

# NONNY'S HAUNTED HOUSE



*Nonny's House was like one of those haunted homes you hear about on Halloween, only this one was real. I lived at Nonny's and witnessed the inexplicable and scariest of happenings, so did my sister Christine and cousin Sharon. Grandma and Grandpa Giacobelli had their own scary moment when legendary mobster Al Capone paid them a visit, only it's not what you think. And then there was the day I was knocked into another spiritual world by former boxer Jack Patti. Here are all the details...*

My Uncle Pete Giacobelli was a man's man. He had movie star looks with an operetta voice that would even cause Mario Lanza to blush with envy.

Born February 29, 1924 he was my mom's older brother and was the Chief of Police for the City of Brentwood for almost 25 years until his retirement in the late 1980's.

Uncle Pete was married in October of 1945 to Mary Glosier. They had two children, my first cousins Jean (my older sister Christine's age) and David (one year older than me).

Uncle Pete was a great guy who always enjoyed visits from his family. He had a great sense of humor and possessed an infectious smile and laugh. There was only one time that I've seen Uncle Pete upset and unfortunately, it was directed at me.

I was their guest at their lake house. They owned a boat and I went out by myself to fish. Well, time passed by, unnoticed, when I saw a boat heading in my direction with three men in it.

One was Jack Patti, a St. Louis County Police Detective that was a friend and neighbor of my aunt and uncle. One of the others was my cousin David who had an expression on his face that foretold doom. The third person was, of course, my Uncle Pete.

There were a few clues that told me that I was in real trouble. The first indicator was that Uncle Pete and Mr. Patti had very stern expressions on their face while David had a smiling smirk as to say, boy, are you in trouble and I'm going to really enjoy this. The last give away was that no one asked how the fishing was going.

Anyway, given the look on my Uncle's face I knew not to say anything. All my uncle said was "DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS?"

I said no sir. "I WANT YOU TO HEAD BACK TO THE DOCK NOW!"

That was the only time I recall seeing my Uncle Pete upset. Now, my Aunt Mary is a different story. I've seen her upset and angry plenty of times. And, it was mostly directed at my cousin David.

## A Real Knockout

My Aunt and Uncle lived on Rankin Avenue in Brentwood next to the YMCA. Across the street from their house lived Uncle Pete's mother and younger brother, my Grandma Giacomelli and Uncle Joe. On one side of my Grandma's house lived their daughter Jean and her husband Carl Reynolds, and on the other side of my Grandma's lived Jack Patti, the St. Louis County Detective (the other guy in the boat).

Jack Patti was a very interesting character, a real tough guy. In his earlier days he was a sparring partner for Sonny Liston. Liston became World Heavyweight Champion in 1962 by knocking out Floyd Patterson.

Mr. Patti solved a murder case in the early 60's in which Hollywood

made a movie about it. Lee Marvin, a famous actor of that era, played the part of Jack Patti.

Mr. Patti was about six feet tall, powerfully built, and had no cartilage in his nose as a result of his boxing days. His nose was flat and soft. He would love for us to put on the boxing gloves to spar.

My cousin David would tell me constantly how he would like take on Mr. Patti and put him in his place. One time, when I was in college, I happened to be visiting my Grandma Giacomelli. Mr. Patti stopped by to talk. So, feeling my oats, I asked him if he would like to get the gloves out and spar. He immediately ran to his house to get them. He was close to fifty years old at that time and still acted like a kid.

We were in the front yard, on the grass, dancing around taking a few jabs at each other. Of course, being younger and faster I started to taunt Mr. Patti. My cousin David, who always enjoyed seeing his cousin Johnny in trouble, was sitting on grandma's porch steps laughing and warning me to watch it and be careful. You have a much longer reach than Mr. Patti does, Stewart. You better stay away.

I saw a quick opening and landed three quick solid punches square in the middle of his face. I remember thinking, boy, he has no nose. That was the last thing I remember... until I regained consciousness. I was lying flat, face-up, on the grass. Looking up all I saw were the limbs of the elm tree in my grandma's front yard and the sound of my cousin David laughing hysterically. David said that Mr. Patti exploded on my head with a series of punches that lasted about three seconds until I went down. Then Mr. Patti took off his gloves and went inside. David loved it!

## Big Dreams

When someone you love, respect and admire suddenly makes fun of you and calls you a "dreamer" it either motivates you to become better or discourages you to become mediocre. Although I was hurt and embarrassed at first, it ultimately motivated me.

Once while visiting my Grandma Giacobelli my Uncle Pete was home for lunch and spotted me across the street about to enter Grandma's house. He yelled at me from across the street to say hello and asked me what I had in my hands.

I said it was a new 35mm camera which I had just bought. He waved at me to come over so he could take a look. Sitting in his den, he was in his familiar leather recliner, and I sat across on the couch. He took the camera in his hands and turned it all around to study all the features.

We talked a little about photography in general then he asked me what I was up to.

