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harry edwards' 40 years of healing

TEN THOUSAND letters—3,000 from abroad including more than 300 from the United States—make up an average weekly mail received by Harry Edwards at his home in the English countryside south of London. Though differing in nationality, age and religion, the writers of these letters have one thing in common: they hope the world-renowned healer can restore health to them or their loved ones.

Most of Edwards' patients come because of recommendations of friends who already have been successfully treated and many travel long distances to his healing sanctuary. His records show that 85 percent of those he has treated report some benefit and about 40 percent claim complete cures . . .

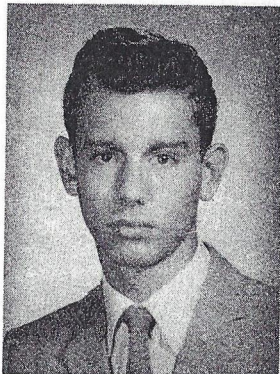
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the TRUTH behind "The Exorcist"

By Steve Erdmann

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His article and reviews have appeared in FATE, "Probe the Unknown," "Caveat Emptor," "Search," "Quest" and "Flying Saucers." He lives with his wife and two children in St. Louis, Mo., where he has been active in UFO investigations.



The actual possession case that inspired Blatty's famous novel and motion picture was far more horrifying than any fiction.

SINCE THE smashing success of William Peter Blatty's novel and the multimillion-dollar movie *The Exorcist*, about the demon possession of a 12-year-old girl, this whole country has been speculating as to its truth and curious about his sources of information.

Undoubtedly Blatty drew from many historical exorcism cases but it is certain that he had one case particularly in mind, that of a demon-possessed boy who lived in Mount Rainier, Md.—14-year-old "Roland Doe." An invisible entity reportedly invaded the boy early in 1949 after he began experimenting with a Ouija board, a practice possibly instigated by his "Aunt Tillie" who took a lively interest in spiritualism and the occult.

When nothing could be done at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., to relieve the boy he was taken to St. Louis, Mo.

where Jesuit priests at St. Louis University successfully exorcized the demon in an authentic Roman Catholic ritual. For sheer drama and horror the true story of Roland Doe far surpasses Blatty's book.

When Blatty was a student at Georgetown University in 1949 he became interested in the case after reading about it in *The Evening Star* and *The Washington Post*. He discussed it with his instructor, the Rev. Thomas Bermingham, S.J., and he may have been formulating the framework for his novel even then.

In the fall of 1949 a "diary" of the Roland Doe case came to light in a mysterious way. Fr. Eugene B. Gallagher, S.J., on the faculty of Georgetown University, was lecturing on the topic of the exorcisms Christ performed when one of his students, the son of a psychiatrist at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., spoke of a diary kept by the Jesuits



Modest St. Louis home belonged to Aunt Tillie, whose interest in communication with the dead may have sparked the boy's Ouija board attempts.

involved in the Roland Doe exorcism. Father Gallagher asked the psychiatrist, who may have been one of the professionals involved in the case, for a copy of the diary and eventually obtained a 16-page document titled "Case Study by Jesuit Priests" and apparently intended as a guide for future exorcisms.

William Peter Blatty, who sat in Father Gallagher's class, repeatedly asked for a copy of the diary but the priest refused.

In the spring of 1950 Father Gallagher loaned the diary to Fr. Brian McGrath, S.J., then Dean of Georgetown University, who wanted to make copies for himself. When Gallagher went to retrieve the diary, the Dean's secretary told him apologetically that seven pages of the diary had been "lost." Only nine of the original 16 pages remained and they were only carbon copies.

Did the diary somehow fall into Blatty's hands?

* * *

THE CATHOLIC Church has kept the exorcism of Roland Doe strictly classified. Therefore, only bits and pieces can be assembled to

make some kind of factual framework, a framework that is spotty but nevertheless reveals the bones of a story that is as shocking and gripping as the fictionalized product, *The Exorcist*.

The case study by the Jesuit priests, the "exorcists' diary," first gives the background of the case:

Roland Doe

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Doe, middle class Washington suburban development. Birth: June 1, 1935. Religion: Evangelical Lutheran, baptized six months after birth by a Lutheran minister. . . .

