



# The ghosts of Ohio® Newsletter

www.ghostsofohio.org

Volume 13 Issue 1

## LUCKY 13 BEGINS WITH A HORROR... OR A HOAX HAPPY HALLOWEEN!



James

Seems almost impossible to believe, but the words you are reading at this very moment are part of a very special newsletter: The first issue in our 13th year!

That's right, The Ghosts of Ohio Newsletter just turned 13 and is now officially a terrorizing teenager! I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank all of you who have subscribed to this newsletter. In fact, some of you have been with us over a decade—back in the days when the “newsletter” was nothing more than a few links to spooky sites attached to an email. Oh, how times have changed!

So obviously, we wanted to do something special for this newsletter to celebrate. On top of that, it's our Halloween edition. After putting our ghostly heads together, we decided to dedicate an entire newsletter to one of the most famous (some would say infamous) haunted houses in the United States, if not the world: The Amityville Horror house.

The Amityville Horror holds a special place in my strange and spooky heart. You see, growing up in New York (and having relatives that lived on Long Island), the moment that creepy black book with the flies on the cover made its way into my home, I was hooked.

My mother, who was of the mindset that all reading was good, allowed me, at the impressionable age of 10, to read *The Amityville Horror*. Not only did the book scare the hell out of me, but it also helped fuel my desire to learn everything I possibly could about the case. Thankfully, my father always read the *New York Post* on his train ride to work every morning, so I was able to collect all sorts of sordid Post-style articles about whether or not the events in the book really took place. And of course, I would constantly nag my parents to go visit my relatives on Long Island, just so we could drive past the house.

Drives past the Amityville Horror house were usually very quick, and yet I can remember each and every one. I will never forget how small the house looked, or the fact that it looked unhaunted—not even a single shutter was broken and the lawn was very well-kept. But of course, there were those (long-since removed) attic windows staring down at you. Trust me when I tell you that they did indeed look like eyes!

But what struck me most about our Amityville drive-bys were that we were never alone. In fact, we would often join what I can only describe as mini-convoys: three to four cars all snaking past the house, pausing only to snap a picture or two. For me, this signified the first time in my life that I realized the power of a good ghost story. People were coming from all over the United States for nothing

more than a five-second glimpse of a somewhat unassuming house. All because of a ghost story.

Of course, there was always that nagging feeling in the back of my mind as to whether or not anything in the book *The Amityville Horror* was true. I mean, the cover of the book itself proudly proclaimed it was a true story. But there were many times, especially when we drove past the house, where I would begin to question the story's validity. Decades later, I'm still questioning it.

But I'm clearly not alone. Even after dozens of movies, books, and documentaries, what exactly did and did not happen inside the house on Ocean Avenue is still very much up to debate. And that's where this issue of the newsletter comes in. We've reviewed some of the various materials about the case and present them to you here in the hopes that you might be able to reach your own conclusions.

But a word of caution: reading too much about the Amityville Horror in one sitting may result in an overwhelming urge to growl “Get out!” the next time an unsuspecting coworker invades your cube.

Cheers,

James A. Willis

Founder/Director



# THE NIGHT THE DEFOES DIED: REINVESTIGATING THE AMITYVILLE MURDERS



Written by Ric Osuna  
Imprintbooks (2003)



Samantha

Nothing evokes a sense of awe and terror than Amityville. It's by far the most notorious American horror story, and it's also the most controversial. There are those that believe that

Ronald "Butch" DeFeo was nothing but a cold-blooded murderer, and there are those who believe that he was possessed by some sort of malevolent presence—something that remained in the house after his incarceration and which frightened the Lutz family into fleeing just 28 days after moving in. What really happened the night of the murders? Did evil truly exist in the house, or was the whole thing an elaborate hoax? As someone who enjoys cutting through bunk to find the hard truth, I jumped at the chance to read this book. I'm glad I did!

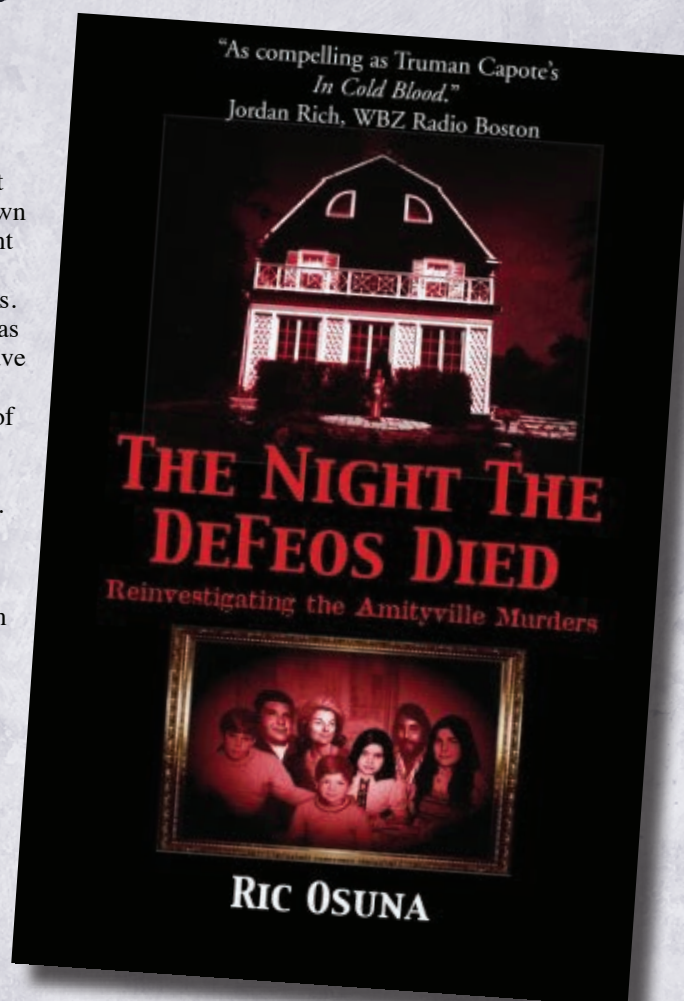
Author Ric Osuna has done an incredible job of researching the case and eliminating the bunk. He objectively conducted interviews, examined investigation notes and pictures, obtained countless court documents, and uncovered the backgrounds and histories of the people and places involved. All of this information combines into the most cohesive and sensible explanation of Amityville that I have seen.