I mentioned that my Mom and Dad and I just got back from our cousin David Fosco's funeral in Chicago. Then I mentioned how busy I was at work. I then asked Uncle Pete how the crime was in Brentwood. He said that it was pretty quiet and peaceful here in Brentwood with "me at the helm maintaining law and order." I laughed.

Then I told him with great excitement that I was working on something that might change my career path.

He said, "What are you up to now, Stewart?"

I told Uncle Pete that I met a businessman from St. Charles a while back who owned a retirement home. This gentleman said that he had 42 units with two people occupying each unit. He explained that it took only 18 units to cover all operating costs and overhead for an entire year. The revenue from the remaining 24 units was all profit. He said that there were no special state licensing laws required for retirement homes since the tenants required no assistant care. He also provides other services, which are billed only to those residents that participate.

It must have been obvious that I was pretty excited and enthusiastic

about this because Uncle Pete started to chuckle. He then asked me where I was planning on getting the money to start such an enterprise.

I said that the money was all taken care of. Uncle Pete looked at me with a puzzled expression.

Then I told him I helped secure a first and second deed of trust on some property for a client. He happened to be a big shot with the Small Business Administration (SBA) in St. Louis. I told him about my idea to open a retirement home. He said that the SBA looks for guys like me and projects like this to invest in. So, he helped me with the application process and filed it on my behalf.

I had just found out about two weeks earlier that my project was approved and that the SBA was granting me one hundred and twenty five thousand dollars.

My Uncle just stared at me for a moment then began to laugh. I wasn't sure at the time why he was laughing. I thought it was out of surprise and enthusiasm for my plans. After all, I assumed everyone thought of me as the most entrepreneurial in the family.

I'll never forget the next words out of Uncle Pete when he stopped laughing. Those words cut me to the core. He said,

"Johnny, you're just like your old man, a dreamer!"

This was a life lesson for me. It was true; my dad was a big talker. He always had big plans and ideas but never followed through.

## Spirits of St. Louis

My Aunt Mary, Uncle Pete's wife, was one of two sisters of Paul and Mary Glosier. They grew up in their family home at 2861 Laclede Station Road in Maplewood.

Their home was a beautiful and elegant two story Victorian with a huge front porch and bay windows. Built at the turn of the 20th century the home's interior featured a grand staircase and ornate woodwork that could only be created by the carpentry skills of old time craftsmen.

Entering the house from the front you walked through a large open wooden foyer which had an area rug lying over a hardwood floor. Straight ahead was a small enclave, which had a small sitting table and chair where the telephone sat. Opposite the telephone table was a door to the basement. Beyond this small space was the kitchen.

To the left of the foyer was a large opening to a spacious living room. Off the living room was another large opening to the dining room. Besides the well-done décor of the living room sat a large dining table, and china hutches, and next to it a large elegant bay window.

On the right side of the foyer was the handsome staircase. You ascended four steps to a landing that featured a small wall table directly below a mid-century stained glass window. On the landing you would make a 90-degree left turn to continue up the steps to the rotunda of the second floor. You entered the three bedrooms and bathroom from this one large rotunda space.

The house was beautifully decorated and wall papered to match the elegance of the house.

Although I had very little opportunity to visit this home prior to renting a room from Nonny after college, this home was the topic of many family ghost stories.

For years I've heard tales from my cousins David and Jean about the spiritual happenings and ghost in their grandmother's home. Everyone in my family believed them to be factual except my dad. He would always say that a person would have to be nuts to acknowledge them. Never the less, most of my family and extended family all believed them to be true.

My older sister, Christine, tells about a direct experience she had in Nonny's house. Cousin Jean finally convinced her two cousins, Sharon and Christine, to spend the night with her at the house. Jean convinced them that nothing would happen with all three of them sleeping in one room. So, my sister and cousin agreed trusting that Jean was right.

This was around 1962. The girls were about twelve years old. After playing, snacking, and watching TV it was time for them to turn in for the evening. So they went upstairs to the guest bedroom where all three shared the same bed.

Christine said the room was dark except for light coming in from the slightly open door. Cousin Sharon was nestled in the middle of the bed between her cousins Jean and Christine.

My sister said that it didn't take Jean too long to fall sound asleep. However, Christine and Sharon were just too nervous to close their eyes. They were quietly lying on their backs with the covers pulled up to their chins and their eyes wide open staring out into the room. Once their eyes became acclimated to the dark they were able to see pretty well. Besides Nonny had left a light on in the rotunda outside the door, providing enough illumination so the girls would feel safer.

As the two girls were lying there they suddenly noticed a spirit, a figure of a woman entering the slightly opened door of their bedroom. The spirit entered without causing the door to move, not even the slightest. The figure came into the room then glided along the walls until it got to the foot of their bed, where it stopped.

Christine said that she and Sharon did not say a word. They just followed the spirit with their eyes and dared not make a sound or a move. The spirit just hovered at the foot of their bed staring at the three girls lying there.

Both my sister and cousin described this spirit as a female in her mid-30's with a pageboy hairstyle. She was wearing a light flowing gown.

My sister said that the room was absolutely quiet. The spirit made no noise in her movement and her body was transparent.