On January 15, 1949, at the home of Roland, a dripping noise was heard by Roland and his grandmother in the grandmother's bedroom. This noise continued for a short time and then the picture of Christ on the wall shook as if the wall had been bumped. By the time the parents of Roland returned home there was a very definite scratching sound under the floor boards near the grandmother's bed. From this night on, the scratching was heard every night about seven o'clock and would continue until midnight. The family thought that the scratching was caused by a rodent of some kind. An exterminator was called in who placed chemicals under the floor



Alexian Brothers Hospital in South St. Louis was scene of exorcism rites.

boards, but the scratching sound continued and became more distinct when people stamped on the floor.

The scratching sounds continued for 10 days, then stopped, although Roland believed he still heard noises. After a three-day silence another mysterious sound began, this time in the boy's downstairs bedroom. It was like "squeaking shoes" on the bed and was heard only at night when the boy retired. The squeaking continued for six nights and on the sixth night scratching sounds returned.

The mother, grandmother and boy while lying on the bed on this night heard something coming toward them similar to the rhythm of marching feet and the beat of drums. The sound would travel the length of the mattress and then back again, and repeat this action until the mother asked: "Is this you, Aunt Tillie?"

"Aunt Tillie" plays an intriguing part in the possession mystery, for she had taken an avid interest in spiritism and had gone to great lengths to make contact with the "other realm" before her death at the age of 54. She had lived in St. Louis, Mo., and died of multiple sclerosis on January 26, 1949—11 days after the phenomena surrounding Roland began.

The extent to which Aunt Tillie

had succeeded in her occult practices may be reflected in an incident that happened some time before her death while Roland and his mother and father were visiting her.

The family, taking a Sunday ride, had driven a few miles when a lap robe in the back seat began to curl up. Then Roland and his mother were drawn together by an invisible force and pushed against the seat. When they arrived back at Tillie's home Roland's father reached for the ignition to shut off the engine but the key was not in the switch. Eventually it was found under the front seat.

After Tillie's death, recalling these peculiar circumstances, the family suspected some connection between the mysterious sounds and the boy's aunt.

The diary continues:

The mother continued asking questions but no verbal reply. She asked this question: "If you are Tillie, knock three times." There were waves of air striking the grandmother, mother and boy and three distinct knocks were heard on the floor. The mother asked again: "If you are Tillie, tell me positively by knocking four times." Four distinct knocks were heard. Then there followed claw scratchings on the mattress.

When the mother or the grandmother paid no attention to the mattress scratching the entire mattress would begin to shake. The action at times was very violent. On one occasion the coverlet of the bed was pulled out from under the mattress and the edges stood up above the surface of the bed in a curled form as though held up with starch. When the bystanders touched the bedspread, the sides fell back to normal position. The scratching on the mattress has been continuous since the first night it was heard.

Desperately seeking help for Roland the family called in two Lutheran ministers and a rabbi. While the rabbi was examining him the boy suddenly began to shout in what seemed to be an unknown tongue—

a form of glossolalia. After listening for some time the rabbi said he thought Roland was speaking Hebrew. A professor of Oriental languages from the Catholic University in Washington heard the babblings and his opinion was more startling: Roland was speaking Aramaic, the language spoken in Palestine in Jesus' time!

One of the Lutheran ministers who served at the family's church, a Reverend Shultz, asked that Roland be allowed to stay at his parsonage overnight on February 17. Roland stayed there from 9:20 P.M. to 9:20 A.M.

The minister reported that at 10:00 P.M. the two had decided to retire

to a room which held twin beds. After only 10 minutes Roland's bed began to vibrate violently and strange scratching noises were heard in the walls.

The Reverend Shultz turned on the lights and clearly saw the vibrating bed. When the minister prayed the vibration became more violent. The pastor asked the boy to get into



Fr. Eugene B. Gallagher of Georgetown University in Washington, D. C., taught class in which William Blatty first learned of exorcism.

Roland Doe
 Son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Doe, Middle Class Washington suburban development.
 Birth: Jan 1, 1937; Religion: Evangelical Lutheran; Baptized six months after birth by a Lutheran minister.
 Maternal grandmother - practicing Catholic until the age of fourteen years.
 Father - baptized Catholic, but no instruction or practice.
 Mother - baptized Lutheran.
 Roland and his mother visited in St. Louis at Bel Air, Maryland, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Doe.

Background of the Case:

On January 15, 1962, at the home of Roland, a dripping noise was heard by Roland and his grandmother in the grandmother's bedroom. This noise continued for a short time and then the picture of Christ on the wall shook as if the wall had been bumped. By the time the parents of Roland returned home, there was a very definite scratching sound under the floor boards near the grandmother's bed. From this night on, the scratching was heard every night about seven o'clock and would continue until midnight. The family thought that the scratching was caused by a rodent of some kind. An exterminator was called in who placed chemicals under the floor boards, but the scratching sound continued and became more distinct when people stamped on the floor.

