



Smith Island TIMES

Now by great marshes wrapt in mist.
Or past some river's mouth,
Throughout the long, still autumn day
Wild birds are flying south.
— Wilfred Campbell

OCTOBER 2000

T.K. Marsh Editor

MORE SPOOKY STORIES FROM SMITH ISLAND

By Jennings Evans

Every year, in the waning days of October, when the weather begins to cool, and the long nights of darkness, over-take us here on the island; I find myself writing stories that have a sort-a spooky twist to them. I guess, it may be because the day of Allhallows, or Halloween is celebrated at the end of October, that these kind of stories seem to be more readily accepted by our readers.

Some of these stories, were passed down to us kids by many of our older people, who seemed to enjoy watching the shocked look on our faces, as they related the ghostly tales in great detail, as we cringed with fear.

Many of these ghost stories never had any logical explanations as to what caused a ghost-like form to suddenly appear on the edge of marshes, or standing by a spooky old pine tree. Most victims of ghost like sightings, never tarried around long to find out, where it came from either; Because they "took out" for dear life, running down the road toward their home, and almost knocked the door down, trying to quickly get back inside.

Back in the 1930s old Dr. Wm. Stout thought that islanders seeing all these ghosts had a "screw loose." Then one summer night, when the old doctor was walking across a spooky ole foot bridge toward his home across Doctor's Gut, he saw one himself, rising out of the marsh. He said, "My thoughts about apparitions, and the "whacky" islanders that were seeing them quickly changed, when I was suddenly confronted with a misty form in the marsh near the bridge."

Dr. Stout had no choice, but to stand there on the bridge, and watch its movements. After studying the mysterious form for a few seconds, the doctor said, "It had all the appearances of a faceless person, untill it began to disintegrate like wind blown smoke." He said, "It disappeared right in front of my eyes leading me to beleive it was some type of marsh gas that sometimes emitted from the salt marshes." I hope he was right!

There were many other ways to be frightened by strange happenings in those days before electricity and street lights got here on the island in August of 1949. Without lighted roads and lanes, ones imagination could run away with you....Especially, after an evening of story telling that the old time watermen used to spin at any of the five general stores, that were on North End (Ewell) at that time.

I remember as a teenager, coming from the "Big Store" (which is located "down the Field" at Ewell) on one dark evening after listening to some of the older men. The topic that night was about the death of Alex Evans, who was found dead inside his blacksmith shop about a month and a half before, on March 1, 1949.

As I continued walking up the road (Caleb Jones Road) I kept thinking about that tragic night, and how Alex died. It was a very cold stormy night and Alex, (who was a crewman aboard the oyster dredge boat Ruby G. Ford at the time) decided to spend that night in his blacksmith shop located on Levins Creek, very close to where the Harborside restaurant is today. No one knew exactly what happened, but it was beleived that Alex got chilly sometime during the night as the northwest wind breezed up 35 or 40 miles, and the wind chill plunged down in the teens.

It was apparent that in an effort to keep warm, he fired up the hot coals of his blacksmith forge, and tried to warm himself. But in turning his back towards the hot forge, lost his balance, and fell on the red hot coals, catching the back of his heavy coat on fire.

Being unable to get his coat off quickly, he may have fell to the cement floor backward, in an effort to smother the flames. But whatever happened, that's the way he was found the next morning face up, but dead, at age 44.

It must've been the tragic manner in which Alex died, that made his death linger in the minds of many islanders living at North End (Ewell) for such a long time after his death on March 1st, 1949. After all, it would be five more months before Smith Island would be finally wired up with electricity by the Rural Electricity Administration (REA), and one frightened man had already become a casualty, when he fell into a wheel barrow one night and broke two ribs, trying to escape what he thought to be the ghost of Alex.

And now here I was, a flighty teenager about a month and a half later walking up from the "Big Store" and on the road that would soon bring me abreast the old blacksmith shop where Alex died. I considered myself to be a brave young man in those days. I had taken a part in contriving quite a few ghosts to scare other people; Besides, with a little help from my teenage friends, we became involved with the "Night Flight of the Great Kite, with the mysterious Light" that almost got us runned off the island in 1946.

