

Disclaimer: The following article recently ran in a Chicago newspaper. I am forwarding it to you all because of the connection between Dr. Tim Barth and Fr. Alphonsus Trabold and Alex Tannous, who was a writer for my first magazine, Psychic World, a CBS publication. Dr. Barth mentioned this case during his presentation at the ASUP July meeting and I believe this is a good example of another person's account from the follow-up. But this is not an ASUP article and we are not suggesting anything has been checked for facts. I have left most of the more obvious spelling errors in place and I have contacted Phyllis Galde at FATE to see what they have in the files for Hinsdale, et. al. in an attempt to substantiate this information.

Rick

The Hinsdale House Haunting; One Journalists Perspective

Chicago based Journalist Roger Marsh, offers his view on the Hinsdale Case, recently discussed briefly by Dr. Tim Barth at the ASUP



Hinsdale House image taken in 1975. Roger Marsh photo.

A Pennsylvania psychic once told me about a piece of property in the southwestern piece of the state. Over a period of a hundred years, within a three mile radius of a point she had located, a ghastly number of death and agony cases had taken place.

The stories and their numbers were all amazing. There were hangings, murders, suicides, accidental deaths – you get the point. It would seem every family living in close proximity to that spot had suffered multiple tragedies in their families. She made the point that the high numbers of these tragedies in such a small space indicated that some evil lurked there.

The story got my attention, but I walked away wondering. If you could take any spot in the country and do the same calculation – going back 100 years and searching for all forms of death and agony – would there be such a disparity where you could develop – with precision – a series of points in a region where the numbers are much higher than in an average region's point?

We could give it a cool name – the tragi-meter.

I attempted only once to build a tragic-meter, choosing one Chicago street, and following reports of its tragedies, over time – only to conclude that just about every block along this highly populated north side route included multiple cases of tragedy – right there in the street mainly – if you allowed a long enough period of time. The *Tragic Lincoln Project* used cross referenced data between murders and other investigated death records from the Chicago Police Department – nicely housed online courtesy of a project with the Northwestern School of Law – and the period's daily newspaper, *Chicago Daily News*.

I could never come to any conclusion as to whether other conditions allowed for the high number of tragedies along this route other than time – like the fact that this is simply a major population area.

Chicago's Lincoln Avenue has never publically claimed it has a haunting history as a whole, but the stories strung together in one presentation do paint a particularly rough portrait of what actually occurred. Just to play it safe, you may want to avoid Lincoln and choose another path in that area. But I suspect every major boulevard in this city of 3 million has its own charming history of misfortune.

Nothing paranormal going on here. It's sadly human nature. That's why we have a judicial system and prisons.

Now on the paranormal side, are the reports just as evenly spread out – or are there hot spots where events happen at an alarmingly higher level?

Tragic Hinsdale House may be one of those locations.

This rural New York farm house sits precariously on mountain land with more than 7 acres of rolling hills. You approach only along a steep, windy, and unpaved roadway. The home's construction age and placement suggest that it may have been a stage coach stop or some kind of weigh station for travelers along what was once a rather rough cross country western route.

Multiple stories from past Hinsdale House residents and neighbors suggest that humans and their mechanical friends are just not necessarily welcome on that property. Stories are told of car accidents, bizarre deaths, injuries, hangings, murders, and a strong dose of apparitions, poltergeist activity, and a general litany of both visual and sound bytes from the paranormal side that would make Rod Serling green with envy.

While the history of odd occurrences seems to go back to the early settler days, the modern day account



begins with Clara Miller and her incredible period of daring, exploration, and survival of the property. Clara's book – *Echoes of a Haunting: A House in the Country* – is a comforting read from the wife and mother's point of view of a family's human experience in rural 1970s defending themselves against both poverty and the supernatural. In the end, they walked away from the property with their own tragic history, but Clara's book colorfully shows off the family's resilience and love in a pioneering structure as well as revealing how the supernatural manipulated their behaviors. The afterword also shows us that Clara and her family got on with their lives and have had quite a successful and healthy run.