This scratching continued for ten days and then stopped. The family finally believed that the rodent had died. The boy began to think he still heard the noise but the family did not believe him.

The entire case is detailed in the following list of the symptoms and signs of the case.

Shown here is first page of document titled "Case Study by Jesuit Priests." Prepared by Roland's exorcists, it was apparently intended as a guide for future exorcisms.

a heavy armchair and draw his knees up to his chin so that his feet were on the chair. The boy encircled his legs with his arms and the Reverend Shultz wrapped a blanket tightly around him.

Then the chair began to move! It moved forcefully against the wall and then tipped over. Roland exclaimed as he fell, "It's going over with me, Pastor!"

Trying not to be dismayed the Reverend Shultz made a pallet of blankets on the floor for Roland, then watched closely. As soon as the boy fell asleep, the pallet began to move across the floor and under one of the beds. Roland's head struck a bedpost and he awoke. Again the minister made up the pallet only to have it whip around in a tight circle and zip under the other bed. Roland's hands were visible and his body rigid. The blankets didn't even wrinkle.

* * *

A LITTLE more than a week later the phenomena took a new turn.

On February 26, 1949, there appeared scratches on the boy's body for about four successive nights. After the fourth night words were written in printed form. These letters were clear but seemed to have been scratched on the body by claws.

Mrs. Doe, a native of St. Louis, thought a trip there would leave the phenomena in Maryland. Apparently the haunting entity approved because the word *Louis* appeared on Roland's rib cage in deep red. When the question of departure was discussed the word *Saturday* was written plainly on the boy's hip. The cause the word *Louis* appeared on Roland's chest as if this were the length of time the entity wanted them to stay. When this "skin branding" occurred Roland's hands always were visible and his mother specifically noted that he could not have

inflicted these claw marks himself.

The markings could not have been done by the boy for the added reason that on one occasion there was writing on his back. Even in St. Louis the writing continued. There was some question of sending Roland to school during his visit here but the message "no" appeared on his wrists; also a large "N" on both legs. The mother feared disobeying this order.

A psychiatrist was consulted but declared that he did not believe the phenomena. His report was that the boy was quite normal. Roland was irritated with the questions and procedures. A physician gave Roland a complete physical checkup and found him to be a normal boy, but somewhat high-strung.

A spiritualist was called in to use his formulae for ridding people of spirits but he had no success. (It should be remarked here that Aunt Tillie believed very much in spiritualism and often consulted spiritualists.)

Fr. Albert Hughes of the St. James Catholic parish in Mount Rainier was consulted. He suggested the family use blessed candles, holy water and special prayers.

Mrs. Doe began the use of the blessed candles and on one occasion a comb flew violently through the air and extinguished them. Later an orange and a pear flew the width of Roland's room. The kitchen table turned over without any action on the boy's part. Milk and food moved off the table and stove under their own power and a breadboard was thrown to the floor. On another occasion a coat on its hanger flew across the room and a Bible landed directly at Roland's feet. A rocker in which the boy was seated spun around although he had exerted no effort to make it do so. Finally Roland discontinued school out of embarrassment because his desk moved around on the schoolroom floor.

The mother took the bottle of holy wa-

ter home and sprinkled all the rooms. When she placed the bottle on a shelf the bottle flew across the room but did not break. When she held the lighted candle alongside of Roland at night the whole bed, mother and son moved back and forth with the swaying of the mattress. . . .

More than one attempt was made to baptize Roland into the Catholic religion to expedite help for him. The press mentioned a baptism at Georgetown University Hospital where Roland underwent extensive medical and neurological examinations during his three-and-a-half-day stay. The press also mentioned a baptism at St. Louis University. On one occasion, in February of 1949, when Roland's uncle was driving him to a rectory to be baptized, Roland suddenly glared at him, grabbed him by the throat and shouted, "You son of a bitch, you think I'm going to be baptized but you are going to be fooled!"

The Roman Catholic baptism ritual usually takes only 15 minutes but for Roland it lasted several hours because when the priest recited, "Do you renounce the devil and all his works?" Roland went into such rages he had to be restrained. Eventually he did respond with a weak renunciation of the devil sufficient for the ritual, however insincere it appeared.

* * *

DURING the Doe family's stay at the home of Roland's non-Catholic aunt and uncle in Normandy, Mo., various relatives witnessed the "skin brandings."