I wish I had some of those friends walking along with me, that evening as I approached the vacant field, with a narrow path that led to the water-front where Alex's blacksmith shop stood in the shadows. I wasn't feeling too brave that evening, because I decided that I wouldn't even look in the direction of the blacksmith shop, which would be difficult to see as the evening grew darker anyway.

But suddenly, I was forced to look in that direction, as I heard what sounded like double doors closing in front of Alex's shop, and in the darkness a dark looking figure began walking up the path from the shop towards me. "Good Lord!" I thought, "He looks exactly like Alex, with his soiled looking blacksmith over-alls." My mind panicked for a moment; "That's got to be Alex's ghost, because theres no other explanation for it." And yet, I didn't want to take off in a run because if it was human, I would've felt like a fool. But the closer he came, the more he looked like Alex, in the darkness. I stood still in my tracks, hoping to identify his face, as the figure was then only about 30 feet from where I stood, and still walking towards me. He did appear to be somewhat taller than Alex, as he came closer, and closer.

However, his soiled cap, was shading his face in the darkness, and I decided, "Alex or no Alex, He was too close for comfort, it was time to move." I strung myself out in a running position, and was getting set to leave nothing but a "Blue Streak" when the ghost said, "Don't Run, its just me!" "Just who?" I thought. "Its me Lora Whitelock!" "WOW!" what a relief, Capt. Lora, the best machinist on Smith Island. He said, "I didn't know who you were either, but I knew what you were thinking, Alex's Back!" Capt. Lora said he was intrested in buying Alex's shop, and was down there looking it over.. Later on, he did buy the blacksmith shop, and used it for a machine shop. That explained the soiled over-alls that he was wearing that evening. He was a machinist, he worked on engines.





There seemed to be more mysterious sightings on the island, back in the days, before we had street lights. Perhaps imagination played a big part, in what we islanders thought, we were seeing. However, there were some strange occurrences, that required a really brave person with enough nerve to find the source of some eerie situations, that just seemed to happen more often in the old days.

Myrtle Evans, mother of Frances, Mina, and Lula, was one of those courageous persons, that wasn't afraid of the devil. She was born in 1901 across "Doctors Gut" close to the Bay. About 1920, her father Capt. Major Evans moved his entire family of 12, house and all, on the lot across from the Ewell Methodist Church, which is now vacant, and owned by the Smith Island Museum. Shortly after the family moved, Miss Myrtle married Capt. Willis Evans of Ewell, and a few years later, they were able to build a home, (where Tim Marshall Sr. lives today).

Capt. Willis was the owner of the bugeye "Verdonia" in which he dredged for oysters in the wintertime, but in later years he got rid of the old bugeye, and bought the oyster buy-boat "Julia V. Davenport." He spent most of his time in the winter, away from home buying oysters in the Potomac River, and on the Chesapeake Bay. Mrs. Myrtle was at home during the winter months taking care of her three daughters.

On one particular night, in the early 1930s Myrtle's sister-in-law and next door neighbor Nannie Mae Evans came running from across the way. She was all excited, and appeared to be frightened by something. She hurried into Mrs. Myrtle's house, out of breath, and told her that there was the brightest light that she ever saw shining from Myrtle's bedroom windows. The biggest fear in those days was seeing or hearing a token, which was a sign of someone's death in the community.

Any unusual sighting, or strange noises (like falling lumber, in the night) was something that no one wanted to encounter... And to Nanny Mae, this bright glow from Myrtle's upstairs bedroom was something fearful, that needed to be explained. She asked Myrtle if she had some kind of lamp lit upstairs. "No, All I've got is a little bedroom lamp up there but its not lit" Myrtle said. Nanny Mae said, "Well, come on, lets go outdoors, and you will see what I mean!" So the two ladies went outside in Myrtle's yard, and sure enough, the mysterious glow had illuminated her entire bedroom. "Well, That beats anything, I've ever seen" Mrs. Myrtle said. "I've got to go up there and see what that is," She said.