Local site historian Michael Rambacher is on board, property permissions have been secured from its

current owners, and regional actors are in place to play character parts for the exorcism scene. The crew is coming from Chicago, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

My first ghost hunting expedition had taken me up a dark and windy mountain road in rural New York state - heading to my destination for the stroke of midnight. Sounds like a sappy mystery novel, huh?

Twenty-first century ghost hunting has reached a mainstream popularity we have not seen before - at least not in my lifetime. With most of the network television shows, I seem to be more interested in the site's architecture than in anything ghostly they capture on film - but I think tracking and recording ghosts is more complicated than quick sound bytes.

So I am constantly taking the time to access everything I experience to make sure it's anomalous and isn't something we mold to make fit what we hope to find. And next we have that evil "coincidence" that rears its ugly head once in a while. The trouble, for me, with coincidence - is that if you have enough of them, rapidly, in a row - then I say it isn't coincidence - it's anomalous. But, that's just my opinion.

Are they watching us?

In my very first haunted house investigation, as a freshman journalism student, I did my homework. I attended a lecture given by a Franciscan priest who claimed to have performed an exorcism in a nearby home to rid a teenager of an evil spirit. Within his mountain of investigation evidence leading up to the exorcism, he told us that it appeared as though some kind of "force" was operating from the house. This "force," he said, seemed to know who was coming to investigate it - and it would take control of and wreck your automobile. In fact, he said, two automobiles used on two different investigations had trouble at the site, and were completely destroyed within seven days of the investigation.

Coincidence? Well, I thought, we only have two cases and I guess one would assume that both cars being completely destroyed within seven days would be a coincidence. If the numbers were, say, 175, I might hold this as a fact. But two, I'm not there yet. But it did buy into my theory that if we are looking for "them," wouldn't you think some of them are watching us?

Armed with the basic information about the house, its occupants, the hauntings, and a mysterious exorcism, my second homework trek took me to the woman who led the second investigation - after the priest. Her car had crashed during the investigation and was later destroyed within seven days. The story going around campus was that "something" had taken control of her car that night and caused the accident - a similar story told by the priest.

It was late on a Saturday night, there was a full moon, and I was determined to arrive at the alleged haunted house at midnight. I guess I did that for effect - arriving at midnight - but it just seemed like the right thing to do in a ghost hunting expedition. But I did not have anything close to clear directions. My quest took me to the campus rathskeller where I knew the woman was out with friends. I approached her in the bar and asked for a few minutes to discuss my trip to this house. She immediately asked me to step outside to discuss the situation.

Outside Hickey Memorial Dining Hall we stood by a statue of the Virgin Mary - important later in the story where you will see four sniveling teenagers sorting out what to do with an apparently haunted brick.

During this conversation outside, the woman cried and pleaded with us not to go - pointing out all of the hazards previous investigations had encountered. But once she saw that we were not going to give up, she drew us a fair map to the location.

With that map, we were out of there. The "we" in this equation were four guys. Myself, close friend Bob, - both freshman; Dennis, who was a high school senior visiting the school; and a freshman who lived in town whose name I do not recall. Bob's 1968 Plymouth Valiant with a three speed on the column was our vehicle of choice - and I was elected driver.

We made it down New York Route 17 away from St. Bonaventure University near Olean to our exit and found the mountain road that would lead us to the house. Two major anomalous events would take place before we ever laid eyes on the house. We would see and experience the "ghost car" that Father Alphonse Trabold had talked about in his lecture - and "something" would take control of our car and cause an accident on a dark and secluded mountain road that we would never forget.

The story began with a lecture by a Franciscan priest, his description of a local exorcism he performed, tales of two former investigation teams having their cars "controlled" by some unknown force, the car destroyed within seven days - leading to four teenaged students driving in the dark to what might be a haunted destination.

The really scary stuff isn't supposed to happen until you get inside the haunted house, but our "haunted" journey started well before we reached that final destination. Did I just say "final destination?"

I was driving friend Bob's 1968 Plymouth Valiant with a three speed on the column - and guided by a map in part created by the leader of the last investigation team. The map got us on the correct two-lane unpaved road on the top of a hilly area. The key was recognizing two S-curves in the roadway, where the driveway, we were told, ran off of the right side of the road during the second S-curve.



