southern California. Named in honor of the Adjutant General of the Department of the Pacific, Richard Coulter Drum, the state-owned museum is operated by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

Sightings of the apparitions that haunt the Drum Barracks are not a recent phenomena. As far back as 1927, neighbors reported seeing strangers in second-floor windows. Several current and former museum employees and volunteers tell tales of wine glasses rattling for no apparent reason, lights turning on by themselves and window shades

rolling up, reportedly because the ghosts enjoy basking in the sun.

Shortly before his demise in 1988, Vincent Manchester, who served as a voluntary caretaker for the museum from 1967 to 1975, wrote a 14-page account of his experiences with the Barracks' ghosts. He mentioned a door that sometimes opened slowly by itself, ceiling lights that swayed back and forth and a voice that hummed songs out of key. Manchester also described his encounter with a lady on the staircase.

"I saw a shadow move on the upper part of the stairs," Manchester wrote. "It was down about five or six steps, and as I looked, I could plainly see a triangular shape, like a girl in a long full skirt."

"She, or it, stood there long enough for me to realize there was actually something there. Then I remembered my flashlight, and turned it on the stairs. When I zeroed in on her, my ghostly visitor disappeared."

On the same stairway, Connor said she met a short, dark-haired, light-eyed, slender

woman named Marie, who stopped sweeping the stairs and put her right hand to her side and moaned as if in pain.

Maybe not-so-coincidentally, Colonel James Curtis, commandant of the post from 1861 to 1863, was married to a woman named Marie, who died of a ruptured appendix.

It seems the colonel also suffered his fair share of grave pain. Psychic Connor said she felt his presence in the musky parlor located on the second floor, which is dimly-lit by two lamps covered by pumpkin-colored shrouds. At one point during her visit to the Drum Barracks, Connor said, as if channeling the Colonel's pain-ridden voice, "My boot is too tight. It hurts. I want to be close to the fire. I want to be warm." O'Brien said Col. Curtis suffered severe frostbite in his left leg and often sought relief by sitting near the parlor's

fireplace.

O'Brien, a self-proclaimed skeptic, said, "I think the ghosts have returned for a few reasons. [The museum] holds a lot of good memories for them. They're here to protect the place. Another reason is that they want to prove that there is life after death. I think most of the ghosts will leave after they feel they have made their point, except for Marie, who said she will never leave. I may be the museum's director, but Marie is definitely the lady of the house."

The Museum is open for tours Tuesday through Thursday at 10 a.m., 11 a.m. and noon. On Saturday afternoons, tours are conducted at 12:30, 1:30 and 2:30. Admission is a minimum of \$1. For more information, call (213) 548-7509.

# The War Hits Home

from p. 1

ade to reach the war-torn shore.

Herceg has also participated in numerous demonstrations on Gaffey Street, asking President Bush to recognize Croatia's declared independence from Yugoslavia and send aid to its people. For Herceg, the war is "from now until we win. We cannot live with Serbians."

She gets news of the war by listening



Regina Herceg with stacks of clothing she is helping to ship to war-torn Croatia. Photo by Victor Carvallas.

to a station in the Croatian capital, Zagreb, on shortwave radio. "A lot of people here have people who have been killed in this war," Herceg said. "My 78-year-old aunt, my mother's sister, was killed by a sniper in Karlovatz."

Another member of the Croatian Hall, Mario Sizgorich, says his relatives in the war zone have fled to Germany and Italy, part of a wave of refugee migration triggered by the fighting. Sizgorich tried to visit his home town of Sibinek in early August, but was unable to reach the town because of the conflict. "I can't go in my own house," he said.

Sizgorich expressed bitterness at President Bush's refusal to recognize or send aid to Croatia, especially after the US government's recent intervention in the Middle East. "Bush wants us to stay Communist, after he says he's for democracy so much," he said. "It's going to be a long time before any of us vote Republican again."

The conviction that independence is the only answer is strong among the members of the Croatian Hall. But other local Yugoslavian-Americans don't want to take sides in a battle where anything could happen. Jerry Rodin, a San Pedro resident of Croatian ancestry, said, "The fight is over there—it's not over here. You don't want to see anything

[bad] happen. You just pray it gets resolved. Until the name Yugoslavia disappears and the US recognizes Croatia as separate, Serbia as separate—it's all hot air."

Like others with roots in Yugoslavia, Rodin has been "glued to the TV and reading the paper" every night, hungry for news of the battle that has raged from Vukovar to Dubrovnik. "You're living on eggs every day," Rodin said. "If something happens to your family over there, what's going to happen?"

Rodin was anxious for news of his relatives in the Croatian town of Sibinek. "I [just] got a phone call from my cousin," Rodin said. "He saw people from his family and everyone's okay."

Regina Herceg fears that while many, including President Bush, want to watch and wait, Croatia is being destroyed. Recently, when the fighting moved to Dubrovnik, Herceg was horrified at news of historic churches and other ancient cultural monuments being targeted and destroyed by the Yugoslavian army. Herceg said that religious differences were behind the bombings. "They're Orthodox and we're Catholics," Herceg explained. "They want to destroy our culture. Dubrovnik survived everything, even Hitler, but the Serbs want to flatten it. If they can't have it, nobody will."

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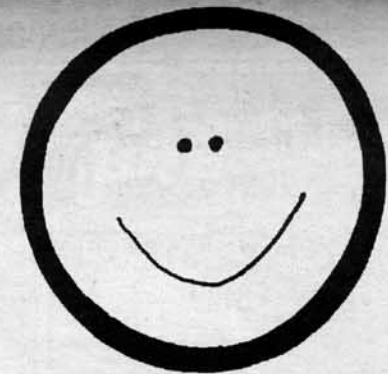
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