



## **REVIEW:** *The Amityville Horror*

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Second only to the recent "orb" phenomena, no topic provides more ammunition for paranormal debate than the events surrounding a simple Dutch Colonial home on Long Island, New York. This house located at 112 Ocean Avenue and the events purported to have taken place within were the subject of several books and movies, widely known as "The Amityville Horror."

The two camps constantly debating the incidents which occurred in this upper-middle class area, strongly hold with their own beliefs that either the entire story was a hoax created by a mass murderer, and then perpetuated by publicity seekers and money hounds, or conversely; that the house is located on a portal to hell and that due to injustices visited upon the indigenous people who originated on the land. . .they caused a young man to kill his parents and siblings in cold blooded murder.

Rather than offering my own views of the events reported, I first wish to present the facts as pertain to the house and the people who lived within. The "facts" that I present are easily verified as they consist of court documents, excerpts from published and/or movies. They come from handwritten and signed documents and correspondence, or from eyewitness testimony.

Due to the fact that multiple parties involved in these events seem to have a litigious bent to them, I should point out that other than the facts presented. . .the remainder of this article is my own informed opinion, formed after reviewing all the information and data available. Others may review the facts and come to some other conclusion, which is of course their right.

Regardless of ones leaning when viewing the data, the fact that an entire family was murdered is not contested and remains the greatest of all tragedies. Individual readers will have to decide for themselves if this family and subsequent ones were caught up in forces of a paranormal nature, or if they and those revolving them, are trying to profit from the spilled blood of innocent victims.

### **Facts pertaining to the murders:**

Fact: On November 12, 1974 Ronald Joseph DeFeo Jr. Participated in the Murder of His father, Ronald Joseph "Big Ronnie" DeFeo, Sr.; His mother, Louise Brigante-DeFeo, his sisters, Dawn Theresa DeFeo and Allison Louise DeFeo, as well as his brothers, Marc Gregory DeFeo and John Matthew DeFeo, in their home at 112 Ocean Avenue.

Fact: In sworn affidavits, Dawn DeFeo's boyfriend, William Davidge has stated that Dawn was a habitual user of L.S.D. as well as mescaline. He also swore that Dawn was actively hostile against her mother and father who refused to allow their adult daughter to move in with her boyfriend. He also stated that Dawn was fond of "using" her older brother, Ron DeFeo Jr.

Fact: In DeFeo's murder trial, Herman Race, former NYPD testified that several different caliber weapons were used in the commission of the murders, as well as his expert advice that several of the family members were not shot while in bed, but were killed elsewhere and then dragged to their beds. He as well Prosecutor Gerard Sullivan stated that DeFeo had to have had 1 or more accomplices.

Fact: In a May 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 handwritten letter by Ronald DeFeo, DeFeo confessed "...it was cold-blooded murder. Period. No ghosts. No demons. Just three people in which I was one." DeFeo stated that he did not murder the people alone, but had the help of two other people.

Fact: During his initial examination, and in later testimony, Dr. Howard Adelman, Medical Examiner for Suffolk County stated that it was his professional opinion and experience that DeFeo did not murder all of his family alone, but had help.

Fact: The Suffolk County crime lab report showed that Dawn DeFeo had gunpowder residue (Nitro Cellose) on her body, consistent with having BOTH fired a weapon and being shot with a weapon. The post mortem examination also showed traces of unfired gunpowder on her nightgown, indicating that she had handled unspent firearm rounds before her murder.

Fact: In interviews after the murder, Ron DeFeo Jr. Admitted that he, his sister Dawn and two of their friends (one of which acted as a lookout and then fled as the murders took place) plotted to, and committed the murders of their parents and siblings.

Fact: Marc DeFeo had sustained a injury to his back during a football game several weeks prior to his murder, and had to sleep on his back to help healing. When found after the murder, he was on his stomach. This would indicate to investigators he was not asleep when murdered.

Fact: Butch DeFeo has repeatedly stated that his sister was the mastermind the murders of the family, and it was after being confronted by her brother over the severity of their executed plans, that the two fought and Butch shot her.

### **Facts pertaining to the trial:**

Fact: Jacob Siegfried, DeFeo's defense lawyer petitioned the courts for access to the arresting officer's notes, along with witness statements given to detectives investigating the case. While

Constitutionally, defense council are supposed to have access to these records to allow for a fair trial, the courts opted not to give the defense these records. Lawyer Siegfried then (and against the wishes of DeFeo) entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity for his client. DeFeo enraged by this strategy fired his lawyer, and without the funds to hire another lawyer (his grandfather had bankrolled Siegfried but now refused to help his grandson further) was appointed a public defender; William Weber by the offices of the Suffolk County courts.

Fact: William Weber, shortly after being appointed as defense council, asked the courts for a 60-day postponement to properly prepare a case. The courts agreed, but delayed delivering crucial paperwork needed for almost a month. Weber later went on to state that without the proper time to prepare and with his client being denied his constitutional right of a fair trial, he had little recourse but to move forward with the previous intention of using an insanity plea, and claiming that "voices" had prompted DeFeo to murder his family.

