

op/ed

# Columist conquers horror movies but nightmares stay

By Pete Mason

I stayed up late Saturday night and watched a horror movie. It was one of the Christopher Lee - Peter Cushing jobs. I watched the whole thing without once closing my eyes, gritting my teeth or putting my hands over my ears.

"You've come a long way, buddy," I said to myself when it was over. I patted myself on the back, went to bed and had one of the truly great nightmares of all time. I guess I haven't come as far as I thought I had.

My lack of progress in the area of fear dismays me. The fact is I can trace the problem back to its origin, to an evening many summers ago when I was ten years old.

When I was ten I was afraid of only two things, spiders and my mother. I guess you could say I was a relatively normal ten-year-old boy. That was before I met Jumbo Foster.

**Ghost stories**

Jumbo Foster was senior counselor of Cabin 3 at Mrs. Mulberry's Country Day Camp. I had been sent there as punishment for putting unpopped popcorn up the exhaust pipe of my mother's Rambler. For the first couple of days I thought it was

about the best punishment I had ever received. I was considering short-sheeting Mom the following summer so I could get sent there again. That was before Jumbo Foster started telling ghost stories.

humor

It probably wouldn't have been so bad if Jumbo had started with the mild little tales like ghost ships sailing into Casco Bay or the ghost of a pirate who guards Captain Kidd's buried treasure on Basket Island. But, oh no, Jumbo had to start with one of the biggies. Spontaneous human combustion.

**Stay near water**

"Now, this is a true story, boys. There was this lady in Freeport a few years ago and she was just sitting at the dinner table with her family one night and—voom!—she just burst into flames. There are many documented cases of this kind of thing. Scientists are at a loss to explain what causes this horrible kind of death. They call it spontaneous human combustion."

That did it. As luck would have it I'd

eaten too many helpings of pork and beans that evening and I had a terrific case of heartburn. Also as luck would have it, it was raining. I stationed myself in the cot next to the door that night so in case the burning got too bad I could leap out and dive into the nearest puddle. For months afterwards I made it a point never to wander too far from water.

**Things unholy**

That was the beginning. Occasionally, right into my late teen years, other incidents occurred which reinforced my unnatural fears of all things unholy.

One night, when I was 13, I returned home from a horror triple feature (I was a masochist then too) to be greeted with a note tacked on the back door informing me that the family was visiting relatives and wouldn't be back until very late.

I turned on every light in the house and sat in the living room reading comic books. I was doing my best to forget the unspeakable terrors I had viewed on the silver screen that day when outside it began to thunder and lightning. Then the lights went out.

**Dark night**

It's bad enough to be 13 years old, sitting in the dark in the middle of an empty house, during a thunderstorm, after having watched the Creature from the Black Lagoon tear the arms off 25 people, the Blob eat 400 people, and the Thing suck the brains out of 1,000 people. It's even worse to be in the aforementioned situation and

have the toilet flush—all by itself! It took my family two hours to talk me out from behind the couch.

Then there was the Tinger incident. I went to a late show with my friend Bobby. The movie was called *The Tinger*. It was about a scientist who discovers that when a person is really frightened and is unable to release his or her fear by screaming, a disgusting, lobster-like animal grows on the spinal chord. The scientist called it a tinger.

**The tinger**

Well, to make a long story short, the filthy thing escaped and crawled around killing people left and right. When the movie was over they opened a concession booth and sold tinger buttons, little plastic things that glowed in the dark and were supposed to keep tingers away. They were doing a brisk business. I bought four of them—at a buck a shot. I went home and put them in conspicuous places all over my bedroom. Then I sat huddled in my blankets all night watching them glow. At 4:30 a.m. Bobby tapped on my bedroom window. I'd forgotten we were going to go fishing. He had to pry me off the ceiling with a crowbar.

Well, I've gotten a little better since those days. At least I can sleep now. If I could just stop the nightmares. It scares my wife to death when I leap up at three in the morning and yell, "Damn you, Jumbo Foster!"

letters

Continued from page 4

The V.F.S.A. was established as a mechanism to fund political and ideological speakers. The account, therefore, will continue to exist after the Ellsberg lecture to provide money for those programs ineligible for student fee support. No political position or ideology is endorsed by the V.F.S.A., nor are the contributing groups asked to support an individual speaker. Rather, those groups contributing have done so—with a few exceptions—in support of an open forum, not a particular speaker.

The All University Fund, Residents Hall Association, and Innocents Society contributed to the account with the understanding that they were not endorsing an individual speaker. A statement explaining their position appears on the publicity. The Faculty Convocations Committee does not usually sponsor programs, but rather, is petitioned by academic departments for funds to be used by the departments. In the case of Ellsberg's lecture, the petitioners and therefore sponsors of the event are the Departments of Political Science and History.

The need for the V.F.S.A. as a source of funding for the Talks and Topics Committee in light of the Regent's position on speakers should be apparent. It is the hope of the Talks and Topics committee that groups continue to recognize the importance of the account in the effort to provide students with an open exchange of ideas so important in a university.

J.B. Milliken  
Chairperson  
Talks and Topics Committee

**Inaccuracies corrected**

In the week and one-half that elapsed between the time that my letter was submitted and printed, I discovered that there are two inaccuracies: one my error, the other a printing error.

I spoke with a member of Kappa Sigma the day after the bonfire and was informed that the piano was stolen. This is not true—the gentleman I spoke with was mistaken. Calling the house to verify my statement, I was informed that a "couple of guys carried it out", presumably Kappa Sigma members. My statement accused no specific individual or house.

The other inaccuracy was that a Centennial sign was burned, not a Seaton Hall sign.

The other facts are true and may be verified with the various and sundry law officials connected with the incidents, as well as the residents of Piper Hall.


My point still is that the *Daily Nebraskan* should be reporting and interviewing on a wider basis than one view from each side of the incident. Such reporting leads to a biased outlook in the articles based on that reporting. I am not "gung-ho" in favor of the police department, nor am I totally anti-Greek. I would just like to read a non-biased article in the *Daily Nebraskan*.

My sincerest apologies to those individuals or houses that I have offended; it was not my intent to do so.

Jeanne Clark  
Integrated Studies  
Sophomore

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