PHOTO: The late Fr. Alphonse Trabold once gave annual lectures on the Hinsdale House to packed audiences at St. Bonaventure University. His lecture there in the fall of 1974 inspired me to investigate the Hinsdale House.

It was nearly midnight this Saturday night and without too much trouble, we believed we easily found the double S-curve stretch of dirt road - but could see no driveway, nor any home looming nearby. It seemed particularly lonely up there that night, with no other cars around us. When we could not locate the driveway, considering that we might have mistaken the double S-curves, we continued down the road in search of the house. The next stretch of road was a straight run for about one mile before ending at a "T" - where you either had to turn left or right. We were stumped. The only thought was to go back and retrace our path, study the map, and hope to get lucky.

Ghost Car

I turned the car around and went back, turning around again in the dark, and coming back toward the original double S-curve, in search of the driveway. This task was completed several times as we were not about to give up. But on one of our trips through the double S-curves, we came upon something we thought was unusual. Along the bend of the second curve, there in the dark along the right side of the road, was a car with its headlights on facing the same direction we were.

Now the site of another car might not seem unusual, but we had been on top of this mountain for some time without spotting a single vehicle, and we were not sure how this particular sedan got past us. As I

approached the car, I decided to simply pull up behind the vehicle and stop. The four of us sat there looking at the car through our front windshield. What we saw was a car nearly identical to the one we were driving - a dark, four-door 1968 Plymouth Valiant, or possibly its sister vehicle, the Dodge Dart. In the front seat were two male occupants, who appeared to us to be rather rigid, meaning they did not move at all - no turning heads - no motion at all. While memories of the priest describing this very vehicle was still in our heads, with two male occupants sitting very rigidly, it was silly to consider this huge chunk of metal and bolts to be a "ghost car." It was very real and spewing fumes from its exhaust.

Ghost Car Disappears

Then in one quick moment, this car bolted forward onto the dirt road and headed away from us. I instinctly put our car in gear and began chase. The vehicle we were following picked up speed quickly and was throwing so much dust behind it that at one point we could only make out the car's red tail lights. But we kept pace. And then a most disturbing thing happened - the car, and the dust - simply disappeared - just like the priest said would happen if you gave chase. We actually drove through the dust cloud as if we had encountered a defined ending - we were suddenly surrounded by a crisp, clear piece of night air again - and looking ahead down the road - no car. We pulled over to assess the situation.

First, we reasoned that had the car maintained its speed on this straight stretch of road, the dust would have continued. The only possibility was that the car slowed down and ditched us on a turn. So we looked for the turn - but we found none. When we returned to the site the following day during daylight, we additionally discovered that this piece of roadway had ditches on both sides of the road that a normal vehicle could not handle - and in fact - the area on both sides of the road was covered with a thick woods that an automobile could not get through even if they somehow managed driving through the ditch.

Clues at the Scene

At that point, I decided to return to the spot where the car was originally parked to look for clues. I pulled into the space and got out of the car with my map. And then it all came together. There it was - right in front of me. The driveway, at this very point, did jut off of the right side of the road, but it took an immediate dip, which made it hard to see in the dark, especially with the large amount of plant growth that had taken over the area. The "ghost" car had been apparently "marking" the spot. Back in the car, not yet understanding how a car could disappear right in front of us, I was excited to see this allegedly haunted house.

I put the car in first gear and turned down the driveway, but then the second seemingly anomalous event happened. The car suddenly, on the property, had a mind of its own. As the driver, I felt as though I had lost control of both the steering and the acceleration. The car moved only a few short feet along the steep driveway, and quickly made a right turn and sent us moving over an embankment. We quickly got out of the car and looked at the mess we were in. I got back behind the wheel, and my three friends, in the dark, pushed the car back up onto the driveway. It was a rather exciting moment. Everyone was screaming. This is a Stephen King moment. I know I was yelling about how something had taken control of the car - and my friends were screaming about wanting to get out of there.