First, Osuna sets the stage for the murders by delving into the DeFeo family's colorful background. Louise DeFeo's father, Michael Brigante Sr., was a Mob kingpin who was responsible for giving her husband, Ronald "Big Ronnie" DeFeo, a managerial position at a car dealership he owned, as well as for enabling the DeFeos to live in their Amityville home, which under normal circumstances would have been beyond their means. Because of his "connections," Ronnie saw himself as a

big shot and acted the part, especially when it came to bullying his own family. He had a violent temperament and was abusive on a daily basis. Brigante knew what was going on and would have taken action to put an end to Ronnie's reign of terror, but Louise begged him not to because she loved him. This turned out to be a monumental mistake.

According to Butch, on November 12, 1974, his mother Louise called him, begging him to come home because his 18-year-old sister Dawn tried to stab Big Ronnie, who was now taking his anger out on the family. When Butch arrived, he found his 9-year-old brother John sprawled on the foyer floor with a bloody face. He had been hit and kicked down the stairs. Upstairs, 13-year-old Allison had been struck across the face, 12-year-old Marc was shouting from his room, Dawn was hurling obscenities from the third floor, and Louise was being beaten by Big Ronnie, who upon seeing Butch, attacked him, too. The scene was absolute chaos. Butch was mostly able to diffuse the situation, but enough was enough. That night, with Dawn's relentless prodding later that evening, a plan was hastily put together to kill their father that night. The idea was to make it look like a robbery gone wrong. Butch was supposed to kill their parents (Louise was a target, too, for never doing anything to stop Ronnie's violence), and Dawn was to drive the kids to their grandparents' house in Brooklyn. Unfortunately, this was not the best laid plan. In fact, it was downright sloppy, and they certainly didn't prepare for

"As compelling as Truman Capote's  
*In Cold Blood.*"  
Jordan Rich, WBZ Radio Boston



contingencies.

Dawn was hot-headed and took the first shot at Big Ronnie, after which Butch had to finish him off. He also shot his mother, but his friend Bobby had to finish her off. When Bobby freaked and ran out of the house, Butch went in search of him, telling Dawn to get the kids out of the house. When he returned later, he discovered the children dead and Dawn upstairs, apparently out of her mind on drugs. Angry, he killed her, then had Bobby help him clean up. The whole thing was a disaster, and Butch wound up getting arrested and charged with all six of the murders.

The circus continued with Butch's experience in the Suffolk County legal system. For years the police department had been under scrutiny for torturing confessions out of suspects, shoddy investigative work, and rigging the

(continued on page 3.)

## THE NIGHT THE DEFOES DIED: REINVESTIGATING THE AMITYVILLE MURDERS CONT.



system so that a fair trial was nearly impossible. After Butch was arrested, it was no surprise that many facts of the case were lost, skewed, or blatantly ignored. And things only got worse for him once he was given a court-appointed attorney named William Weber.

Weber told Butch that his only defense was to plead insanity, which is something Butch did not want to do. In order to convince him to go that route, Weber proposed a book deal. If convicted, Butch would wind up institutionalized for a few years, then he'd emerge a rich man (and so would Weber). Butch agreed because he wanted the money. "Amityville was a hoax that Weber and the Lutzes started," Butch said in an interview with Osuna. "Yes, to make money." Butch's wife Geraldine had accompanied Weber on a meeting with the Lutzes. It was clear to

her that a hoax was in the works because George Lutz kept insisting that they had to move into the Amityville house to help support the idea that there was a dark force there that made Butch do the things he did. Kathy Lutz played it up by rubbing her head and pretending to have psychic impressions. Geraldine stormed out because she wanted no part of it. To her it was completely ridiculous.

Needless to say, the plan proceeded anyway, with enormous success. The Amityville Horror story has been depicted in countless books, movies, documentaries, articles, and interviews; and although inconsistencies, embellishments, and conflicts abound (as Osuna outlines in this book), the story remains as popular as it's ever been. Perhaps it's because people enjoy a good horror story, regardless of whether it's true

or not. And maybe people simply love a heated debate. One thing is certain—Amityville will always be remembered for the November 13, 1974, tragedy and the events that transpired afterward. Not for the quaint town it used to be.

Butch DeFeo was convicted of all six counts of murder on November 21, 1975. Despite attempts to appeal, he's been in prison ever since. You know what they say about the best laid plans...

Anyone interested in delving into the meat and potatoes of this case should put this book at the top of their reading list. Ric Osuna has doggedly researched nearly every detail in an honest effort to discover the truth. This is yet another case of the truth being stranger than the fiction we all know.

## HALLOWEEN'S OVER, BUT THE GHOSTS ARE STILL COMING FOR YOU!



Last year, The Ghosts of Ohio decided to take time off from our usual schedule and just enjoy the October/Halloween season. And while we certainly did enjoy ourselves, one thing was clearly missing: all your smiling, happy faces!

So this year, we're back. Boy, are we ever! New presentations, new spooky "evidence" to share, special guests, and more spooky surprises than you could shake a skeletal stick at!

The following is a list of all CONFIRMED dates, meaning that while the specific time, etc., is still to come; you can go ahead and circle the date on your calendar! Additional information will be announced, as it becomes available, on Facebook and our other social media accounts, as well as our newsletter. And please note that dates marked with a "\$" are pay events and you will need to purchase a ticket. All the others are free!

So get ready, Ohio, because The Ghosts are coming for you!

If you're interested in booking The Ghosts of Ohio for a presentation/appearance, don't delay! Shoot an email to [info@ghostsofohio.org](mailto:info@ghostsofohio.org) and get the ball rolling today!

