

Priest skeptical of 'possession'

By ALICE COLLINS

A young girl plays with a ouija board and is terrified to a point of hysteria when the letters spell out "The devil is in the record player." A man, who believes his wife is possessed by the devil, calls a priest and offers to pay his way to another city to exorcise the evil Satan.

The same Detroit priest gets several calls a day from people who believe he conducts exorcisms regularly.

At this point in our history, pos-

sion and exorcism have captured the imaginations of many. Devil fear and devil worshiping are rampant.

FATHER JOHN SALIBA, A Jesuit priest and assistant professor of theology at the University of Detroit, was willingly thrust into the role of confronting the occult tidal wave, and in his own words "became an overnight expert" on possession, exorcism and related phenomena because of the current occult preoccupation and because "the average priest doesn't know anything about exorcism."

Father Saliba came to Southfield last week to address a class on possession and exorcism, one of 10 sessions on psychic phenomena arranged by De Something Different Inc., a Birmingham based organization that arranges special classes in adult education programs throughout the metropolitan area.

Some in the audience may have come to witness or even participate in some form of exorcism. If they did, they were disappointed.

In all his experience, Father Saliba has never been convinced of a true case of possession by the devil. He has never known a priest who has performed an exorcism and knows of only one case in which a priest knew a priest who did.

He goes a step further, and doubts the existence of the devil.

"I'M DIFFERENT from the average Christian who probably does believe in the devil," said Father Saliba. "I don't rule it out, but I've never seen it."

He said this doesn't cause any religious conflict for him as a Catholic priest.

"Belief in the devil is not on the same level as believing in God and Christ. It's possible to be a good Christian and not believe in the devil," Father Saliba believes Christian doctrine backs him up.

"It's this special research into the occult and the devil started for me about two and a half years ago," said Father Saliba, "when superiors at the U. of D. asked me if I'd like to appear on the Lou Gordon television program along with William Blatty, there to promote his book, 'The Exorcist.' I was to balance the program."

Father Saliba said he then read Blatty's book and prepared for the encounter. "At this time, though, I was just passing through."

But from that point on, Father Saliba said he ran into the occult again and again in his readings and class preparations and later went to California to visit and study the many contemporary movements into the occult.

HE BEGAN a series of public speaking appearances that led to his

recognition as an expert on exorcism. And he is still in search of new cases to study.

Father Saliba didn't really explain the popularity and impact of the book and movie "The Exorcist" except to say it fell on fertile ground because of the current interests in ESP and related phenomena.

A similar book 10 years ago didn't even cause a ripple, he said.

The priest urged his audience to be very skeptical when confronted with stories and witnesses in strange, bizarre cases.

He advises:

•If it's a story or novel, remember that facts have probably been altered. Even Blatty says he made changes in his novel from the case on which it is reportedly based.

•Consider the witnesses. Are they persons already too susceptible to believing in this phenomena?

•Locate the basis of your belief. Have you personally ever met a person in these circumstances?

•Doubt critically. Even before performing exorcism rites in the 18th Century, the priest was advised to ascertain the difference between possession and illness.

•Look for the psychological angle. Most bizarre acting persons are mentally ill—not possessed.

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Police promote officer

R. Jerry Simmons of the Southfield Police Department has been promoted from sergeant to lieutenant.

Simmons, 40, has been with the department since September 1959. He was transferred to the detective bureau in 1961 and to the records bureau in 1963.

He was assigned to the intelligence section of the detective bureau in 1964 and has been commander of the section since 1970.

Simmons was promoted to sergeant in January 1970. He has received special training in homicide investigation and attended the FBI

organized crime school in Washington, D.C.

He has received specialized training in handling cigarette and bootlegging cases and application of intelligence techniques to organized crime.

Simmons has received citations for bravery and department commendations from the City of Southfield.

Southfield woman honored by WSU

Mrs. Evelyn Berke, 16400 North Park Drive, Southfield, was recently honored with a 50-year certificate at Wayne State University's Golden Anniversary Tea.

She is a graduate of The Detroit Teachers College, class of 1924, the forerunner to WSU's College of Education.



R. JERRY SIMMONS

Local CPAs lead talks

The Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants (MACPA) is sponsoring ten professional development courses on Monday through Wednesday at the Hospitality Motor Inn in Lansing.

Four Southfield CPAs have been selected to lead the sessions including Kenneth I. Shevin, J. K. Lasser & Co., CPAs, "Services to Physicians and Dentists," William C. Herrick, CPA, Plante & Moran, "Estate & Gift Taxation," Michael M. Cinnamon, CPA and attorney, of the firm of Dagumano & Cinnamon, "Private Foundations," and James F. Peters of Peters, Joseph, Dize, Grady & Moceri, CPAs, "Accountants' Fees."

These seminars are designed for CPAs who wish to expand their knowledge and expertise in these specialized areas.

More than 4,400 CPAs are members of MACPA headquartered in Southfield. The Association serves its membership by coordinating professional activities throughout the State.

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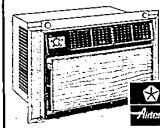
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