As the girls lay there motionless and transfixed on this spirit, my other cousin Jean was laying on her side sound asleep. For what seemed like an eternity to the two girls, the spirit was simply staring at each of them, transfixed to each other's gaze. Finally, as if the spirit had enough fun, it moved off toward the slightly open door and glided out of the room without a sound never to return, for that night anyway. If this spirit ever did return my sister and cousin Sharon would never have known, because they never wanted anything to do with that house again. That was the first and only time they stayed a night at Nonny's house.

Moving ahead several years, my cousin Jean, Nonny's granddaughter, the daughter of my Uncle Pete and Aunt Mary, the older sister to my cousin David, and the only girl in bed with my sister Christine and cousin Sharon Hoffman- that was dead-to-the-world sound asleep during the ghostly visitation, was married and had her reception at Nonny's – which, by the way, was the only time my sister and cousin Sharon went back into that house.

Jean married a young man by the name of Carl Reynolds. Carl was a fun-loving St. Louis boy who enjoyed fast cars. He was a very friendly and affectionate guy. My younger brother Paul described Carl's looks as a cross between Burt Reynolds and Earnest Borgnine.

Although I did not attend their wedding I did attend their wedding reception. The reception was a small intimate affair for just the immediate family of both the husband and wife and a few intimate friends.

Nonny's house was elegant. People were mingling around the huge foyer and living room. The dining room was set-up with fine china and silverware on the table. On the huge dinette sat the wedding cake with china serving plates and utensils.

Most impressive of all, to me, was another table set-up in the dining

room. It was next to the kitchen door and hosted a huge prime rib roast warming under two heat lamps. On the other side of the table was an old black chef doing the carving. This gentleman was dressed in his white chef's smock and chef's hat. I've never seen a real chef before. I was really fascinated with how he carved that roast.

After dinner the wedding party gathered into the dining room for group pictures. Standing in the background, in the middle of the living room, I observed the photographer carefully arranging the wedding party for both group and individual pictures. All were arranged with the grand wall size bay window as the backdrop. I also noticed the photographer maneuvering the families so the reflection of the camera bulb would not reflect in the glass of the bay window. It was dark outside at the point and the image of the huge bay window with its massive curtains bordering both ends with all this glass was an interesting backdrop to the white dresses and tuxedos worn by the wedding party.

Of course, all evening, my brothers, sisters and cousins were nervously joking about the possibility of seeing a ghost during this reception. Always in the back of our minds were the thoughts that at any time something supernatural could happen. We felt safe as long as we were all together on the main floor with the adults. But once we strayed from their protection, well...

Earlier in the evening my cousin David took my brother and me downstairs to look at the massive hot water boiler that heated the old Victorian. This monster boiler, with its octopus like vent arms springing out in all directions, looked like a monster to us. David confessed that when he was much younger this boiler used to really frighten him. But, now that he was nearly an adult, age 13 at the time, he was no longer afraid of being downstairs in his grandmother's basement. Of course, on this occasion, he insisted that we go downstairs with him.

David took advantage of the situation to tell us about some of the strange things that occurred in the house and in the basement partic-

ularly. My brother Mark and me were fascinated but wasted no time in finding an excuse to go upstairs to the safety of the large group. We felt more comfortable upstairs. David was the first one up!

Returning upstairs we found most of the guests still there. Many were still mingling around talking while others were still snapping away taking photos of the new bride and groom.

Several years later I heard a very interesting story how Nonny and her two daughters, Ann and my Aunt Mary, invited a team of paranormal researchers from a local university to come into the home to do an investigation. The team spent a few days interviewing family, particularly those that had first-hand experiences with these spirits. During the course of their investigation they came across several pictures from Jean and Carl's wedding reception. The investigators discovered in several of the pictures that were taken in the dining room the very clear and defined silhouette of a man and woman in the bay window.

These silhouettes were distinctive and unmistakable. And in all the pictures they were of the same two people, whoever they were.

My sister Christine immediately recognized the female as the one that entered her room the night she and Cousin Sharon had spent the night. Both Christine and Sharon said it was the spirit without a doubt, pageboy hair style and all.

Although I had no point-of-view either way I was interested in seeing these photos so I could to see for myself.

When my cousin Jean showed me the pictures I could not believe my eyes. Sure enough, the images were undeniable. Jean said that professional photographers indicated that flash bulbs or reflections could not possibly create these images. Furthermore, no one could have been standing outside looking in the bay window because the bay window was at least ten feet above the ground.

Well, whatever doubts I may have had about the validity of these

stories had just been confirmed with those photographs. They were downright eerie and undeniable.

Whatever "possessed" me to move into that house I will never know. I suspect my cousin David had something to do with this decision. But, I don't exactly remember the details.

## Grandma and Big Al

It is now the spring of 1977. My years at SLU were over. I moved back home temporarily until I was able to find a job with the goal of moving into my own place.

My career path was for the most part unknown. All I knew was that someday, I hoped to own my own company. Doing what? I had no idea. I just wanted to manufacture something. I always admired those individuals that owned businesses. And there was nothing more exciting to me than to be able to manufacture something and then be able to sell it.