### CONFIRMED APPEARANCES

**Saturday, November 7, 2015**

Buckeye Book Fair \$  
Wooster, Ohio  
<http://buckeyebookfair.com>

**Saturday, November 21, 2015**

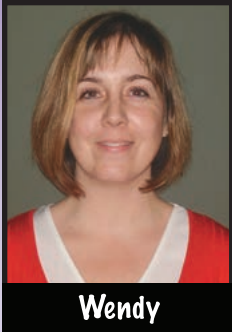
An Evening With Author James A. Willis \$  
Museum At The Friends Home  
115 S. 4th Street  
Waynesville, OH 45069



Photo courtesy of the Defiance Public Library System

# THE AMITYVILLE HORROR CONSPIRACY

Written by Stephen Kaplan, Ph.D with Roxanne Salch Kaplan  
Published by Toad Hall/KatcoMedia (1995)



Wendy

Ah, the Amityville Horror. I think it is a book any ghost-loving aficionado grew up reading. It scared the pants off of me at the time, and I had a purple stuffed pig in my bedroom! Come to find out...it was all a scam. And Dr. Stephen Kaplan spent years of his life proving it.

Stephen Kaplan was a parapsychologist who lectured in the 1970s around the Long Island college circuit about anything from the history of witchcraft to classic hauntings. When the Defeo family was murdered in their Long Island home in 1974, Stephen had just opened up his Parapsychology Institute of America and was working as a communications specialist with the New York City Board of Education. Little did he know that the murder house and its subsequent haunting would become the obsession of his life.

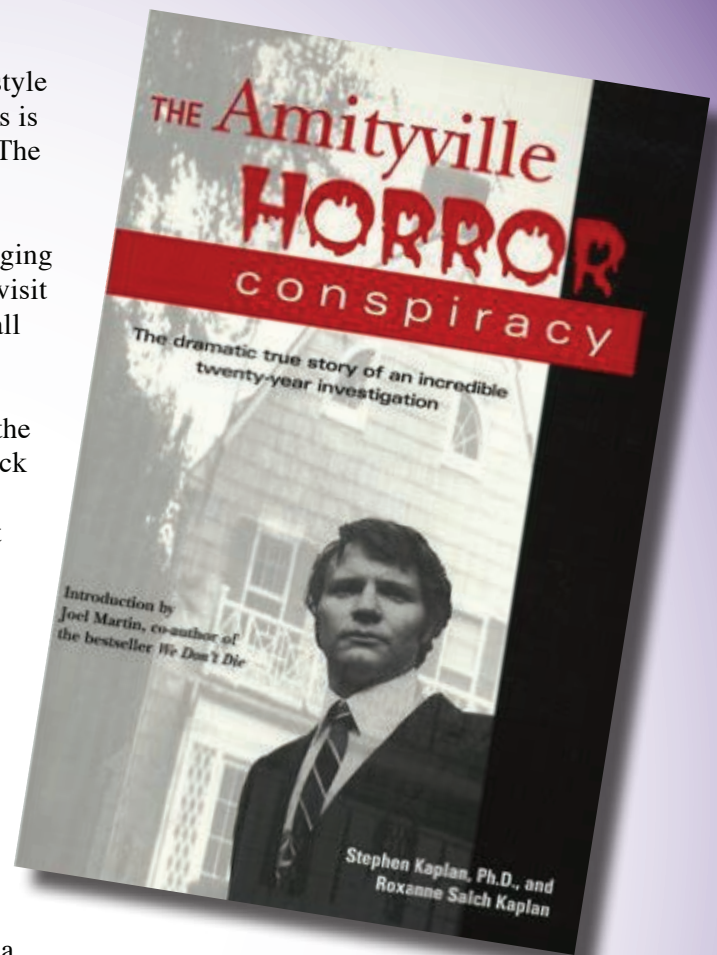
When the Lutz family moved in, and then out, of the Defeo home on Ocean Avenue, they created quite a media storm with their claims of supernatural happenings at the house. George Lutz contacted Stephen to investigate, and then the night of the investigation, called it off. Instead, he brought in the Warrens. Stephen had a feeling this was all a hoax from the beginning, and set out to prove it.

This book is written in a diary style, with dated entries. Since Kaplan spends the whole book ridiculing the

Lutzes and their diary-style book, I am guessing this is his cynical wit at play. The book gives loads of evidence, from George Lutz's continually changing story, to Kaplan's own visit to the house. It details all of the work he and his Institute did to uncover discrepancies between the hardbound and paperback books: the witnesses who were written about in the book, yet were never in the house, and the interviews with the subsequent owners who loved the warm feeling of this supposedly demon infested house.

Kaplan documents the people who knew Lutz was writing a fictional ghost story to make some money and helped him with ideas, only to be cut out of the financial end and see their ideas used for a true story! Between his on-air arguments with Lorraine Warren, and continual letters to the editors of any magazine or paper that advertised the book or wrote about, it was definitely a story that strongly affected Kaplan's life.

My only complaint is that the subtitle of this book is "The dramatic true story of an incredible twenty-year investigation." The investigation only took a couple of years. Kaplan's speeches and writings about it did last until the end of his life, just before this book came out, but I don't know that the investigation did. Anyhow, this is a must read for anyone who



believed the Amityville Horror was a true story. It may change your mind. Like we at The Ghosts of Ohio like to say—get the facts!



# IN SEARCH OF THE AMITYVILLE HORROR



Kathy

If you've never watched *In Search Of* with Leonard Nimoy, you are really missing out on a late-70s/early 80s classic. There were 146 episodes filmed about wide variety of topics, including everything from

UFOs and hauntings to tidal waves and D.B. Cooper.

I'll admit, shamefully, that I was not at all familiar with the story of the Amityville Horror before now. How could that possibly be?!? Even my non-believing husband knew the details around this story. But, if I had to learn about it for the first time from anyone, I'm so glad it was Leonard Nimoy giving me the "facts."

The episode dives right in with the known truths about the murders that occurred at 112 Ocean Ave in Amityville, NY. And after seeing a few shots of the house, we get to see and listen to Kathy and George Lutz talk about how the house was so charming and lovely that they decided to ignore the superstition and buy it. They look like a normal couple, typical of the 70s. Nothing particularly stands out about them.