"Nanny Mae, Do you want to go upstairs with me?" "No, my Lord," Nanny Mae said. "And I don't know if you ought to go either!" Mrs. Myrtle replied, "Well, I've got to go up there sometime tonight, so I just as well go now." Nanny Mae said, "Well, you've got more nerve then I have, and you better be careful, because I don't know what that is up there!" Undaunted by the fear of the unknown, Myrtle went back into her house, and began to fearlessly climb the stair steps that led to her bedroom door. She could see the bright light glow from her bedroom, shining through a small crack beneath the bedroom door.

What would she see, when she opened that door? Would it reveal a ghostly scene,, or worse yet, a sign of someones death? She would soon find out, as her hand gripped the porcelain door-knob of the bedroom door... She suddenly pulled the door open... "WOW!" Everything in the the bedroom was shining like a silver dollar... And what did Myrtle discover was the source of this heavenly glow? A large mirror atop the bureau suite was reflecting the bright moonlight from a full moon shining directly into the mirror, through an upstairs window, to the ground below.



Unfortunately, this wasn't the last time that Mrs. Myrtle's courage would be tested, and again it would occur in her own home. According to her daughters Frances Kitching, and Lula Marshall, on another night when Capt. Willis was up the Bay buying oysters, Mrs. Myrtle, and her 3 daughters were sleeping in their upstairs bedrooms.

Suddenly, the girls were awakened by the sound of keys being played on their piano, down in the parlor below. The very thought of someone being downstairs trying to play their piano in the dark, was frightening to the girls. Yet, knowing full-well that in those days no one would dare to enter someone's home at that time of night (even as a joke), caused them to worry that something "SINISTER" was in the parlor "Plinking" and "Plunking" on their piano.

The terrified daughters woke up their mother Myrtle, who was asleep in her bedroom, and told her about the disturbing piano sounds that they heard coming from the parlor below. Mrs. Myrtle listened for a moment or two, and sure enough the "Plinking" and "Plunking" on the piano continued. Not wanting to alarm or disturb whatever creature it was creating the uncanny piano sounds, Mrs. Myrtle quickly picked up her bedside flashlight, and crept softly down the dark stairsteps.

Electing not to use the flashlight, until she had to, she crept and felt her way through the living room, and up to the parlor door. The parlor door was cracked open slightly with sounds of the eerie piano keys coming through loud and clear. Myrtle could see through the darkened parlor door the silhouette of the piano, but couldn't see who was sitting on the piano seat. Yet, the "Plinking" and the "plunking" was still ringing out in the darkness.

Finally, the moment of truth had arrived, and Myrtle knew that she had to open wide the parlor door, and to quickly shine her flashlight beam on the piano seat. She took a deep breath and forcefully opened the door, throwing her flashlight beam on the piano stool.... There was no one there, the stool was EMPTY.... And then, she quickly aimed the flashlight beam on the keys of the piano. Its beam picked up something even scarier.... A startled RAT was running across the piano keys, and for a brief moment, looked right straight into the beam of the flashlight, from his musical perch on the piano keys.

It took the rat a second or two to regain its senses, and then it leaped from the piano, into one of the dark corners of the parlor, and to the relief of Mr. Myrtle and her 3 daughters, never returned for an encore performance, and was never seen, or heard from again.