Furthermore, writing appeared on Roland's body while he was reading a comic book. There was sharp pain. The writing was done through his clothes. When Roland retired there was violent shaking of the bed and scratching on the mattress. Hardly any relief through the night.

On Tuesday, March 8, 1949, the shaking of the mattress and scratch-

ing continued. A stool upset several feet away from the bed and was seen by Roland's cousin who was spending the night with him. Even when the cousin lay alongside Roland the mattress moved upward along the bedposts.

On Wednesday, March 9, the violent motion of the mattress continued and the scratching on the boy's body was witnessed by Fr. Raymond J. Bishop, S.J., who taught a religious class at St. Louis University.

One of Roland's cousins who is in Father Bishop's class asked Father Bishop whether he could give any assistance in the case. Father Bishop consulted Father Moody and Father Bowdern, the President of the University, and decided that it might be well to have the boy say some prayers and that we could give him the priestly blessing.

Furthermore, Father Bishop agreed to go to the home of the Does in Normandy so that he might bless the house and room where Roland slept. A second-class relic of St. Margaret Mary was pinned on the bed of Roland.

Even after the blessing of the house and in spite of the relic, the swaying was evident and the scratches appeared. The relatives of the boy said, however, that Wednesday night was the most peaceful they had since Roland arrived in St. Louis.

Nevertheless, shortly after Roland retired that Wednesday night the mattress began to move back and forth intermittently, about three inches in both directions.

When Father Bishop sprinkled St. Ignatius holy water on the bed in the form of a cross, the movement ceased quite abruptly but began again when Father stepped out of the room. During the course of the fifteen minutes of activity a sharp pain seemed to have struck Roland on his stomach and he cried out. The mother quickly pulled back the bed covers and lifted the boy's pajamas top enough to show zigzag scratches in bold red lines on the boy's abdomen.

For the 15 minutes this phenomena

lasted Roland was in clear view of six observers. The mattress movement stopped about 11:15 P.M. and there was peace for the rest of the night. On Thursday, March 10, the mattress shook again and the scratching beat out a rhythm as of marching soldiers. The second-class relic of St. Margaret Mary was thrown on the floor although the safety pin had been opened by no human hand.

Friday, March 11, 1949: Same home as above. Same observers as of Thursday with the addition of Fathers Bowdern and Bishop. Father Bowdern had concluded the Novena service at the college church at 9:00 P.M. It was arranged that relatives of the boy would take the two above-mentioned priests to the home of Roland. Since the Novena services were in honor of St. Francis Xavier, Father Bowdern, the pastor, thought it proper to take the first-class relic of Xavier along for a Novena blessing. He likewise carried a crucifix containing first-class relics of several of the North American martyrs and of St. Peter Canisius.

Shortly after Roland retired at 11:00 P.M. Father Bowdern read the Novena prayer of St. Francis Xavier, blessed Roland with the relic (a piece of bone from the forearm of St. Francis Xavier) and pinned the crucifix reliquary under Roland's pillow. The relatives then left Roland's room and Fathers Bowdern and Bishop departed for the evening.

Suddenly a loud noise came from Roland's room. Five relatives rushed to him. They found a 75-pound bookcase swiveled in a complete circle, a bench turned over and the crucifix moved to the foot of the bed. The shaking of Roland's mattress stopped only when the observers shouted, "Aunt Tillie, stop!"

* * *

ON MARCH 16 Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter* gave Father Bowdern

*Later Cardinal Francis Joseph E. Ritter of the Diocesan Tribunal in St. Louis, Mo. (now deceased).

permission to begin the formal rite of exorcism. That night, accompanied by Father Bishop and a Jesuit scholastic, Father Bowdern led Roland in an Act of Contrition and then began reciting the ritual prayers of exorcism.

The chronology throughout this case is extremely confusing. It is not clear how long Roland stayed at the home of his aunt in Normandy, Mo. It is known that he was taken to the Alexian Brothers Hospital in South St. Louis and held there for possibly as long as a month, either before or after intermittent stays at a nearby rectory.

Nor is it known how many persons were actively involved in the exorcism. The names of the exorcists given out in St. Louis were Fathers Bowdern and Bishop and Fr. Lawrence Kenny. No doubt several seminarians and hospital personnel also were in attendance. Present as a witness was the late Fr. Charles O'Hara of Marquette University in Milwaukee who gave Father Gallagher many of the details I am reporting here.