Because they are a Catholic family, they decided to have their new house blessed by a priest. The viewer is then told that this is the first time the priest has been willing to be interviewed on television about his experience with the house and the family. He begins to describe how the blessing started in the sewing room and that it was unusually cold. Then a deep voice told him to get out and he was slapped across his face. Later, after he left the house, he developed blisters all over his hands and a doctor told him it was psychosomatic. He didn't believe he had any tendencies that would lead him into believing anything like that, so it must have been due to the house. He started to worry about George and Kathy and attempted to call them a few times, but he was never able to get through. When asked why the house was never exorcised, he

said that as a Roman Catholic, they believe that only people can be possessed, not objects and that George and Kathy were not possessed.

After the priest left, everything got a lot more intense for the Lutz family. Everything from changing personalities, swarming flies in the middle of winter, erratic behavior, and nightmares plagued the husband and wife. Their three children seemed unaffected for the most part. Their daughter, Missy, did have an invisible friend she called Jody and he told her that he could only be seen if he wanted someone to see him. And, he said he could be any size or any object.

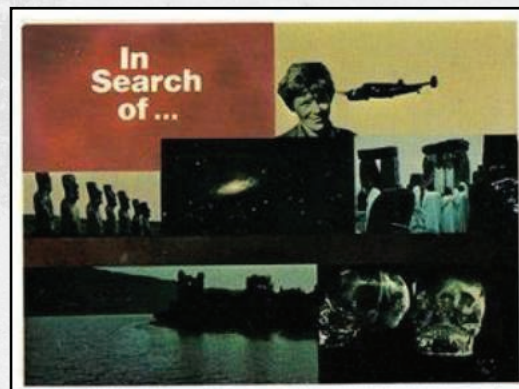
Kathy discovered a small red room in the basement that wasn't part of the original house plans and their family dog wouldn't go anywhere near it. Oddly, that is the only mention of this room in the entire episode, so I never really understood why it was mentioned.

Throughout the 28 days they were in the house, George experienced crippling coldness. He became obsessed with having a fire in the fireplace and would spend a majority of his time huddled in front of it trying to get warm. He stopped taking care of himself and going to work. Mr. Nimoy added at this point, in a very serious tone, "Slowly the chill gripped his very soul." There are many moments where his background as an actor definitely adds a mysterious and spooky tone to the episode.

Kathy and George decided to rebless the house on their own. They heard a chorus of voices telling them to stop, which caused them to believe the reblessing did not work. Kathy tried to contact the priest, but she was unable to reach him in the same way he was unable to contact her.

There was a brief interview with Jay Anson, the author of *The Amityville Horror*. He mostly just added parts about how George and Kathy were normal people and how he believes these events really happened to them.

It should be noted, as well, that Ed and Lorraine Warren came to investigate the house. They were interviewed for the



episode and Ed stated, "The inhuman are attracted to the diabolical ... and can cause a psychic explosion."

The final "fact" presented really surprised me: in the past, the Indians in the area used the land where the house now stands as the grounds for their insane and tormented tribesmen. This, of course, is presented as a possibility for how the negative energy started and is what caused Ronald DeFeo to murder his entire family.

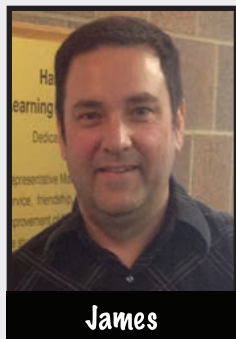
In the end, the Lutz family decided to abandon the house and all of their possessions to move across the country and start over. After 28 days, they had tolerated enough and escaped in the family car to safety. Their lives have been peaceful ever since leaving.

If this review seems to jump around, it is intentional. This is how the information is presented in the episode. Jumping from George and Kathy, to the priest, back to George and Kathy, and then to Jay Anson, and the Warrens, and finally back to Leonard Nimoy with facts about the murders and factual history. I think this format is intentional. It gives the viewer a sense of confusion and frenzy appropriate for this haunted house story. It's also full of spooky and creepy imagery that is never mentioned as part of the story. This ups the "scary" factor for the viewer, of course. For example, there are several shots of baby dolls with glowing red eyes, but there is no mention of that actually happening. Or a dramatic scene of all of the windows shattering, but no one actually talks about that happening.

This was an entertaining episode that I recommend to everyone because it is not only drama-filled with some very memorable lines, but it's only half an hour long and gives a good overview of the story. It's interesting to see and hear the story straight from all of the people involved.



# MY AMITYVILLE HORROR



James

**TITLE:** My Amityville Horror

**DIRECTOR:** Eric Walter

**GENRE:** Documentary

**RELEASE DATE:** 2013

**AVAILABLE:** Netflix—DVD and currently streaming

Back around 2012, I started hearing rumors about an Amityville documentary that was going to be unlike any other that had come before it. Given the plethora of documentaries already in existence about Amityville, I was intrigued...and incredibly skeptical. I mean, seriously, what new angle could this documentary really take? Needless to say, I didn't give it much thought until I read about the direction the documentary was going to take. And from that moment on, I was hooked.

You see, director Eric Walter was indeed going to be taking the *My Amityville Horror* documentary in a new direction. Specifically, he was going to be talking to and focusing on Daniel ("Danny") Lutz, one of the three children who lived inside the house on Ocean Avenue in Amityville for those 28 terror-filled days.

Not only would this be the first time Danny would be speaking out publicly about the events that took place in the house, but it would also be the first time any of the children talked about it. Through the years, Kathy and George Lutz, Danny's mother and adopted father, were the only two who went on record about what exactly took place during the family's time inside the house. Danny, who was 10 at the time they lived in the home, as well as his two siblings (Christopher, who was seven at the time, and Melissa (or "Missy"), who was five at the time), repeatedly refused to be interviewed or even talk about the case in any sort of open forum. That is, until *My Amityville Horror* came along.