Foot note to this story:

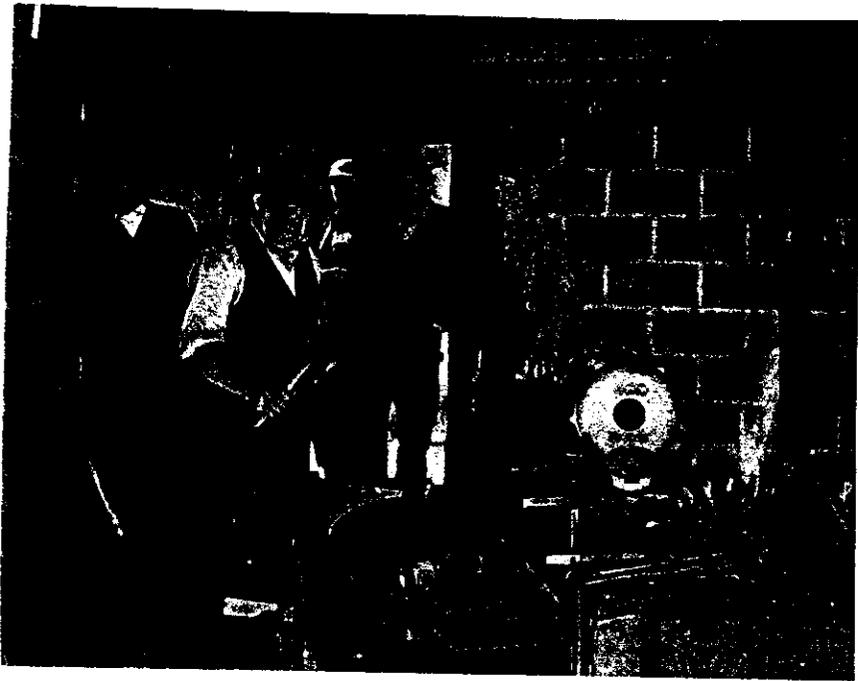
While gathering information for the stories you've just read about Mrs. Myrtle Evans Marshall, I had a telephone conversation with her youngest daughter, Lula Marshall... I asked Lula, if there was ever a time in her mother's life where she became frightened. And to my surprise, Lula said, Yes!

Lula said, "Back in the 1940s Myrtle, and Capt. Willis, became the sextons of the new Ewell United Methodist Church, that was dedicated on July 25, 1940... The same church that stands today." She said, "One day when her mother was up in the church choir-loft alone, cleaning chairs, she heard a loud noise coming from the back of the church sanctuary... And when she turned around to look, all four doors in the rear of the church had swung open. With no one else, in the church, two sets of double doors all swung wide open at the same time." Lula said, "It unnerved her mother so bad, that she resigned her job, as sexton of the church."