Mad Man Behind the Wheel

Safely back in the car on the driveway, I again put the car in gear and headed down the driveway - only to discover my friends thought I was a mad man. They shouted, cussed, and swore about how a "ghost" car and our "uncontrolled" car was enough for them - time to go home. I countered that this was the reason we came here in the first place and that I was not going home without a full confrontation with the "force." I moved toward the house. My friends continued screaming the entire length of the windy

driveway until our headlights shown on the structure that was once a stage coach stop - now empty.

The shouting and begging was too much. I gave in. But turning around somehow seemed like a scary thing to do, so close to the house - so I simply put the car in reverse and began to back out. But a funny thing happened - the car's backup lights failed to work - so my two friends sitting in the back seat nervously opened their doors and helped to guide me - until we were back on the mountain road.

Now it was Bob's car - and he was a bit nervous about so many things happening to his vehicle - so he asked me to stop the car. I did. Then he asked me to put the car in reverse - and this time - on the main road - the backup lights came on. That was enough for me, well, for all of us. We left the area - enough ghostly investigations for one night. Maybe the Rathskeller was still open.

Meeting with Priest

We later met with the priest - who confirmed that other witnesses at this home had encountered the exact same things that we did - the disappearing car, something taking control of our car, and some "force" screwing with the car's automation. Now just one thing - would our car survive the seven-day test - where other vehicles had been destroyed?

Now this is the part of the story where you think everything is going to go back to normal - we all went home and everything was okay. Not the case.

A big piece of the end of this story is that my friend Bob had a trip to his hometown scheduled the following weekend. He drove. Two odd or tragic things happened. First, he said that something was not right with his vehicle from that investigation night. Something was odd with his car. In his hometown, he took the car to a mechanic and described what was wrong. After an inspection, the mechanic said that all six of his transmission bolts had been unscrewed down to the last thread. The mechanic told him that he had seen one or two of these bolts come loose, but never all six. The following day, Bob was driving through his hometown and got into an accident - broadsided at an intersection - and his vehicle was totalled, well, as the story goes - was completely destroyed within seven days. Sounds like a curse.

The Hinsdale House haunting had received a fair amount of press before I ever arrived on the scene - especially media from nearby Buffalo. The events leading up to the 1973 exorcism there were well known in that region.

As a college student, I listened to the campus lecture by Fr. Alphonsus Trabold, and walked away from several attempts by people to get me to stay away from the secluded place. I soon encountered first hand how a "force" was able to take control of the car I was driving, manipulate the steering and accelerator and cause an accident. The "force" also seemingly caused the back-up lights to not work on the property. We also encountered the "ghost car" that both the family and Fr. Trabold described - watching it disappear in a fog of dust. That midnight excursion into the unknown ended when my three companions refused to follow me into the home - and we returned to campus.

Follow-up investigation

The following day, though, we set out again in daylight to investigate further.

We first retraced our path from the driveway - where we first encountered the "ghost car" - to the point where the car disappeared. The first part of that roadway was discounted, because we knew we could still see the car's tail lights through the dust that the car was throwing behind it. We moved to a point in the road where we apparently lost the car and drove slowly to the spot where the dust seemed to end as

though you had driven through a brick wall.

This short piece of roadway was searched for any driveway jutting off of the road - any means of escape for our "ghost car." And what we found were ditches on both sides of the road, impassable for a car, and a thick woods on both sides of the road. We could not figure out how this huge piece of metal and bolts and rubber had simply vanished in front of us - so we returned to the house.

I drove my own car this day - a 1975 Datsun B210 - with the same group from the previous night. I first photographed the home from the outside, and then we entered through a back door. Based on our experiences the night before, I have to say I was a little cautious entering this home even on a bright sunny day, and moved slowly from one room to the other. And nothing happened. It just felt like an old home with no traces of the paranormal.

Attic crawl space

Some of the anomalous activity that the family reported here in the early 1970s came from a crawl space area accessed from the second floor. We moved to that area, opened the door and looked in. The family had reported hearing odd sounds from this spot during the night. When the father and a son investigated, they discovered that the piece of the brick chimney that connects a first floor fireplace to the roof, had been disassembled - brick by brick - and the bricks piled neatly nearby. The story was told that each time the family attempted to rebuild the chimney, the sounds would come again - and again - they would find the chimney in this piece of the house disassembled and stacked nearby.