In my old neighborhood in Richmond Heights, where it seemed we were surrounded by relatives, our backyard became the evening gathering place. On summer nights the older folks would sit around in lawn chairs visiting and enjoying themselves. Most of the time members of the family would walk over, but on occasion there would be someone driving over in their Cadillac. Those were usually the more successful cousins. I used to look at those cars and watch how members of my family would fuss over their more successful cousins. I thought about how I wanted to be successful like them. Of course, being that young, I didn't realize that success was defined in many different ways.

Always involved in those family gatherings was the matriarch of the Giacopelli side, my grandmother, Nina Giacopelli.

Grandma Giacopelli was one of those special people that you could not help but like. She loved everyone and her personality was infec-

tious. Standing only 4'11" grandma would get the biggest kick out of the fact that by the time I was in eighth grade I was taller than her, on my knees.

Everyone I knew and, everyone that ever met my grandma liked her immediately. She loved to play card games and when we accused her of cheating she would always get mad and yell in her broken English voice, "Me no cheat!" We would all tease her about cheating only to get her goat. She was one fun lady.

Grandma Giacobelli – Antonina Lupo, immigrated to America at the age of 24 in 1921 according to records of the Ellis Island web site. The ship's manifest has this: arrived at Ellis Island on the ship Europa (out of Naples), at the age of 24 in 1921. She had \$25 in her pocket. Passage paid by herself. Last known address, Cinisi. Place of Birth, Gibellina; father, Vincenzo Lupo, my great-great grandfather. She came to meet up with Diego Giacobelli, my grandpa, under an arranged marriage, where they lived in Cicero, Chicago.

As a parent, I cannot imagine what it must have taken for her mother and father to let her, not knowing if they would ever see their little girl again. Of course, millions of people undertook this same journey, this same risk. An unknown and dangerous journey for a better life. I wish my grandma were still alive so I could ask her about this to understand what was involved for her, and her parents, to make such a decision.

Grandma finally settled in Cicero, a suburb of Chicago not too far from Midway airport. There she had three of her four children, my Aunt Pat (Patricia) born in 1922, Uncle Pete, born in 1924, then my Mom, Frances. My Uncle (and Godfather) Joseph was born later after they moved to St. Louis in 1927.

When my grandma brought my mom home after her birth in 1927 to their single family flat in Cicero, it was customary as it is today for family to come visit and bring food or simply to see the baby. One of those visitors was a second cousin to my grandma on her mother's

side, the Vitalli's. The visitor was Al Capone. Although my Aunt Pat was only five years old at the time, she remembers Capone as a regular visitor.

On this particular visit, Capone simply came by to offer my grandma his respect and best wishes for the new baby. While visiting they heard a loud noise coming from grandma and grandpa's room where my mom was in her crib sleeping. They ran into the room to see what the loud noise was and to their surprise, and my grandma's horror, a large chunk of plaster above my mom's crib fell and landed all inside the crib covering their daughter, my mom. There was also a foot sticking out of the hole in the ceiling.

My Grandma screamed, "THEY KILLED MY BABY, THEY KILLED MY BABY!" With that my grandma pulled a gun out of her dress pocket (she always either had a gun or knife on her) and shot the guy's foot.

With that, Al Capone and his boys ran up to the roof to discover that the man was an assassin who was stalking Capone and planning to shoot him. Unfortunately for the shooter his foot went through the roof during the attempted ambush.

My Aunt Pat remembers the incident and all the commotion but doesn't remember what happen to the guy who owned the foot sticking out of the ceiling. Of course, my mom was okay but not sure about the guy on the roof.

## **Pistol Pete To The Rescue**

My grandpa, Deigo Giacobelli, was a quiet and not too ambitious man who made his living as a maintenance man and gardener. Soon after coming to America he changed his name to Frank because he thought everyone was calling him Deigo. It was told in my family that many of my grandpa's siblings and relations were quite successful in business or in the mob. My grandpa was offered many opportunities to get involved but never showed much interest.

One family incident that was of particular interest to us involved my second cousin Pistol Pete Giacobelli. Not my mom's brother, Uncle Pete, but my grandpa's brother's son.

Around the time of my mom's birth in 1927, still in Cicero, my grandpa was running his brother's grocery store and suspected that his brother was running a booze operation out of the back of the shop. My grandpa wanted nothing to do with this type of illegal business.

One morning, while my grandpa's brother was visiting the store, a black gentleman entered and pulled a gun in an attempted robbery. My great Uncle's son, Pete, who was about 12 years old at the time, was in the store working – sweeping and stocking shelves. From what I'm told my great uncle wasn't scared of anything. Not like his brother, my grandpa, who they say was a very shy and timid man.

Well, apparently my great uncle had a few choice words for this would-be thief, but unfortunately, it would be my great uncle's last words. The gunman shot my uncle through the chest killing him instantly. My grandpa and my cousin Pete witnessed the entire tragedy.

Well, the killer was caught and sentenced to twenty plus years to life in Joliet Prison.