Fact: During his own trial, DeFeo who continued to assert that he was not insane and had full mental facilities, stated that he never heard voices on the night of the murders.

### **Facts about the "Haunting in Amityville"**

Fact: The year prior to the DeFeo murders, William Blatty's book "the Exorcist" was made into a motion picture and was a box office smash, making the subject of demon possession and "exorcisms" a household word.

Fact: In 1977, Jay Anson's book: "*The Amityville Horror*", was published by Prentice Hall. They printed on the book cover that the story was "the non-fiction *Exorcist*." The cover proclaimed the book was "A True Story," and in the end sold more than three million copies and was turned into a major motion picture that grossed more than \$80 million dollars.

Fact: During a trial between the Lutzs and William Webber, Father Ralph Pecoraro, the priest in question who was involved in the Amityville case, stated under oath that none of what appeared in the movies or the books actually took place and that he was not positive that there were supernatural events at the 113 Ocean Ave home during his time there, although he did state he did hear a voice say "get out" while blessing the home.

Fact: on March 6, 1976, Paranormal investigators Ed Warren and Lorraine Warren went to the 112 Ocean Avenue Amityville house. Present with them was a reporter with the local TV news Marvin Scott. Also present were several psychics that had worked with the Warrens previously. Dr. Karlis Osis and Dr. Alex Tanous, Investigators with the American Society for Psychological Research in Manhattan, and Gerald Solfin, investigator from Psychological Research Foundation in Durham, North Carolina were brought along as well. The purpose of the visit was (in part) to conduct a séance in the house.

Fact: The investigators from PRF and ASPR present during that night recorded no evidence of paranormal events nor any data suggesting the house was haunted.

Fact: The Warrens and the psychics they brought along with them state they felt the presence of evil spirits and while being filmed on camera, moaned and groaned.

Fact: the Warrens claimed that through paranormal means, the Murdered DeFeo's were paralyzed and thus were not able to awaken nor move while they were murdered.

Fact: Marc DeFeo had sustained a injury to his back during a football game several weeks prior to his murder, and had to sleep on his back to help healing. When found after the murder, he was on his stomach. This would indicate to investigators he was not asleep when murdered.

Fact: Dr. Hans Holzer visited 112 Ocean Avenue on January 13, 1977, with William Weber, Bernard Burton, Laura Didio, and medium Ethel Johnson-Meyers.

Fact: Ethel Johnson-Meyers claims that the spirit of Indians resided at the property to protect an Indian burial ground.

Fact: Johnson-Myers claimed that anybody living at 112 Ocean Ave. would be plagued by the wrath of these Indians.

Fact: Dr. Hans Holzer wrote a book after his visit to the house, titled "Murder in Amityville".

Fact: Dr. Hans Holzer stated in his book--*Murder in Amityville*--that the spirit of a Indian chief possessed Ronald DeFeo Jr. and it was this chief that made DeFeo jr. murder his family.

Fact: in 1982 American International Productions created a movie based from Holzer's book, titled "*Amityville 2: The Possession*". Holzer had to sign an agreement which included Clause 6, part B that he "could never make any public statements which ran counter to the possibility of demonic possession of Ronald DeFeo".

Fact: In the books published regarding a demonic possession at the 112 Ocean Ave house, the Shinnecock Indians are identified as the tribe who lived on the land the home was built on.

Fact: The Shinnecock Indians never lived on Long Island, where Amityville is located. It was the Montaukett Indians who lived there.

Fact: According to local Indian and historian John Strong, there is no Indian burial site resting under the house at 112 Ocean Ave. There are burial grounds several miles away, but they are presently being used as a dump, not for housing. Additionally, In 1913, a man named William A. Eardeley was employed by the state of New York to research and locate all cemeteries in the area. No records were located to show a burial site (Native American or otherwise) being present on the 112 Ocean Ave. home.

Fact: In books published, a man named John Ketchum is stated to have been a Satanist who almost died during the Salem witch trials of the 1600's. It is claimed that he relocated to Amityville and built a house near the 112 Ocean ave home and practiced witchcraft.

Fact: John Ketchum was a local governmental figure circa 1600's, but resided in a town 10 miles away from Amityville. The **Ketchum Genealogy Organization** has no evidence to prove he was present for, or participated in the Salem Witch trials.

Fact: In the various books, it is stated that In the 112 Ocean Ave house, there is a red room, which is a portal to hell.

Fact: The red room is a small storage closet under the staircase into the basement which was used by the DeFeo children to house their toys.

Fact: In the books and first movie, Kathy Lutz wakes up from a nightmare in which she screams "She was shot in the head"; referring to Louise DeFeo.

Fact: Police Reports and the Medical Examiner's reports show Louise DeFeo sustained two gunshot wounds to the upper body (back) and not the head.

Fact: Kathy Lutz stated on the History Channel in October of 2000 that every family who has lived in the Amityville home has some horrific incident happen to them.

