Charlie, a friendly ghost, haunts restaurant

By Gundella special writer

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ARLENE, an attractive 49-yearold Morthville grandmother,
still remembers her first visit
to the White House Manor, a
magnificent mansion situated on Nine
Mile road west of Haggerty in Novi.
More than 30 years ago, when the
house was still a private residence, her
best friend, Mary Ellen Crusoe, lived
there. One day the two tecnage girls
were talking quietly in the south end of
the library. Suddenly the glass covering
a large picture at the opposite end of
the room shattered and fell to the floor.
A started butler came into the room
and angrily accused the girls of throwlag something at the picture. The girls
knew they hadn't.

knew they hadn't.

ON SEVERAL other occasions, when Arlene was visiting her friend, they were accused — falsely — of opening and closing doors, turning lights on and off, and making strange noises on the back stairs.

Did she believe the house was haunted? "Well, I know we didn't do these chimgs," Arlene said, "and whenever I walked up or down the main stairway, I always felt like someone was watching me — when I knew there was no one there."

A maid who worked for the Claude Crusse family denied anything unusual occurred. "All large houses make strange noises," said the maid, who

besides, I don't believe in ghosts."

THE HOUSE has since been converted into a restaurant. Waiters, waitresses, the manager—and even some customers—believe that at least one ghost, maybe two, frequent the building and mingle with the living.

But no one seems concerned about it. Some employees even talk to one of the ghosts, whom they affectionately call "Charille."

Arlene, who has eaten there on sev.

"Charlie."

Arlene, who has eaten there on several occasions and plans to continue doing so, still feels she is being watched and even followed on the main stairs. But she, too, says she isn't frightened

WHITE HOUSE Manor is a gracious wifite HUDSE Manor is a gracious combination of pre-depression New England and southern Georgian architecture. Built in the late 1920s, it was the home of Charles Rogers and his wille, Harriet.

After their deaths, the house was occupied by the County of the late of the

After their deaths, the house was occupied by the Crusoe family for about 10 years and later by the Sinacolas, who now live in Articana. After the Sinacolas moved in 1973, it stood empty for several years.

In 1981 the Cervi brothers converted it into an elegant restaurant.

The building stands on the original homesteds lite of the Thornton family, into which Charles Rogers married. The old farmhouse was moved when the new house was built; it still stands

'Mr. Rogers is really a friendly old fellow. We all call him Charlie and acknowledge his presence, and we get along just fine."

- Waiter Richard Shank

just northeast of the newer, larger

just northeast of the newer, larger structure.
At one time, the two houses were connected by a screet underground the nel, it has been closed off and its entrances scaled.
Riggers made a fortune in the canned milk industry. His stather is credited with the invention of condensed milk.

THE HOUSE always has been a showcase, with Italian-inspired columns, a wishing well and balconless. It features pediments, pliasters and carnices on the outside and hand-carved woodwork, tulck rich paneling, molitings and sculptured ceilings on the inside.

inside.

Beveled and leaded glass doors and stained glass windows add to the at-

mosphere.

Its most arresting feature is the grand staircase in the entrance room. Ten feet wide, these stairs have cherrywood banisters on each side which curve and rise upward to circle the encurve and rise upward to circle the en-

tire second floor. Rogers is said to have built this stair-

way for the daughter he never had, dreaming of leading her down the stairs on her wedding day. Instead he was blessed with four sons.

was blessed with four son.

FINALLY THE day came when a Rogers grandaughter announced ber engagement. It was planned that her wedding would be held in grandfather's house. He would escort her down the stairs to her waiting bridgersom.

At the last moment, the couple cloped, it broke Charles Rogers' heart. He died shortly afterward — Nov. 11, 1942. His dream of the beautiful wedding never was fulfilled.

In the three years White House Manor has been a restaurant, more than 30 weddings have been held on the staircase. It is why the ghost of Cheeles Rogers still lives in the house. Is it possible he is still longing for the MIKE CERVI, manage and co-

MIKE CERVI, manage and co-owner, isn't sure. But he is sure that strange things happen there.

Late at night, after everyone else has gone home and he known he is alone, Cervi often hears footsteps on the stairs. He hears doors opening and closing. He feets a presence there with him. Many times he has carefully turned out the lights before locking up, only to see them go on again when he reached his car in the parking lot. Several others also have seen the light on the large, unused, third floor turn itself on when no one was in the building.

SHERRY MIDKIFF, who tends bar at White House Manor, tells of a disturbing incident. A huge mirror hanging over the bar shattered although no one was anywhere near if.

Cervi said this has happened on more than one occasion. And the mirror hangs exactly where the picture which broke used to hang when the Crusoes lived there 30 years before.

On more than one occasion, women

On more than one occasion, women customers have reported strange experiences in the upstairs ladies' room. One woman insisted that when she entered the restroom, she heard someone moving about in the totlet stall. Then the tollet flushed — but no one came out.

out.
When she gently touched the door, it swung open. The stall was empty.

Midkilf said it isn't unusual. "It seems that bathroom was once connected to the master bedroom, and Mr.

Rogers still believes it is his own," she laughed.

RICHARD SHANE, known as "Captain Napkin" to regular customers, has waited table in the restaurant for nearly two years. He is an authority on the history of the building.

Fascinated by what has taken place there, Shank has spent many hours interviewing local historians and visting libraries, museums and cemeteries to learn whatever he can about the house and its former residents.

He believes that neither Charles Rogers nor his wife Harriet has ever really fully given up possession of their home.

Like other employees, Shank has

nome.

Like other employees, Shank has heard the noises on the back stairs, has seen doors open and close mysteriously, has felt Rogers' presence on many consigns.

occasions.

SHANK BELIEVES, bowever, that it isn't Charles but Harriet who breaks the mirrors and glass.

"Mr. Rogers is really a friendly old fellow," Shank claimed. "We alt call him Charlie and acknowledge his presence, and we get along just fine."

Patrick and Juania Suchy and their daughter Lealle, regular customers at White House Manor, seem to agree with their favorite walter.

"We like it bere," said Lealle, a senior at the University of Michigan. "We're not afraid of ghosts, and the food is great."



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