My family all said that during the sentencing of this killer, and on many occasions since, my cousin Pete swore revenge for his father's murder.

This is absolutely true. Twenty three years later, on the very same day this killer got released from prison, the killer of my great uncle and the father to my cousin, Pete, was the day the police discovered the killer's dead body in an alley in south central Chicago - an unsolved case to this day.

I've always known my cousin Pete by the name of "Pistol Pete". I've never called him anything but "Pistol". And, for some reason he real-

ly took a special liking to my mom. He always called my mom, Chick. And, subsequently everyone that knew my mom called her Chick.

After the incident, my grandpa was scared and was generally scared of the mob. So he told my grandma that they had to get out of Chicago. They moved to St. Louis in late 1927. Eventually, many other family members left Chicago to relocate in St. Louis, including Pistol Pete's family.

Through the years, as the family continued to grow in St. Louis, many settled in Richmond Heights and on the Hill.

My grandma told us the story about an encounter with what she believed to be an angel. It was during the Depression on a cold snowy December morning. She was in the kitchen cooking for the family. She heard a knock at the kitchen's back door. When she went to answer it she noticed a man with ragged clothes and a half grown beard. He asked my grandma if she could spare a little food. My grandma invited the man in and sat him at the kitchen table. She poured him a bowl of soup that she was cooking for that evening's dinner.

As the man sipped the soup he said how appreciative he was for her kindness and thoughtfulness. He also commented on how good the soup was. The man finished the modest portion in quick order. My grandma asked the man if he would like more. He said yes, only if you can spare it. So she scooped another ladle into the bowl.

He said, "Bless you Ma'am". As she turned to put the ladle back into the bowl on the stove she turned around immediately to ask the man if he would like a couple of more crackers. To her surprise the man was gone. The soup was still in the bowl.

He was out of her site no more than five seconds and then he was gone. No sound, no noise. He simply disappeared.

My grandma was a very devout Catholic. She loved the Church and raised her children by good example. She always told me that she

always thanked grandpa for getting them out of Chicago.

Pistol Pete eventually moved his family to St. Louis. And, for some reason, he took a special liking to my mother.

Anytime my mom needed Pistol, he was always there for her.

For years Pistol operated a Las Vegas Gambling Junket business out of St. Louis and Phoenix, AZ. He would fly high rollers to Las Vegas for weekend gambling trips. He also owned a percentage of the MGM there. His business was quite successful. When I saw Pistol at my mom's funeral in 1982 I asked him if he was still traveling to Vegas. He told me that he didn't travel to Vegas any longer and that he sold his business. "How come I asked?" He said with a serious face, "Too many Feds."

There were times when my mom would call Pistol when there was trouble in the family. One incident involved my father, whom at the time was the head of the Plumbers Union in St. Louis. The Teamster's Union Hall was across the street from the Plumber's Union Hall. One time the teamsters were having contract issues with the plumbers and my father would not give up his position. Then bullets began flying through his office window. This happened a few times before my mom got Pistol involved. My dad never knew that mom involved Pistol. My Dad would never had allowed it, but all the sudden the shooting stopped.

Another time Pistol came to the rescue involved my sister Christine. Her husband, Terry and their two young children were living in a rented house in Phoenix. Christine was talking on the phone with mom telling her how upset they were that the landlord was trying to evict them one year prior to the end of their lease. The company wanted them out NOW because of a development plan. The firm was using "strong arm" tactics and was really harassing them. And, my sister's family had no place to go. So, my mom called Pistol. Since he had friends in Phoenix she wanted to see if there was anything he could do to help out. He said, "Chick, I'll see what I can do.

Two days later my sister received a phone call from the real estate company that was trying to evict them. They told my sister not to worry. They can live in the house as long as they wish. Well, what do you know?

As of this writing, Pistol Pete is still living in his home in St. Louis Hills.

## **Date With The Exorcist**

Living back at home after spending four years away was tolerable for the first week or so. After that I needed to leave, but, I did not have a job. So, I spent the next two weeks really concentrating on starting a career. Finally, I took the first job offered.

I went to work as an assistant manager for Beneficial Management Group. There were three divisions to BFG – the personal finance division, real estate loan division, and the tax service division. I went to work for the real estate loan division, which was headquartered in downtown Clayton. I went through a three-month training program allowing me to actually negotiate commercial and residential loan contracts.

The job was quite interesting but I really wanted to advance into something more challenging. My chance came when my immediate boss asked me to drive the regional manager, William Wayward, to the airport. Driving Mr. Wayward to Lambert I mentioned how much I enjoyed working for the company and if an opportunity came up for advancement in any of their other branches to please keep me in mind. A couple days later our local division manager, Mr. Shopp, summoned me into his office. He said, "Stewart, how come Mr. Wayward is requesting that you take over the Tax Service for the St. Louis Region?" This news surprised me as much as it must have surprised Mr. Shopp. Anyway, I got the job and I figured now was a good time to look for a place of my own.

I must have mentioned to my cousin David that I was looking to

move out of my parent's home but had not found a place yet. David must have suggested to me that I should consider renting a room for a month or two from Nonny until I was able to find an apartment.