The area did not have a floor - only beams of wood with a space between them that housed pink insulation. We could see the chimney, its missing pieces, and the stack of bricks close by. Three of us decided to go in for a closer look.

Somehow I just wanted to get near that chimney and check out the bricks. Bob and Dennis followed. But as we moved across the small room, Dennis slipped - and tried to catch himself, but failed. The weight of his body tilted left as he was falling, and instead of catching one of the beams, his hand went down into the insulation. His quick scream caught our attention and everyone stopped for a moment until he got his bearings again. But Dennis stared at us in a strange way.

"There's something down there," he said, pointing to the area where his hand had just been. It was a tough move thinking you are in a haunted house, and with the previous night's events still fresh in our minds, it was even tougher to reach down into this unknown area - but we did. Buried in this attic spot was a notebook, a cassette tape, a piece of folded paper and a doll.

The notebook turned out to be a diary written by one of the children who lived in the house. The cassette tape was a recording of two children - a boy and a girl - talking about spooky activity happening in the house. The folded paper opened up to a drawing of "spirits" in the house. I kept three of the items. Bob kept the doll, later tossing it into the trunk of his car and forgetting about it.

We also walked out the door that day with one of the bricks from the chimney - a local relic to remember the event.

I ended up writing a feature story for the school newspaper - the Bona Venture - in October 1975 - the Halloween issue. What I did not know was that the family who once lived here, who moved to California, had decided the media had calmed down and it was safe to return to the area. Now my story was out - including quoted pieces of the diary.

Diary writer calls

My telephone on campus soon rang. It was the young woman, now in her 20s, who had written the diary and who had returned to the area. My recollection of this phone call is that the woman was screaming from the start and never stopped. She wanted her diary back. Whether or not I made the right decision at the time, I asked her to call me back when she could talk to me in a civil tongue, and I hung up.

My friend Bob, whose car we used that first night, experienced trouble with his vehicle beginning that night - and as told in a previous feature, got into an accident and his car was totaled. I spoke with Bob recently, now a colonel with the U.S. Army, and he said that after the accident, while waiting for a tow truck, he opened the trunk to remove some personal items, saw the doll, became very afraid, and tossed the doll along the road side.

And the brick. The four of us haunted explorers got together one night at St. Bonaventure University, and we buried the brick alongside a campus statue. No one dared keep it.

Network makes a movie

Many years would pass before I saw the one-hour network film made on the house, and checking the credits, I found Michael Rambacher. Michael is a paranormal researcher local to the house. I first called Michael in 2007, discovered that he had been researching the house since 1985, and listened to his update.

Huge pieces of the story had been missing for me. Michael had become close friends with Fr. Alphonsus Trabold, and received intimate details on the exorcism there and other anomalies occurring at the site. Michael also told me that the young woman whose diary I had discovered there, had taken her own life; that the husband passed away, and that the mother had moved away to a distant state.

But a huge piece of the story that I did not know, was that Fr. Trabold invited a psychic to the house with him for the exorcism - Alex Tannous - and that Alex had procured a four-person film crew from New York University (NYU) to shoot the exorcism. Michael also recounted personal details of the exorcism he received from Fr. Trabold, including the fact that the "entire house shook" at one point and that all of this was caught on film. Both Fr. Trabold and Alex Tannous are now dead.

Exorcism filmed

Now if all of this isn't strange enough, Michael recounted that after that shoot, the NYU film team was never heard from again. This is not to imply that they were killed, or carried off by the Catholic Church to preserve the sanctity of the exorcism. Michael says it is a fact that neither Fr. Trabold or Alex Tannous was ever able to get in touch with these people (we only presume they were students) - three male and one female. We agreed to stay in touch.

But while working on these stories here, I had the urge to call Michael again last week. And we had a wild coincidence. Michael was glad to hear from me - and he had interesting news - news he had just received from the woman who lived in this house with her husband and children from 1970 to 1973.