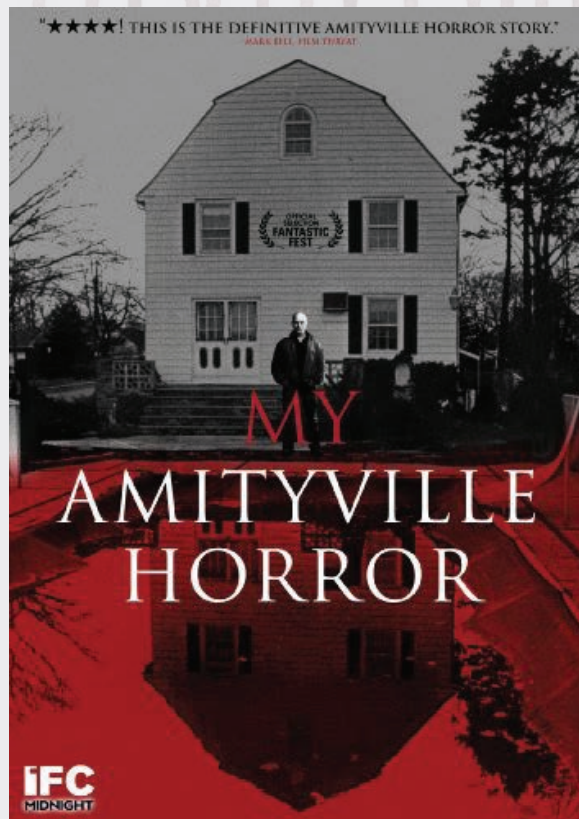
Right from the start, it is very clear that Danny Lutz is a troubled individual who still carries the emotional scars from Amityville around with him. What's not so clear is trying to determine if the scars are

the result of having to endure a haunting, an unpleasant upbringing, or both. And that's what makes this documentary so fascinating.

Danny clearly has issues with George Lutz and continually paints him as an arrogant, violent figure. That is not to say Danny disputes that there was something supernatural in the home. However, he repeatedly brings up that whatever was in the home, it was brought there due to George's involvement with the occult.

As far as what exactly took place during the Lutzes stay in the Amityville Horror house, while Danny does discuss a few things, he doesn't go into the type of blow-by-blow descriptions I was hoping for. As a long-time fan of all things Amityville Horror, I was sort of looking for something of a side-by-side comparison between what was alleged to have happened and what really did take place.

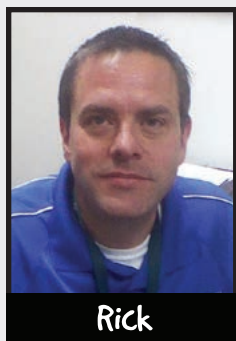
While the bulk of *My Amityville Horror* focuses on Danny Lutz, there are also several interviews with some of the original reporters who covered the case, as well as a somewhat bizarre interaction between Danny Lutz and famed researcher Lorraine Warren, who investigated the home with her husband, Ed Warren, after the Lutzes vacated the property. These interviews not only add more meat to the documentary, but director Eric Walter also gives each person interviewed the opportunity to give their opinion as to what really happened inside the house.



But of course, the question still remains: What exactly happened in that house? The closest director Eric Walter (and the audience) comes to an answer is in the film's final few minutes, where Walter asks Danny point-blank if he would be willing to take a lie detector test. Danny's response, as well as the awkward conversation that follows, is perhaps the most chilling part of the entire film. And as the film fades to black for the final time, a small postscript comes up, stating that while Danny's two siblings were approached, they both declined to participate in the film. This would seem to drive home the point that while *My Amityville Horror* raises more questions than it answers, it does not appear any real answers will be found any time soon.



# THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (1979) VS. THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (2005)



Rick

**TITLE:** The Amityville Horror

**GENRE:** Horror/Thriller

**RELEASE DATE:** 1979 & 2005

**AVAILABLE:** Netflix — DVD only (not streaming)



## 1979:

Directed by Stuart Rosenberg (*Cool Hand Luke* and *The Pope of Greenwich Village*) and stars James Brolin (*Beyond Belief: Fact or Fiction*, *Catch Me If You Can*), and Margot Kidder (*Superman*, *Halloween II*).

## 2005:

Directed by Andrew Douglas (Commercials: Nike, Adidas, Coca-Cola, Apple, Toyota, Ford, Microsoft—known as the top commercial director in the world) and stars Ryan Reynolds (*X-Men Origins* & *X-Men Wolverine*, *The Green Lantern*), and Melissa George (*30 Days of Night*, *The Slap*—television mini-series).

These films are very different. The 1979 version attempts to stick more to the facts (or the alleged facts) of the case as provided by the Lutz family. This version also had “1979” special effects, corny music, and over-the-top acting. I can remember being a lot more scared when I saw this movie in 1979 versus today. It is hard to watch

this movie now without having a few snickers slip out.

The 2005 version was targeted less on the facts of the case (remember alleged facts) and more on the jump factor. In my opinion, the film succeeded in the jump factor but failed in the substance factor. Case in point, the main character played by Ryan Reynolds turns around and suddenly you see the face of a tormented ghoul with blood pouring out of its mouth; this face is invisible to our main character. Of course this gruesome scene is accompanied by a super loud noise to make you jump out of your seat, which you will. But whose face was it and why was it there? No one knows and you never find out. From strictly an entertainment value and jump factor the movie was decent. Finally, no offense to Ryan Reynolds (note: I am a big fan of Ryan and he did a good job in this movie), but I would have really loved to have seen the 1979 original movie’s main character’s son, Josh Brolin (seen in *No Country For Old Men*), play the main character. What better way to celebrate the 26-year anniversary of The Amityville

Horror than to have the original actor’s son star in the same movie and the same role?! Oh well, maybe they asked him and he turned it down.

And now for your reading pleasure I’ve outlined the main points of each movie and which version contained what. Enjoy and Happy Halloween!



(continued on page 8.)

# THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (1979) VS. THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (2005) CONT.

| Scene:   | 1979 | 2005 |
|--|------|------|
| Flashback of the DeFeo Murders.  | Yes  | Yes  |
| The Lutzes knew about the DeFeo Murders before looking at the house.   | Yes  | No   |
| Priest forced to leave the house by a swarm of flies and a demonic voice.  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Priest goes blind.   | Yes  | No   |
| Wife wakes up and screams, "She was shot in the head."   | Yes  | No   |
| Husband sees hanging ghost girl in bedroom.  | No   | Yes  |
| Wife sees "red" eyes outside her daughter's window.  | Yes  | No   |
| Husband kills dog with an ax.  | No   | Yes  |
| Black tar comes up through the toilets.  | Yes  | No   |
| Babysitter gets locked in closet.  | Yes  | Yes  |
| Little girl tries to jump off roof.  | No   | Yes  |
| Little boy gets hand smashed in window.  | Yes  | No   |
| Ghostly ghoulish face with pouring blood from its mouth appears next to husband, but no one sees it.   | No   | Yes  |
| Wife's brother has \$1,500 disappear right in front of him.  | Yes  | No   |
| Husband pulled under the water in his own bathtub by ghost arms.   | No   | Yes  |
| Blood starts pouring from walls.   | Yes  | No   |
| Husband forces stepson to hold wood as he chops it with an axe.  | No   | Yes  |
| Husband tries to kill everyone in the house.   | Yes  | Yes  |
| The front door and basement door are blown off their hinges by invisible forces and a tree crashes through the house.  | Yes  | No   |
| Husband falls through basement stairs into a pool of blood.  | Yes  | No   |
| Husband finds hidden red room.   | Yes  | Yes  |
| Husband sees a vision that an evil reverend tortured and killed Indians in the basement of the house over 300 years ago and cut his own throat so his evil would live forever. | No   | Yes  |
| Husband discovers the original owner practiced witchcraft and worshiped the Devil.   | Yes  | No   |
| Family escapes and husband turns back to normal once away from the house.  | Yes  | Yes  |





# AMITYVILLE CONFIDENTIAL



Samantha

In 1976, just 28 days after moving in, George and Kathy Lutz fled 112 Ocean Avenue with their three children, claiming that their house was “infested with evil spirits.” But was it really? This History

Channel “History’s Mysteries” documentary explores whether the Amityville Horror was real, or whether it was all an elaborate hoax.

As with most one-hour documentaries of this type, viewers are left with no definitive answer. It’s interesting, however, to see the people involved in the case and hear their varying sides of the story; and Amityville has quite the cast of characters.

First, there are the Lutzes, who maintain that it was not a hoax and that they did, in fact, experience something evil in the house. When presented with the fact that their story seems to change with every article and interview, they simply claim that they’re repeatedly misquoted.

Next is William Weber, attorney for Ronald DeFeo, Jr. In this documentary, Weber says that he approached the Lutzes after they fled their home with a book proposal. He would later accuse them of faking their experiences for money; and he sued them for stealing his ideas for the book.

Jay Anson was the author of *The Amityville Horror*, published in 1977. Initially touted as nonfiction, it was hugely

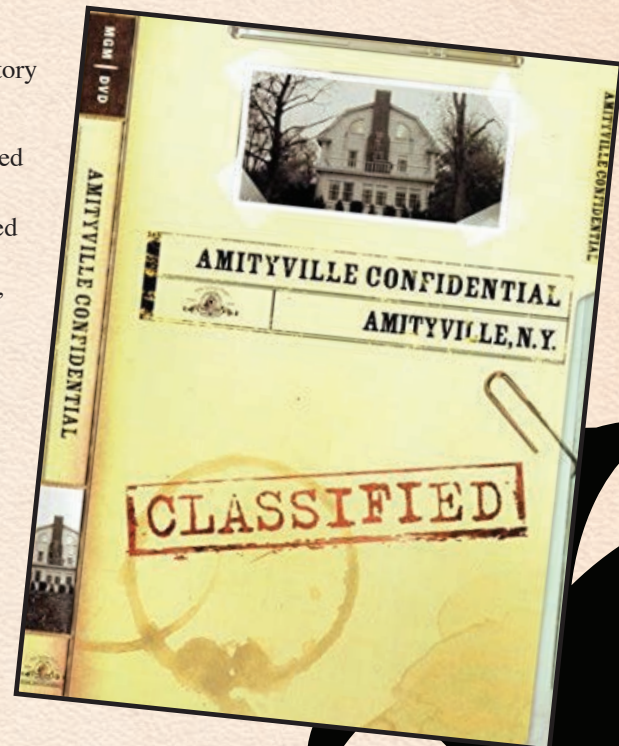
successful. However, there were “hundreds of changes” made to the story for the paperback version, seemingly to cover inconsistencies and improbabilities. It was later reclassified as fiction.

Parapsychologist Hans Holzer claimed that an Indian chief, whose remains were allegedly found on the property, had possessed DeFeo. This was disproved, but it’s the story he maintained.

Demonologists Ed and Lorraine Warren investigated the home, claiming to have encountered a dark presence there. Ed stated, “This, on a scale of one to 10, was a 10.” They later returned with a number of psychics, parapsychologists, and a camera crew. While Lorraine and one of the psychics would claim that the night was intense, the TV crew wasn’t impressed. “The movie was a lot more frightening.”

And then there was parapsychologist Stephen Kaplan, who bitterly rivaled the Warrens until his death. Kaplan claimed it was all a hoax.

Like I said, this documentary won’t help viewers make up their minds about Amityville. This debate will continue to rage on as long as there are people to throw more fuel on the fire. Sadly, it’s been quite a feeding frenzy, and I can’t help but feel empathy for the families that have resided at 112 Ocean Avenue since the Lutzes left. Their horror stories stem not from ghosts in their house, but from the tourists and the media who won’t leave them alone.



# HANS HOLZER AND THE AMITYVILLE HORROR



James

I love Hans Holzer. Always have and always will. As a child, Holzer's books were my first real foray into the land of ghost hunting. The fact that he wrote so many books on the paranormal (over 100) meant that he quickly became my

go-to ghost researcher to whom I would look to for advice on how to hone my craft. Of course, Holzer believed all you really needed for a ghost hunt was a deep trance medium and nothing more, but that didn't stop me from literally devouring any and all things Holzer. And when I found that Holzer had gotten involved in one of my all-time favorite ghost cases, the Amityville Horror, well, let's just say I was more than a little giddy.

Over the years, I have done more than my share of pondering over Holzer's involvement with the case. And while there's no denying that Holzer left an indelible mark on what can only be described as the mythos that has become the Amityville Horror, when it comes to Holzer and Amityville, almost everything is shrouded in mystery.