ARE YOU CRAZY?

He said, "Johnny, it will only be for a short time. What could happen?" ARE YOU NUTS? Moving into Nonny's house is the last thing I would consider given its history. Nonny told me it is not unusual for her to wake up in the morning to lights on and TV blaring. There is no way I would move into that possessed house!

Well, David must have given me a great sales job because one week later I moved in.

Nonny was a very pleasant but eccentric lady. We got along famously and I believe she enjoyed the company. I remember that I enjoyed teasing her by telling her that when I would leave in the evening to go out with my buddies we were going to church. I don't think she bought that.

A very good friend to both David and me was Jim Garegnani. Jim is the spitting image of the comedian, Chevy Chase. And he had the personality to match. The first time I met Garegnani was over the Christmas Holidays in 1973. It was around 9 am and I was still in bed. David and Garegnani came over and woke me. They stopped by to invite me to a movie that just came out. David said that his dad, my Uncle Pete, got us three free passes for the movie that evening at the Brentwood Theater. I said sure I'll go.

We got to the Brentwood Theater about 6:00 PM for a 7:05 PM show. The line extended out of the lobby, onto the sidewalk, for at least a hundred yards. Wow, I said. This movie must be GREAT. I asked David, what is this movie about again? David said it's about exercise. Exercise?

Since David's father was the Brentwood Chief of Police the manager escorted us right in, past the long line and right into the theater. We

had our popcorn and soda and were sitting up close and center waiting for the movie to start.

It was only a half an hour into the movie that we realized that this movie had nothing to do with exercise. All my fears of demon possession were being realized on the big screen right in front of my eyes.

I'm Catholic. This is what I know as a Catholic. Demon possession is real and something we should not tinker with. That is why we don't play with Ouija boards or conduct séances.

This wasn't an exercise movie. This was the exorcist! The true story about demon possession. The Blob and The Day the Earth Stood Still was "child's play" compared to this movie. There had not been a movie like this before.

There we were, three big, strong tuff guys slouched down in our seats with our hands covering our eyes in fright. We were up close and personal experiencing one of the scariest movies we had ever seen. Fortunately, we were not the only frightened people in the theater. There were approximately 200 others.

After the movie David suggested that we go back to his house to spend the night just in case Jim and I were afraid to be alone. We agreed and went to my Cousin Dave's house.

That night, everything frightened us - even turning out the lights. Just before bed, however, David suggested that all three of us should go over to the window in his room to pull down the shade. So, these tough guys went to the window to pull it down-all three of us. I was the one that actually pulled the shade while my two bodyguards had my back. I pulled it down and as we turned, the shade suddenly sprang back up by itself with a loud flapping sound. This scared us so much all three of us started to run to exit the room. Unfortunately we were on a floor rug that caused us to slide back under our feet. All we could do was just stay there for a moment as our legs were

desperately trying to propel us but we were just running in place like being on a tread mill.

It was hilarious. We still laugh today about this incident and the first time we saw The Exorcist.

## The Flying Saucer

Well, without much fan-fair I moved into Nonny's house. The first couple of nights I was a little tentative but I quickly got used to the surroundings. Of course, I was only there during the evenings after work and usually after a night out with the boys.

One morning at breakfast, Nonny was cooking something I had never seen before. She was cooking a slice of sandwich bread on a griddle with a circle cut out of the center of the bread. Nonny cracked an egg in the center of that bread. I had never experienced anything like that.

While I was enjoying a farm first bread egg breakfast, Nonny mentioned that "They were outside again last night." I said to her, "Who was outside last night?"

Nonny said that the flying saucer was outside again last night. "Flying Saucer? What flying saucer?"

Nonny said that for the last few years, she would see a flying saucer outside during the night.

I said to her, Okay; let me know when it comes back.

One night while lying in bed around midnight, I noticed a figure slowing and stealthily sneaking into my room. Very quietly Nonny approached my bed and slightly shook me, "John. John, are you awake?" Still half asleep I said, "Sure Nonny. What's happening?"

She said that the flying saucer is outside the bathroom window again and would I like to see it?

I followed Nonny into the dark hall then into a dark bathroom where I noticed the bathroom window was completely opened. She looked out the window to make sure our visitor was still there then turned to me to and said, "There it is," as she was pointing out the window. As I approached the window Nonny's eyes were affixed on me as to say, okay, boy, I told you. I looked outside the window, and in my half sleepy state I noticed a blurry red light flickering on and off.

I couldn't believe it. There it was. Looking outside in Nonny's backyard from the upstairs bathroom window, slightly above the back tree line, I noticed that flashing red light going on and off. In my sleepy state, all I could tell was that there was something hovering just above the tree line. As I became fully awake, adjusting my eyes and focusing in, I heard Nonny once again whisper from behind me, "See, I told you."

Watching the blinking red light, and now fully awake, I realized this mysterious light was not from a hovering space craft, it was in fact the KSHE radio tower that was located at Hanley and Manchester Road.