Fact: The land the house was built on was owned by a woman named Annie Ireland. No evidence exists which shows a tragedy connected with "evil spirits" befell her. John and Catherine Moynahan had a home built on the land (the same home that is there today) in 1925. No evidence exists which shows a tragedy connected with "evil spirits" befell them. Eileen Fitzgerald, the daughter of the Moynahan's was the next owner, no evidence exists which shows a tragedy connected with "evil spirits" befell her. On October 17, 1960, a couple named John and Mary Riley bought the house. No evidence exists which shows a tragedy connected with "evil spirits" befell them. The DeFeos bought the home on June 28, 1965. They are the only family which the evidence does show a tragic incident occurring.

The Lutz family next bought the home from Columbia savings and Loan, and then moved out 28 days later. Despite their claims. . .there is no evidence to back up their story. On March 18, 1977, Jim and Barbara Cromarty bought the home. They have stated that nothing unusual (except curious movie watchers hounding them) has happened while they lived in the house. August 17, 1987, Peter and Jeanne O'Neil purchased the house from the Cromartys. They have stated that they experienced nothing unusual in the house. On June 10, 1997, Brian Wilson (not the beach boy) purchased the house and has stated that he has experienced nothing unusual taking place in the home.

Fact: The Lutz's have stated that after the 28 days at the 112 Ocean Ave, they left the house with all the furniture and possessions still inside, and never returned.

Fact: Multiple long time residents in their neighborhood have stated that on day 29, the Lutz's held a garage sale at their home.

### **Summation**

It is my opinion that for a 1970's public psyche, it was much easier to accept the fantasy that the devil had forced Robert DeFeo to murder his parents and young child siblings than it was to accept that he and his sister could perpetrate such a crime. It goes hand in hand with the desire of people to want to believe that the mafia or the government was ultimately responsible for the death of President Kennedy. If only one barely-educated man was able to murder a protected and important person such as the president, what does that say about their own safety! It's much easier to accept that there was a shadow government who wanted to see President Kennedy dead, and the length of the "cover-up" afterwards just goes to show how in depth "their" power runs.

So too was it difficult for a 1970s public psyche to accept that a seemingly normal son could have been responsible for the cold-blooded murder of his parents and young brothers and sisters. Unlike today, where the public is deluged with news stories of horrible atrocities taking place against children and families in the United States; in 1974 it was unfathomable. It is my contention that with the absence of the Movie "The Exorcist" having debuted just 1 year prior to the murders, the story of a possession at 112 Ocean Ave. would not have warranted such attention, and would have been dismissed.

After the Exorcist, a movie which in it's own right shocked and jarred an innocent people, the use of demonic possession as a vehicle to explain the murder of the DeFeo family seemed the most plausible excuse for Ronald DeFeo Jr.'s actions.

William Webber, as a poorly paid public defender no doubt had a great many cases appointed to him by the county courts during that time and a large number of defendants to represent. Unlike privately retained lawyers who have the resources available to them and may pick and choose whom they will represent, Attorney Webber had no such luxury in this instance. The fact that the courts delayed their delivery of crucial documentation which would have shown that Ronald DeFeo was suspected of not working alone only hampered his ability to adequately represent his client. With the courts of New York, circa 1970 already having been proven incompetent by their future courtroom critics, Webber had little recourse but to move forward with his strategy of his not guilty by mental disease ploy.

While I doubt Webber's original motivation was financially based, there is little doubt that his later attempts to write books relating to a demonic possession, and then his desire to write books discredited the accounts of those events were money driven. I would be hard pressed to find any motivation in the people directly or indirectly involved in the trials or who lived in the home that wasn't financially driven.

I suspect that the purchase of the 112 Ocean Ave. home by the Lutz' was a financial gamble on their part that didn't payout. George Lutz had a family business, which I surmise he honestly felt would help him bankroll payments on his new home. When the money wasn't rolling in as quickly as he would have liked, he decided to leave the home and use the factual story of the murders in his home as the reasoning for defaulting on the loan.

If something otherworldly or paranormal also played a part in their decision to vacate I can't say. I haven't been able to locate any evidence or information other than anecdotal evidence and impossible to verify accounts of psychics and mediums. All the evidence I have been presented, tends to point more to a drug induced rage and the causality of a lifetime of physical abuse being

directed at Ronald DeFeo and his sister. The evidence, including Ronald DeFeo's own handwritten confession years after the incident indicate that he and his sister were the true culprits, and the story of ghosts and demonic possession was first a fabricated defense, and then a money train used to profit off the deaths of children.

Based upon only this evidence presented and until I am provided with new evidence which indicates otherwise, it is the opinion of this investigator, that there was no paranormal events which took place during the DeFeo occupation of 112 Ocean Ave., nor when the Lutz's occupied the home.

English logician and [Franciscan](#) friar, [William of Ockham](#) created the basis of **methodological reductionism**, when he publicaly stated "Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem" ("Entities should not be multiplied more than necessary"). Modernized, it has now become known as the principal of Occams Razor, in which "The simplest explanation is probably the right explanation."

Source: *Lutz V. DeLaurentiis* case California courts : Declaration of George Lutz

Source: Handwritten correspondence of Ronald DeFeo Jr.

Source: Court documents: People vs. DeFeo 1975.

Source: *The Night the DeFeos died* - Ric Osuna