One male nurse, Ernest Schaffer, whom I know personally, said the priests had a terrible time during Roland's hospital stay. To this day, Ernest cannot speak about the case without emotion. He had many conversations with the priests and was aware of the supernatural phenomena. I believe he said that he had to clean "the mess" in the room on several occasions, for like the little girl in the movie, Roland continually vomited.

The Roman Ritual of Christian Exorcisms reads: "I cast thee out, thou unclean spirit, along with the least encroachment of the wicked enemy, and every phantom and diabolical legion. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, depart and vanish from this creature of God. . . ."

Instructions in the ritual command

the exorcist to "pronounce the exorcisms in a commanding and authoritative voice and at the same time with great confidence, humility and fervor. And when he sees that the spirit is sorely vexed, then he oppresses and threatens all the more."

Father Bowdern prepared himself for the exhausting ritual through a "black fast" of bread and water for spiritual fortification. It is said that from the time he first learned of the obsessed boy until the exorcism ritual had run its course he lost almost 40 pounds.

At the onset of a prayer commanding the demon or evil spirit to identify itself and declare its time of departure, Roland winced and rolled in a sudden seizure of pain. In a two-hour period the boy was branded 30 times—on his stomach, chest, temple, throat, thighs, calves and back. When Bowdern again demanded the name of the demon, the words *well*, *spite* appeared on Roland's chest. Another time the word *hell* appeared on his chest as he rocked and rolled in pain, meanwhile cursing and screaming obscenities in a voice that ranged from deep bass to falsetto.

The priests wore around their necks receptacles containing the consecrated host and they constantly read from the Roman ritual book which then was written in Latin. Roland would answer in Latin. In fact Roland seemed to have expert knowledge of any language that was used.

At certain climactic points the room was literally "hell." At times Father Bowdern wore a raincoat as protection against Roland's continual vomiting—sometimes "shot" at the priest.

It took as many as 10 persons to hold Roland when he broke from his shackles during his outbursts. On one occasion (whether in his home in Maryland or during the exorcism ritual is not clear) he broke the

fetters that restrained him, got a hand on a bedspring, broke it and jabbed it into a priest's arm, inflicting a wound from the wrist to the elbow.

One night, during a trip across a river in the St. Louis area, Roland was held by two big men in the back seat of a car in which Father O'Hara and the driver were in front. Suddenly Roland broke the grip of his handlers, dived over the front seat, grabbed the steering wheel and attempted to catapult the car into the river. The car struck the guardrails as it zigzagged across the traffic lanes.

Father O'Hara told Father Gallagher something even more bizarre.

"One night the boy brushed off his handlers and soared through the air at Father Bowdern standing at some distance from his bed (with) the ritual book in his hands. Presumably Father was about to be attacked but the boy got no further than the book. And when his hands hit that—I assure you, Gene. I saw this with my own eyes—he didn't tear the book, he dissolved it! The book vaporized into confetti and fell in small fine pieces to the floor!"

The ritual continued, the prayers being recited several times each day despite Roland's rabid behavior. He urinated on his bed and profaned and cursed anyone near him. Vulgarisms flowed from his mouth.

In March, Roland was moved to a rectory and there were quiet periods in which he seemed almost normal. Because the exorcism seemed virtually useless the priests requested permission to instruct Roland into the Catholic faith. The parents consented, hoping his first Holy Communion would help.

Then Roland broke out in a rage that was worse than ever before. A six-inch portrait of a satanic visage with hands held above its head, webs stretching from hands to shoulders

and horns projecting from its head, appeared in deep red on Roland's calf.

Again he was baptized into the Roman Catholic faith to prepare for his First Communion.

Father Bowdern made arrangements to return to Maryland with the boy, perhaps hoping to leave the entity behind but at any rate to seek some solution. During the train ride Roland became maniacal, striking Father Bowdern in the testicles and yelling, "That's a nutcracker for you, isn't it?"

The custodians struggled with Roland till he fell into a deep sleep.

* * *

FAILURE seemed imminent. Father Bowdern found no suitable accommodations for working with Roland in Maryland. He approached various clinics but none would have anything to do with the boy. In any case, Father Bowdern was called back to St. Louis within a few days and he returned, taking the boy with him.

The exorcism had reached an impasse. Seeking a solution Father Bowdern researched the literature on possession. He learned of an 1870 case in Wisconsin that seemed similar and from this he devised a new set of tactics.