When I realized what this was, I turned to Nonny and said "WOW! This is unbelievable." I didn't have the heart to tell this sweet old lady that it was actually a radio tower. If it didn't bother her I just left well enough alone and let her believe it was a UFO. I thanked her for sharing this sighting with me. Then I went to bed not to bring this incident up again.

Although this incident was something imagined by an eighty-five year old lady, it in no way reflects on her credibility regarding the past ghostly happenings that she and others have experienced in this home. There is enough evidence and witnesses to attest to the fact that this house is haunted and, I can only assume, that it is still haunted, even though I never witnessed anything personally.

After living in this house for several weeks I began to feel right at home and quite comfortable, not even considering that this home

had “spirits”.

## Mystery Caller

On one particular weekend Nonny was undergoing a test in the hospital and I found myself home alone. It was a Saturday night and I was watching television.

The telephone rang. I went into the enclave in the hallway to answer the phone. “Hello,” I said. No one responded. “Hello,” I repeated. Still, no one answered, but I could tell that someone was on the other end. So I hung up the phone and went back into the living room to resume watching TV.

A few minutes later the phone rang again. I went to answer it and still the party on the other end would not answer. Again, I hung up the phone and went back to the living room.

I no sooner sat back in my chair than the phone rang again. I decided to let the phone ring and not answer assuming the person on the other end will get tired and hang up - no such luck. I let the phone ring at least twenty five times before answering it - Once again, no answer on the other end.

Now I started to get concerned. I hung the phone up once again but this time the phone rang immediately. I picked up the phone but did not say anything, only hoping to pick up a familiar noise, or hear someone breathing or something – but nothing.

I stood there quietly just listening when all of a sudden a demon voice spoke in a low, raspy voice, “What are you doing in my house?” Who is this I demanded? “Do you realize that you are in danger,” the voice responded. I had enough and hung up.

This time I went back into the living room but instead of watching TV I started turning on all the lights. That’s what you do when you’re home alone and frightened. I didn’t know if this was a prank or if something else was happening.

The phone rang again. I let it ring for several minutes but it just kept ringing. The more it rang the madder I got. I picked it up without saying a word. This same voice said that if I hung up again I would be in real danger. I said, “Come on punk, what are you going to do?”

With that the voice told me never to talk like that again. I hung up the phone and once again I got an immediate call back. Finally, I really lost my temper and suggested that the person on the other end of the phone come over to the house so I can beat their ass! All I heard then was, in a gruff threatening voice, I’ll be right there. Then they hung up.

I thought to myself, Oh now I’ve done it. After all Stewart, you’re a lover, not a fighter.

So with all the lights and TV still on I headed outside into my car and parked across the street in the dark waiting for someone to show up. After an hour or so I figured it was a prank and went back inside. Since it was nearly one in the morning I headed upstairs to bed.

The next morning, after church, I headed over to my grandma’s house for a visit. While there my cousin Jean Giacomelli came in to say hello. She started quizzing me about Nonny’s house and asking if I have witnessed any strange happenings.

I told her that I hadn’t seen anything unusual. She said, “Nothing unusual had happened?”

She asked me if I was scared staying in that house all alone. No, I said. She asked me if I had any strange phone calls lately. I said no. Why? No reason she said. Then it hit me. I started to tell her about the phone calls from the previous night. With that she began to laugh hysterically.

“Jean, what do you know about those calls?” I asked. She said, “Well Johnny, we had some people over to the house last night and thought we would call you knowing you were in that house all by yourself.

You were on speaker and it was Jack Patti making the calls.”

“You mean I threatened and cussed out Jack Patti?” Jean laughed and said that they had a ball.

Although I felt foolish for the moment I made it a point to stay clear of Mr. Patti for a while.

So, during my short two-month stay at Nonny’s house, all that happened to me was a false alarm with the nightly visit by the flying saucer and a malicious prank phone call. A total bust if I were a paranormal investigator. Not even loud footsteps or lights on in the morning. Stuff that Nonny’s house was so famous for.

Not that I was hoping for anything - only to survive my stay. In fact I had just signed a rental agreement on a small two-bedroom house on “The Hill”. I had only a few weeks left before I was to move.

## Scary Saturday

A few days before my last weekend Jim Garegnani called to ask for my help with his car repair. It was on a Saturday and he agreed to pick me up around 10 am.

Saturday morning was when Nonny would run some errands with her daughter Ann. I was in the house alone doing some chores. I remember it being one of those gorgeous crisp fall mornings with a clear bluebird sky and the leaves beginning to change colors. I had the front door open so I would be able to hear when Garegnani pulled in the driveway.

I was in the living room and heard the phone ring. When I answered it no one was on. It was quiet. I said hello two or three times. There was no response so I hung up. I thought it was odd only because the quietness on the phone had a different sound. I know that doesn’t make much sense but on the older phones you could always tell by the sound if the phone call was some how disconnected or someone

was on but refused to answer, such as the time a few weeks prior with my cousin’s party prank.