Take for example how Holzer initially became involved with the case. By most accounts, after George and Kathy Lutz fled their soon-to-be-infamous home on Ocean Avenue, they started seeking out someone who could help them possibly "fix" their house so that they could move back in. Apparently, that someone was supposed to have been Hans Holzer. But when the Lutzes found out he was unavailable, they instead turned to the husband and wife paranormal team of Ed and Lorraine Warren. It would be the Warrens who would confirm the presence of evil/demonic forces in the Amityville home.

That's not to say Holzer didn't actually investigate the Amityville house, because he did. Some time after the Warrens' investigation, in January of 1977, to be

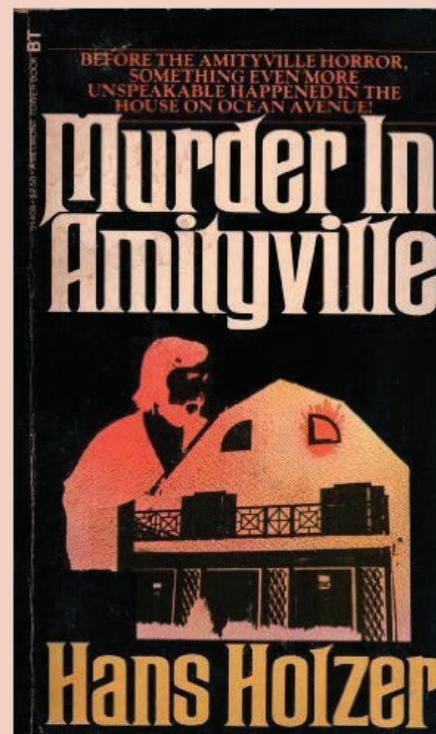
precise, Holzer conducted his own investigation, with the help of medium Ethel Myers. Holzer's findings raised more than a few eyebrows in that they went against the Warren's claims of demons in the home. Rather, Holzer concluded that the spirit of a Native American Indian was causing the activity, whose grave the house had been built over.

There were also whispers regarding who exactly brought Hans Holzer into the Amityville home and why. The person in question was William Weber, who also happened to be the defense lawyer for Ronald "Ronnie" DeFeo. DeFeo was responsible for what many believe is the real Amityville Horror when, in November of 1974, he gunned down six members of his family in their beds while they slept.

For many, the inclusion of William Weber is key for several reasons. For one, Weber would later come forward and claim that he and George and Kathy Lutz conspired together to create the majority of what would become known as the Amityville Horror. Weber said that his angle was use the evil-spirit angle as a postscript to the book he was writing, along with possibly being able to use it to get a new trial for his client, Ronnie DeFeo.

There are those who believed that Weber felt a little left out when he learned that George and Kathy Lutz had taken the stories the three had concocted and turned them over to Jay Anson, who would pen the legendary book, *The Amityville Horror*. OK, perhaps a lot left out. In fact, years later, Weber would sue the Lutzes over the whole thing.

For those reasons, some think that when Weber found out what the Lutzes were doing, he made the decision to hire his own ghost hunter to investigate Amityville. What's more, Weber decided to go with Hans Holzer because Holzer's style was so different from the Warren's. In essence, it's alleged that Weber wanted someone who would contradict the Warren's claims and that Hans Holzer



became an unwilling pawn in a bizarre game of paranormal posturing.

Pawn or not, what are we to think of Holzer's claims of the Amityville home being inhabited by the angry spirit of a Native American Indian? It's hard to say. On the one hand, Holzer's work at Amityville doesn't vary much from his standard way of going about his ghostly business, right down to his use of medium Ethel Myers. So it would stand to reason that if you believe Holzer's claims on all the other cases he was associated with, his stance on Amityville would be accurate, as well. But for me, there's one final twist to all this that leaves me scratching my head.

Holzer published his findings on Amityville in the 1979 book, *Murder In Amityville*. The book focused on Ronnie DeFeo and brought up the theory that he had murdered his entire family after being possessed by the spirit of the Native American Indian, who was basically angered over having settlers living over his final resting place. Fair enough. But for reasons known only to Holzer, he chose to follow up *Murder In Amityville* with not

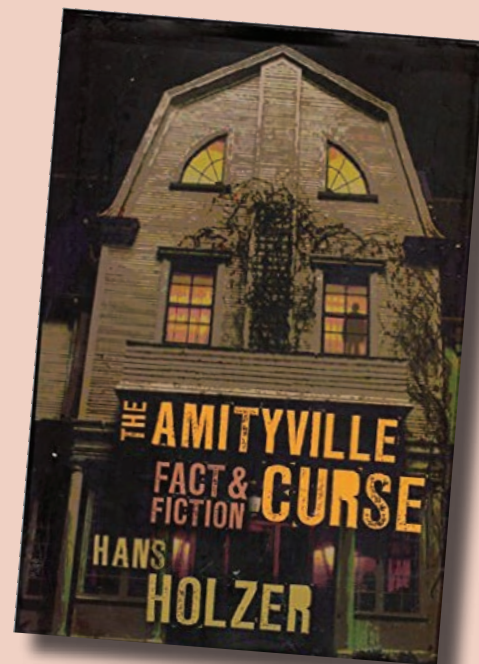
(continued on page 9.)

# HANS HOLZER AND THE AMITYVILLE HORROR CONT.

one, but two works of fiction about the Amityville home. That's right, fiction!

Holzer started with *The Amityville Curse* in 1981 and followed that up in 1985 with *The Secret Of Amityville*. Why Holzer didn't see that publishing two works of fiction about a house he was claiming really was haunted would muddy the waters and call his "true" claims into question is anyone's guess. Some say the books were nothing more than a cash grab and that Holzer simply didn't care. As someone who had a decades-long respect for the man, I keep hoping that wasn't the case. But I will admit that, sadly, it does seem to be the most logical explanation.

All of this does nothing to diminish Holzer's impact on the Amityville mythos. Real, imagined, or just plain invented, Holzer's statements on the Ocean Avenue home have been used as the basis for numerous books and documentaries about the case. They've even made their way into several of the Amityville movies, including the 2005 remake of 1979's *The Amityville Horror*. It all becomes very confusing, which seems appropriate since nothing associated with the house on Ocean Avenue is ever really what it seems to be.