On the night of April 18, 1949, the ritual resumed. Father Bowdern forced Roland to wear a chain of religious medals and to hold a crucifix in his hands. Roland protested violently but several hospital attendants kept the boy from destroying the medals and the crucifix. Suddenly Roland became contrite and began to ask questions about the meaning of certain Latin prayers—possibly as a deceptive maneuver. Father Bowdern, aware that he must not engage in conversation with the demon, continued the ritual, demanding to know who the demon was and when he would depart.

Roland exploded. Five Alexian brothers rushed to hold him while he screamed he was one of the "fallen angels" mentioned in biblical writings. Bowdern persisted in the ritual, reciting incessantly until 11:00 P.M. when Roland interrupted. In a completely new masculine voice Roland said, "Satan! Satan! I am St. Michael! I command you, Satan, and the other evil spirits to leave this body, in the name of Dominus, immediately! Now! Now! Now!"

As if a struggle were occurring within his body Roland went into a final spasm (which he later described as a tearing sensation in his stomach). Then he was quiet.

"He is gone!" he said wonderingly, with a smile on his face. He told the priest he had had a vision of St. Michael holding a flaming sword. He felt wonderful.

Roland left Missouri 12 days later to return with his parents to Mount Rainier. He wrote Father Bowdern on May 22, 1949, that he was happy and that he had a new dog.

Today Roland is a happily married man of 39. He has three children and he sells insurance in northern Virginia. He recently told a reporter that he has only a vague memory of 1949.

* * *

WHAT POSSESSED Roland Doe? Demon possession gets short shrift from modern psychiatrists. They call the symptoms instead paranoid schizophrenia. Suffering from this malady a person hallucinates constantly. He believes he is being persecuted and often is told so by an "inner voice." When his illness moves him to attack his "persecutors" he often displays superhuman strength. Did Roland Doe fall prey to such a psychosis?

Some of the phenomena were typically "noisy ghost" or poltergeist activity, a type of disturbance usually associated with a teen-ager.

Medical doctors will have none of this either but more venturesome scientists speculate that the human brain has energies as yet unrecognized—energies that can move heavy objects when the teen-ager (or other agent) is not even in the room. Yet much more than poltergeist phenomena was manifested in the Roland Doe case.

Can we credit a separate entity “possessing” the body of a normal person? *The Roman Ritual on Exorcism* contains this statement by the Rev. Philip T. Welby: “There is a world of demons, as revealed religion teaches, and even if revelation were not so absolute, we could conjecture that the devil is a real person and that his sway is tremendous.” And the full report in the Catholic Chancery in Washington, D.C., calls

the case of Roland Doe a *genuine demonic possession*. Fr. John Nicola of the Gregorian College in Rome, Italy, had an opportunity to review this report and he noted that 41 persons had signed a document attesting they had witnessed the strange phenomena.

But how account for the entity revealing itself as Aunt Tillie in one instance and later as a “fallen angel”?

These and many other unanswerable questions concerning young Roland pursued me as I walked down the silent street where Aunt Tillie once had lived—an ordinary street in a commonplace midwestern city. As I passed her house, its outlines softened in the early morning drizzle, I found myself whispering, “Was that you, Aunt Tillie? *Was that you?*”



CAPTAIN RICH'S TOMBSTONE

THE LEGEND of the witch's foot on the Buck tombstone in Bucksport, Maine, is celebrated, but an equally intriguing tombstone in the cemetery at Bernard, Me., is all but forgotten, explains Dick Shaw of the *Bangor Daily News*. The white marble stone is inscribed: “Elias Rich, died Dec. 14th, 1867, age 88 yrs., 1 mo. & 22 days. Blessed are they which die in the Lord.”

When the tombstone is viewed from the rear, amidst the marble veinings a startling image of a man can be discerned. His profile faces south and appears to be surmounted by a crown. Some people detect that he is holding a child as well.

In 1902 Maine poet Holman F. Day published an entertaining ballad purporting to explain the

enigmatic marking. In Day's account Elias Rich was a humble woodchopper who wound up in the poor farm. He remarked so often that he looked forward to a crown of gold in the afterlife that his fellow paupers scornfully labeled him “Heavenly Crown” Rich. After his death and burial the face appeared on the tombstone to prove to all that at last Rich was wearing his crown of gold.

Day's account contains considerable poetic license, explains Shaw. Far from being a pauper, Captain Rich belonged to an affluent family. How much truth there might be to the rest of the story remains unclear as Day's poem is virtually the only source for the legend. But the Rich tombstone continues to have the last word.