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## Local Entertainment from THE FREDERICK NEWS-POST

### THE NEXT 72 HOURS : COVER STORY

## Ghosts, and a great meal

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By Myra Anderson  
News-Post Staff

To celebrate my 50th birthday -- to heck with dinner and a movie, how about dinner and some poltergeist?

Ghosts anyone?

Which is just what my husband and I hoped we'd encounter on a recent dining excursion and ghost investigation held one evening at the historic (circa 1788) and known-to-be haunted Charles Washington Inn of Charles Town, W.Va. Hosted by the Maryland Ghost & Spirit Association -- which is always in search of conclusive evidence of ghosts -- the event was a special gathering held at the Inn, which boasts the existence of nine spirit visitors, with one being a child.

Easily accessible from U.S. 340 West, the Inn offers guests a nostalgic walk through history. Named for Charles Washington, younger brother of first President George, the establishment is nestled between two fine old sycamore trees on West Liberty Street. Each of the three dining rooms, all with working fireplaces, are decorated with antiques and reproductions. As you enter the current brick and frame dwelling, a cozy front lounge area with fireplace awaits. As you proceed, a small back lounge area comes into view with an outside garden patio ideal for summer dining.

The main floor dining room, with elegant decor, is set off to the right and a large, open, grand stairway at the end of the hall leads upstairs to the two other dining rooms. These are separated by another hallway to an outdoor balcony.

Our group was directed to both upstairs rooms. One room we chose had originally served as a viewing room for Civil War soldiers visited by the former owner of the property at that time, Dr. Edward Tiffin. The parcel on which the original log building stood was his home and practice, and for years the site was known as the Tiffin house.

In 1987, the house was converted into the current Inn which has been operated since 1994 by Pam and Dave Villeneuve as proprietors. The evening we arrived, one could feel the expectation in the air; a room full of strangers with one goal in mind -- to sense or see a ghost! We would be discussing black holes, orbs, ectoplasm and auras -- not the usual topics at the dinner table -- except for



Photo by Travis Pratt

Stuffed mushrooms filled with the house specialty crab cakes are a popular appetizer at the Charles Washington Inn Restaurant & Lounge in Charles Town, W.Va.

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tonight.

The evening started with beverages and tossed garden salad or Caesar salad (\$3.99). Two crystal bowls arrived with a sampling of lettuces, sprinkled on top with red onions, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, shredded carrots and croutons, served with house dressing. Then, out came the small photo albums filled with color snapshots of ghostly inhabitants taken on site. The pictures depicted somewhat blurry images (perhaps faces from the past), scattered, multiple orbs -- small, circular flash-points of light, and auras (in the form of wispy blue fog) which surrounded the live subjects that were captured within the frame.

Dining orders were then taken, and out of the five select entrees offered for the evening, I opted for the 'House Specialty' Crab Cakes and Darrell chose New York Strip Steak. We enjoyed our salads as the albums were passed from table to table for viewing, commentary and critique.

Our hostesses for the evening were Pam Villeneuve, Beverly Litsinger and Laine Crosby; each with her own distinct ability of sensing and communicating with the deceased. A lot of the guests had brought along digital and movie cameras to record the evening's events. It was quite a surreal moment at times with bulbs flashing about the room and spirits being invited to join us by the ladies who were serving in the capacity of our 'spiritual guides' over a bridge of communication to the other side.

Pam, Beverly and Laine spoke of their personal experiences with paranormal phenomena. Some of the resident ghosts that haunt the Inn have names and play tricks and pranks on the guests and waitstaff. They are Mary and Katherine (mother and daughter), Jonathan (a murdered slave), Sebastian, Elizabeth, Bill and others. At such times when ghosts from other properties visit the Inn, Laine, Beverly and Pam try to help them go toward the 'white light' (the beckoning, blinding light that shines from the other side, wherein our ancestors dwell). Guests also questioned the ladies as to what the spirits might reveal to them. We learned that many are indeed fearful and afraid, some do not know they have died, others scream and describe violent deaths, and more.

Everyone was becoming acutely sensitive to just what might happen next -- Then came order up!

Placed before me were two jumbo lump crab cakes broiled to a light golden brown, topped with Imperial sauce, alongside a mixed vegetable medley of steamed zucchini, carrots and green string beans. (\$20.99); Darrell's cooked-to-order (medium well), 12-oz. aged, marbled beef came with a plump-filled, double baked potato, heaped with sour cream and butter. (\$21.99). The crab cakes were moist, smooth to the taste, with a mild seasoning that did not mask the delicate flavor of the crab. The vegetables were crisp and flavorful. The steak was juicy and filling.

As the guests were finishing their meals and sharing in their digital technology delights, orders were taken for dessert. Darrell selected chocolate mousse (\$4.95), which was layered in a large champagne-style glass; I requested a slice of raspberry cheesecake on Oreo cookie crust with coconut topping (\$4.95). Both were incredibly delicious.

Cups of hot coffee and tea on fine china were served while Beverly encircled the room with her electromagnetic field detector (sensor) that emitted high to low numerical readings of energy levels in an attempt to confirm that there were indeed entities among us. Some of the more anxious guests requested, "Check behind me!" and "What does it show?" However, there were the skeptics too, who questioned, "Is that run by batteries or spirits?" and "Why are the ghosts who haunt always from hundreds of years ago?"

I never personally felt a "chill" around me, which is a common sign to denote a presence. I was too warmed by the tasty meal and dessert among strangers who, as the evening progressed, were becoming talkative friends sharing in their own beliefs and ghost stories.

The Inn offers guests a full dining experience, with seven appetizers; soups; salads with dressings; dinner entrees of beef, veal, chicken, duck; and combination dishes that all include garden salad, rolls, honey butter, vegetable du jour and choice of rice pilaf or potato de jour. There are also seven seafood choices; options for a lighter appetite; three vegetarian dishes; and a variety of cakes, cheesecakes and pies offered for dessert.

If you're so inclined, the Inn hosts ghost talks on Tuesday evenings. You need to make reservations.

Apparitions aside, what a memorable way to mark my pivotal new age! As we departed for the evening, we signed the guest book, commenting on our fun,

festive and informative time spent among those of the living and of the hereafter.

-- Myra L. Anderson

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In Good Taste reports on an unannounced dining experience and is not meant to be a critical review.

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