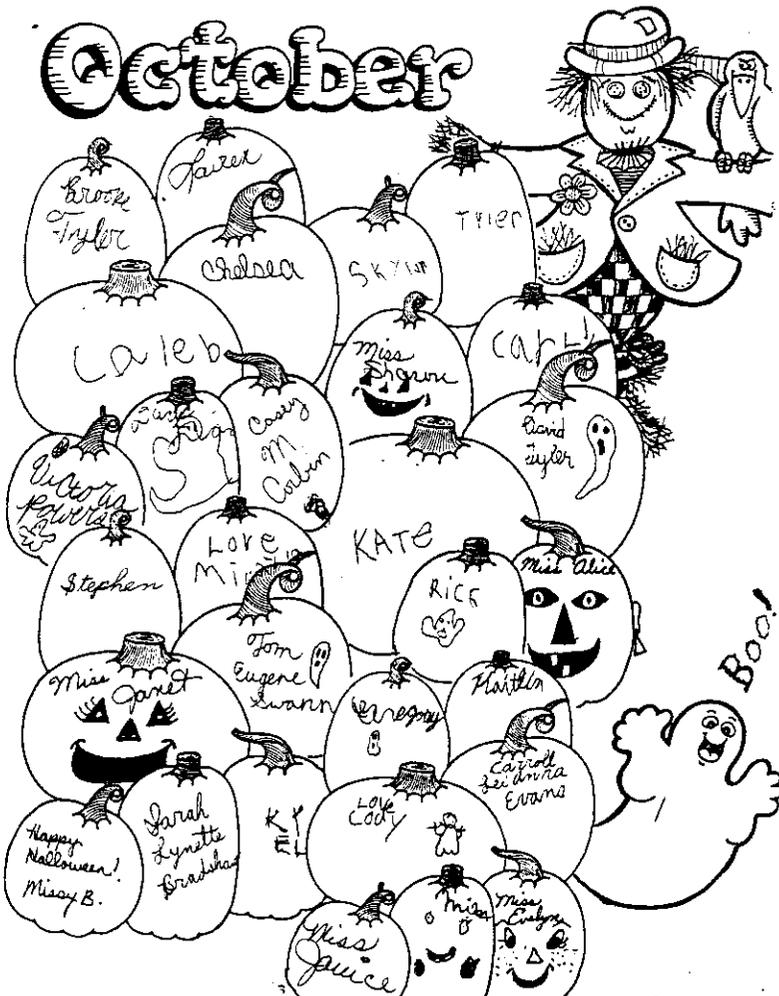


Picture Shows Inside of Alex Evans Blacksmith Shop
September, 1948

Left to Right
Mart Evans - Blacksmith Ad Venable (with Hammer)-Don Middleton (in doorway)
Edgar Brimer Sr.- Alex Evans (firing up forge)
Six months after this picture was taken, Alex died in a fire there.



October



EASTERN SHORE AUTUMN

The maple banners now are hung
Along the Chester's edge;
The Sassafras is lit with flames
Of red and golden sedge.

Alone, the pines' defiant green
Resists the golden tide:
The year is ageing night by night
Throughout the countryside.

October skies are full of ghosts,
Of memories that rush
From other autumns held and lost
Before the winter's hush.

Now comes the time of silent gray,
The months when no birds sing,
And yet we know God's autumn pledge
Will light our way to spring.

"Hello !", From Ewell School Students and Staff.

ELECTION DAY SUPPER - sponsored by Ewell Ladies Aid at the Rec. Center Tuesday. Check signs for time.

WATERMEN'S DINNER will be held at the Rec. Center Saturday Nov. 4th.

The P.T.A would like to thank everyone for the wonderful support of the HALLOWEEN SOCIAL!

I would personally like to thank everyone for the overwhelming support of the HAUNTED HOUSE held at the Rec. Saturday and Monday nights. I would also like to thank my crew for their wonderful efforts in behalf of the P.T.A.:

Jenny Evans
Jordy Marsh
Pete Narowanski
Candice Smith

Amber Swann
Tom Swann
David Tyler
Larry Marsh



A special thanks to my husband, Larry Marsh, who constructed the sets for me, and also purchased and donated all the new materials I needed this year.

RHODES POINT BINGO TONIGHT

We will be starting bingo at Rhodes Point Thursday the 2nd of November at the Community Hall at 7:00. There will be door prizes, hot dogs and sodas. Come out and win cake and prizes and have a nice evening with your friends.

***THERE WILL BE AT LEAST THREE DOOR PRIZES EACH WEEK DURING NOVEMBER!**

Rhodes Point W.S.C.S. is holding a raffle for a complete uncooked Turkey Dinner. Tickets are 3/\$1.00, see members for tickets. Drawing will be held the week before Thanksgiving.



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HAPPY 21ST BIRTHDAY
CANDICE SMITH

LOVE, MOM

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

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- 5 - TYLER G. TYLER
- 6 - JULIA TYLER
REUBEN BECKER
- 7 - CHARLIE B. EVANS
- 10 - BETTY LOU MARSHALL
DIANNA LAIRD
LEE SMITH
- 12 - TOMMY BRADSHAW
- 15 - ROOSTER SOMERS
- 16 - LECKY TYLER
DONNA JEAN LAIRD
TERRY LAIRD SR.
- 17 - WES BRADSHAW
- 20 - HOSS PARKS
ALAN SMITH JR.
MORRIS G. MARSH
TERRY SWANN MARSH
- 21 - ROLAND BRADSHAW "PAL"
- 23 - ROBIN BRADSHAW
- 26 - TAYLOR CORBIN
DENNY BRADSHAW
- 27 - KRISTEN BRADSHAW
AMY TYLER
OLDEN BRADSHAW JR.
CLARA TYLER
- 28 - ANNIE D. EVANS
- 29 - CANDICE CLARK SMITH
- 30 - KYLE TYLER
EDDIE RUSS SMITH
- 31 - EVERETTE ROSS LANDON JR.



