

## Strange Happenings

*by Liz Gibbons*

I married into a family that had many strange stories to tell. My husband's grandfather was born in Ireland and moved to Belize, British Honduras, where he earned a good income working on a mahogany plantation measuring lumber for export. He married a native Mayan girl. In 1900 they had identical twin boys named Gerald Charles, my father-in-law, and Charles Gerald. There are many family stories about their experiences growing up in that superstitious culture where it was common to see apparitions.

One that stands out is one day the twins were walking down a road, and as they started to cross a bridge they heard the sound of a galloping horse. Looking back they saw a stallion racing toward them with flames shooting from his nostrils. Frightened, they ran to the end of the bridge to hide below it. They peeked up to watch the horse, and when it got to the end of the bridge it just disappeared.

The twins went to St. Louis when they were sixteen and were able to enroll in dental school. When they graduated they were not yet 21, so they could not get a license to practice dentistry in the United States. They returned to British Honduras and set up a practice in their childhood home. One evening they were in the house and heard someone come up the steps, enter the house, and go into the dental room. They smelled a horrible smell and ran into the room to see who was there. The room was empty. A few minutes later their mother came into the room and told them, "Don't be upset. That is just the ghost of your Uncle Antonio."

After being licensed they set up a practice in Detroit. They both married. In Uncle Charlie's home the lights would come on and off in the basement. Often when Uncle Charlie got up in the morning the basement lights would be on. Exasperated, he yelled down one day, "Whoever is turning on the lights, please help pay the light bill." Soon he found \$6.31 on the fuse box. When the monthly bill arrived he owed \$6.31.

There were other stories of events at one or the other brother's homes of pianos playing or typewriters writing, and no one was there to operate them. There was the time when my husband's family and another family gathered for dinner at the home of a family several weeks after their five-year-old son had been hit by a car and killed. As they sat down to eat they realized there was an extra place setting. Just then there was a knock on the back door. The father of the deceased boy went to the door and saw small boot prints in the freshly fallen snow leading up to the door and none leading away. No one was there. They were convinced that the dead son was making his presence known.

There was also the story of an elevator that the brothers decided not to get on that crashed to the basement and killed the two people on it, and another story of a relative dreaming of a big dog and waking with bite marks on their leg.

I don't know how much these stories have been exaggerated over the years or changed according to each brother's perception. But life with this family has been interesting.