This time I remember distinctly that the silence on the phone was strangely different. It was as if there was only space. The sound was similar to when you hold your ear to a conch shell, but softer. For whatever reason I remember that family members would talk about the phone ringing right before a paranormal event would happen in the house. Why I remembered that then but not when I was pranked a few weeks earlier I cannot begin to say. All I knew was that I instinctively realized this was different.

After hanging up the phone I walked toward the foyer so I could see if Garegnani was in the driveway. At that moment the unimaginable was happening. From somewhere upstairs the noise began. Boom – boom - boom. Incredibly loud, frightening booms like footsteps coming closer toward the top of the stairs. I looked up from the foyer but no one was there. No one I could see. Some thing was there. Something frightening was happening. My first thought was this couldn’t be what I’m thinking. This must be a train in the back. So, I ran outside and toward the track in the far back of the yard. I hopped the fence and made it to the train tracks. Nothing! No train from either direction. RATS! I was hoping for some reasonable explanation.

I couldn’t believe this! I ran as fast as I could to the front of the house scared to go back in. The noise was so loud I could hear it from the front porch.

I went back inside where I was once again standing in the foyer. The noise was still upstairs but I now could tell it was at the top of the steps. All of a sudden the noise was now descending down the steps, slowing and very loud. It was so distinct that I could tell which step it was on.

At that moment Garegnani pulled into the driveway. By this time the entity was half way down and getting closer. I turned and jumped toward the door closing the door behind me. I didn’t bother with the

steps. I jumped off the porch and onto the grass and into Garegmano's car. I told Jim to get out of here. He noticed right away something must have happened.

He told me later that I was white as a ghost. Jim just looked at me and said, "Something just happened, didn't it!" I just said, "Come on, we've got to go."

I cannot explain what this was or how long it lasted once I left the house. I will tell you that it was something I would never forget. The sound was frightening. It is something no household appliance or system could possibly make.

Nonny was back home when I returned later that afternoon. I invited Garegnani in but he refused to enter the house. As Nonny and I sat in the kitchen I mentioned the occurrence to her. She told me that what occurred would happen occasionally and it had been a few years since this happened. She then asked me if by chance I received a phone call just prior to the noise. I said, "Yes, how did you know?" She said that it was typical for the phone to ring just prior to this happening as if the spirit was forewarning its presence.

Any skepticism I had regarding all the stories about this house had been validated. This experience, although short in duration, will last my lifetime. This was something that you definitely would have to experience before fully understanding the sound, the movement and the sheer energy of this spirit. It was powerful without shaking the house.

## **No Place Like Home**

Spirits and non-human entities can become attracted to certain locations or certain energies. Several years after Nonny died my cousin Jean stopped by her grandmother's house on Laclede Station Road, which then belonged to new owners. She knocked on the door hoping to speak with them.

A lady answered the door. Jean introduced herself as the granddaughter of the original owners. She said she practically grew up in the house. Jean asked the lady if she would mind telling her if they experienced any unexplainable activity in the house.

The lady just looked at Jean for a moment without answering her. Then she said, "This is something I don't wish to discuss". Then she politely turned and closed the door.



*My Sister, Christine*



*My Cousin, Sharon*



*Cugino di primo grado, my pisano, David Giacopelli*



*This is how I always remember my Uncle Pete.*



*Jean Giacopelli*



*Bottom Row Left to Right: My Mom, Uncle Pete, Aunt Pat. Back Standing: Uncle Joe.*



*The evening gatherings of family and friends in our backyard on Delavan.*



*More family gatherings in the backyard.*



*Grandma Giacopelli at a family grave site, Chicago.*



*My Grandma and Grandpa Giacopelli in their front yard in Richmond Heights.*



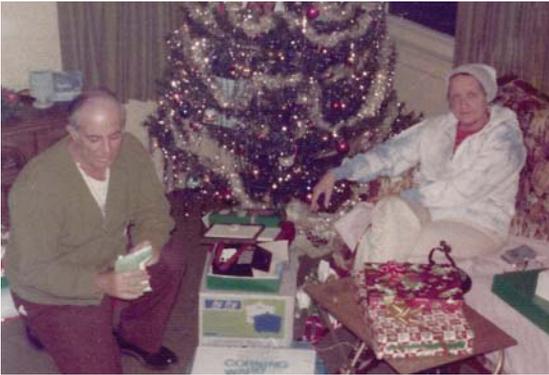
*My Mom on Left and Cousin Frances both sitting with family in Chicago.*



David and I after we returned from an early morning fishing trip to Pond, MO. His bedroom in Brentwood.



Jean and Carl Reynolds



Uncle Pete and Aunt Mary. They were the first in the family to have an artificial tree.



My Grandma on Left with her Brother, Sadudi, his Wife and Daughter in Sicily.



From Left to Right: Our Cousin Eddie Fasco from Cicero in Chicago, my Brother Mark, Me, and Brother Danny. We are in Grandma's backyard.



My Uncle Pete, my Mom & friend on the side of their house. This is the kitchen side door that my Grandma used to let the old man in to get food.



First communion celebration in Sicily.



My Grandma Giacopelli second to Right with family in Sicily.