## REVIEW: THE WILLOUGHBY GHOST WALK (WILLOUGHBY, OH)



Samantha

Whenever October rolls around, I start looking for all of the fun things to do this time of year—corn mazes, hayrides, haunted houses, and ghost tours. One ghost tour I've always been curious about is

the Willoughby Ghost Walk in Willoughby, Ohio. I finally got tickets for the 8 p.m. walk on Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, which was cold and very windy. I'm thankful it wasn't raining, too! Accompanying me was my friend and coworker Ginny. While I've been on countless ghost tours throughout the states, this was Ginny's first taste of the paranormal.

The tour began in the Willoughby Masonic Building, in which people have experienced spirit lights, knocking sounds, and a "wailing woman" in the basement. Our tour guides were Angela and Cathy, who said "Stuff happens in this building all the time."

Other stops during this two and a half hour tour included Arabica (footsteps are heard after hours), several small shops (shadow figures, cold breezes, touched by unseen hands, weird feelings and sounds), a bank, and the Willoughby Brewing Company

(where Ginny experienced some awesome mac & cheese, and I tried a delicious "Brewdog"). Supposedly, the Brewing Company had once been a machine shop, where a man was found hanging after the shop closed. Later, when the Brewing Company took over, skeletal remains were found where they were digging the patio, and a painting they had commissioned was delivered with a hanging man depicted in an upper window. No, they didn't order it that way. Unfortunately (or conveniently), the painting is no longer on display.

Another stop on the tour was the Willoughby Coal Supply Company. It had originally been a flour mill, and in 1947, a man named Don Norris was found dead outside the front door, seemingly beaten to death. Since his money wasn't taken (and since there was a strong Mafia presence in Willoughby at the time), it appeared to be murder and not a robbery. Could his ghost be haunting Willoughby Coal to this day? Surprisingly, Cathy's not convinced. "I've not really sensed him." Other people claim to have sensed other spirits there, including someone named Henry, Doc, a brothel girl, and a smelly dog named Yukon who was killed by a train in the 1970s. And, of course, people see faces in windows, shadow figures, and they hear sounds like footsteps when no one's around.

One of our last stops was inside the local cemetery to see the grave of "The Girl in



Blue," who was killed by a train and left unidentified and unclaimed for years. Someone later came forward and identified her as his sister, but the fact that it took so long was quite a sad story.

All in all, the Willoughby Ghost Walk was what I expected—nuggets of history wrapped in a veil of ghost story and urban legend. It was entertaining and a little macabre (there's a creepy story about grave robbing and dismemberment that you won't want to miss!), and I'd say it was worth the \$14 ticket price. In Ginny's words, "That was a lot of fun!"

# WHAT A STRANGE AND SPOOKY FALL IT WAS!



Amazing. Simply amazing. We can't think of any other word to describe our strange and spooky fall tour we embarked on this past month.

Having basically taken off last year, we were a bit unsure if you guys still wanted to come out and hang with us. Well, that question was answered almost off the bat with presentations and appearances selling out almost as soon as tickets were made available.

The final numbers are still being tallied, but as of right now, over 1,200 of you took time out of your busy schedules to come hang out with us. Not only that, but you brought ghost stories to share and some of you even brought photos for us to check out! Of course, nothing compared to the fact that, for some of you, this was your second, third, or in one case, tenth Ghosts of Ohio-related event you attended.

To say all of us here at The Ghosts of Ohio are incredibly grateful would be an understatement. "Humbled" is probably a better word. To look out over a packed house and know that people are there because they enjoy and support what you're doing gives us all a feeling that is almost indescribable. It may sound like a cliché, but here at The Ghosts of Ohio, we firmly believe that we have the best fans out there!

So from the bottom of our ghostly hearts, thank you to each and every one of you who came out to see us!





## GOT A SCARY STORY TO TELL?

Have you had a ghostly encounter in Ohio? Want to see it featured in a future issue of The Ghosts of Ohio Newsletter? Then here's all you have to do:

Just write down your story and send it to [info@ghostsofohio.org](mailto:info@ghostsofohio.org) with the subject line "Newsletter Ghost Story." Be sure to also include your name as you'd like it to appear with the story. We'll take it from there and send you out an email letting you know which issue it is going to appear in. That way, you can get all your friends to sign up for the newsletter so they can see how famous you are!



*Coming in the  
December Newsletter*

Holiday Scares

The Legend of Krampus

A Merry Scary  
Christmas With  
The Ghosts Of Ohio



### Investigations & Consultations

The Ghosts of Ohio have begun scheduling investigations for 2016. If you or someone you know is experiencing something unexplained in a home or place of business, contact us at [info@ghostsofohio.org](mailto:info@ghostsofohio.org) or visit our website to fill out an investigation request. All investigations are offered free of charge, and confidentiality and discretion are assured.

Not sure if you want or need an investigation? The Ghosts of Ohio also offers consultations. Let us sit down with you to discuss your current situation and what help we may be able to offer. For more information, please visit <http://ghostsofohio.org/services/investigations.html>.

### Interact with The Ghosts of Ohio

In addition to our website, here are a couple of places where you can find The Ghosts of Ohio lurking online:

 FACEBOOK  
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/Columbus-OH/The-Ghosts-of-Ohio/60704381381?ref=mf>

 TWITTER  
<http://twitter.com/ghostsofohio>

### Administration

The Ghosts of Ohio Newsletter is a free, bimonthly email newsletter. To subscribe, unsubscribe, or change your email address, please visit <http://mailman.ghostsofohio.org/mailman/listinfo/ghostsofohio>. Please do not send vacation notices or other auto-responses to us, as we may unsubscribe you.

The Ghosts of Ohio collects your name and email address for the purpose of sending this mailing. We will never share your name or email address with advertisers, vendors, or any third party, unless required by law. The Ghosts of Ohio will never sell, trade, or rent your personal information.

For more information, please visit us online at [www.ghostsofohio.org](http://www.ghostsofohio.org).

**NEWSLETTER STAFF:** Editor-In-Chief: James Willis   Copy Chief: Kathy Boiarski   Designer: Stephanie Willis  
Contributing Authors: Kathy Boiarski, Wendy Cywinski, Samantha Nicholson, Rick Tarantelli, and James Willis