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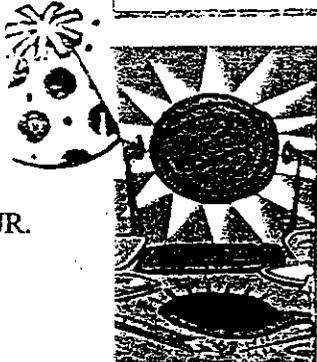


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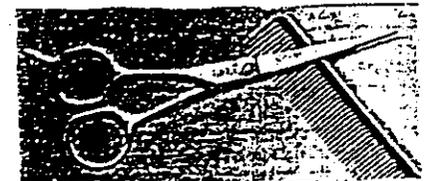
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HOWL

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DEMON

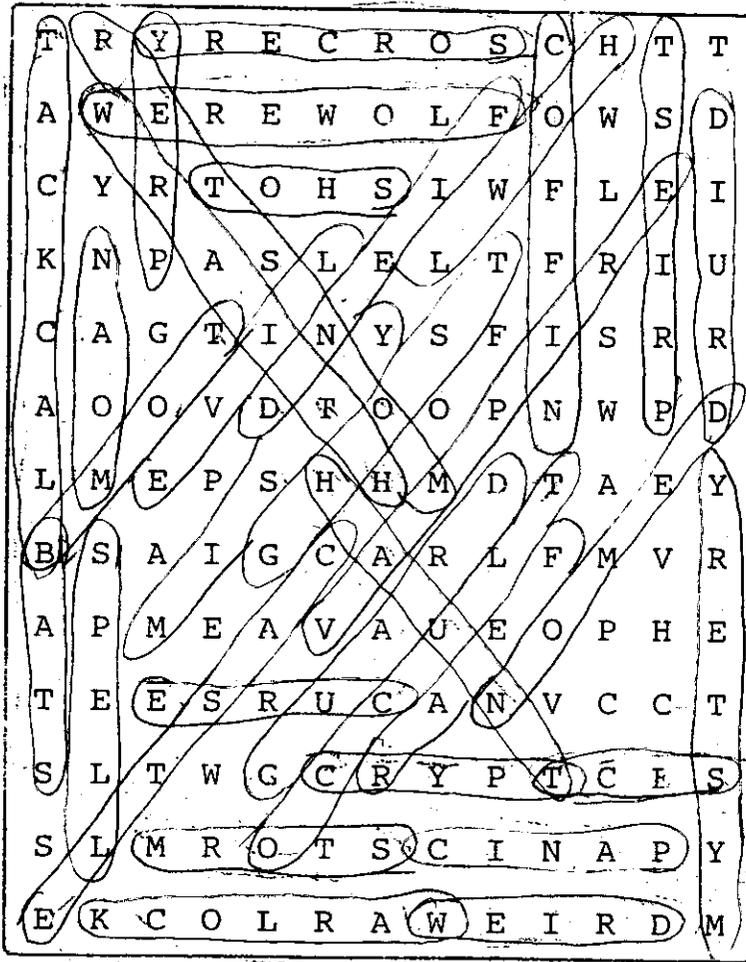
MOAN

DRUID

MONSTER

EVIL

OCCULT



PANIC

PREY

PRIEST

WARLOCK

SECT

WEIRD

SHOT

WEREWOLF

SORCERY

WRAITH

SPELL

STORM

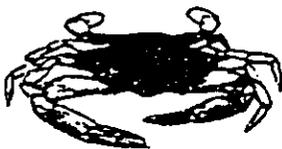
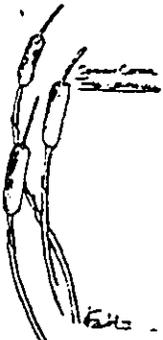
TOMB

VAMPIRE

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