

The Amityville Horror

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"A fascinating and frightening book" (Los Angeles Times)-the bestselling true story about a house possessed by evil spirits, haunted by psychic phenomena almost too terrible to describe.

In December 1975, the Lutz family moved into their new home on suburban Long Island. George and Kathleen Lutz knew that, one year earlier, Ronald DeFeo had murdered his parents, brothers, and sisters in the house, but the property-complete with boathouse and swimming pool-and the price had been too good to pass up.

Twenty-eight days later, the entire Lutz family fled in terror.

This is the spellbinding, shocking true story that gripped the nation about an American dream that turned into a nightmare beyond imagining-"this book will scare the hell out of you" (Kansas City Star).

Jay Anson (1921-1980) began as a copy boy on the New York Evening Journal in 1937, and later worked in advertising and publicity. With more than 500 documentary scripts for television to his credit, he was associated with Professional Films, Inc. He died in 1980.
Chapter One
December 18, 1975

George and Kathy Lutz moved into 112 Ocean Avenue on December 18. Twenty-eight days later, they fled in terror.

George Lee Lutz, 28, of Deer Park, Long Island, had a pretty good idea of land and home values. The owner of a land surveying company, William H. Parry, Inc., he proudly let everyone know that the business was a third-generation operation: his grandfather's, his father's, and now his.

Between July and November, he and his wife, Kathleen, 30, had looked at over fifty homes on the Island's South Shore before deciding to investigate Amityville. None in the thirty to fifty thousand dollar range had yet met their requirements -- that the house must be on the water and that it must be one to which they could move George's business.

In the course of their search, George called the Conklin Realty Office in Massapequa Park and spoke to broker Edith Evans. She said that she had a new house that she wanted to show them, and that she could take them through the place between three and three-thirty. George made the appointment and the broker -- an attractive, warm woman -- took them there at three in the afternoon.

She was very pleasant and patient with the young couple. "I'm not sure if this is what you're looking for," she told George and Kathy, "but I wanted to show you how the 'other half' of Amityville lives."

The house at 112 Ocean Avenue is a big, rambling, three-story affair, with dark shingles and white trim. The lot on which it stands is 50 by 237, the fifty feet facing the front, so that as you look at the house from across the street, the entrance door is down the right side. With the property comes thirty feet of wooden bulkhead that stands against the Amityville River.

On a lamppost at the end of the paved driveway is a small sign bearing the name given the house by a previous owner. It reads "High Hopes."

An enclosed porch with wet bar looks out at a preferred, older residential community of other big homes. Evergreens grow around the narrow grounds, partly blocking off the neighbors on either side, but their drawn shades can be seen easily enough. When he looked around, George thought that was peculiar. He noticed the neighbors' shades were all drawn on the sides that faced his house, but not in front or in the direction of the houses on the other side.

The house had been on the market for almost a year. It was not in the paper, but was fully described in Edith Evans's agency listing:

<blockquote> EXCLUSIVE AMITYVILLE AREA -- 6 bedroom Dutch Colonial, spacious living room, formal dining room, enclosed porch, 3-1/2 baths, finished basement, 2-car garage, heated swimming pool and large boathouse. Asking \$80,000 </blockquote>

Eighty thousand dollars! For a house described like that in the listing, it would have to be falling apart, or the typist could have left out a "1" before the "8." One might think she'd want to show a suspect bargain after dark and from the outside only, but she was glad to show them inside. The Lutzes' examination was pleasant, swift but thorough. Not only did it meet with their exact requirements and desires, but contrary to their anticipations, the house and other buildings on the property were in fine condition.

Without hesitation, the broker then told the couple it was the DeFeo house. Everyone in the country, it seems, had heard about that tragedy, the twenty-three-year-old Ronald DeFeo killing his father, mother, two brothers, and two sisters in their sleep on the night of November 13, 1974.

Newspaper and television accounts had told of the police discovering the six bodies all

shot by a high-powered rifle. All -- as the Lutzes learned months later -- were lying in the same position: on their stomachs with their heads resting on their arms. Confronted with this massacre, Ronald had finally confessed: "It just started; it went so fast, I just couldn't stop."

During his trial, his court-appointed attorney, William Weber, pleaded for his insanity. "For months before the incident," the young man testified, "I heard voices. Whenever I looked around, there was no one there, so it must have been God talking to me." Ronald DeFeo was convicted of murder and sentenced to six consecutive life terms.

"I wonder if I should have told you which house this was before or after you saw it," the broker mused. "I'd like to know for my future reference with clients looking for a house in the ninety-thousand dollar range."

Clearly she didn't feel the Lutzes would be interested in such an affluent property. But Kathy took one final look about the house, smiled happily and said, "It's the best we've seen. It's got everything we ever wanted." Obviously she had never hoped to live in such a fine house. But George vowed to himself that if there was a way, this was the place he wanted his wife to have. The tragic history of 112 Ocean Avenue didn't matter to George, Kathy, or their three children. This was still the home they had always wanted.

During the remainder of November and the early weeks of December, the Lutzes spent their evenings laying out plans for minor modifications to be made in the new house. George's surveying experience enabled him to rough out suitable layouts for the changes.

He and Kathy decided one of the bedrooms on the third floor would be for their two boys, Christopher aged seven, and Daniel, nine. The other upstairs bedroom they gave to their children as a playroom. Melissa, "Missy," the five-year-old girl, would sleep on the second floor, across the hall from the master bedroom. There would also be a sewing room and a big dressing room for George and Kathy on the same floor. Chris, Danny, and Missy were well pleased with their room assignments.

Downstairs, on the main floor, the Lutzes had a slight problem. They didn't own any dining room furniture. They finally decided that before the closing, George would tell the broker they'd like to purchase the dining room set left in storage by the DeFeos, along with a girl's bedroom set for Missy, a TV chair and Ronald DeFeo's bedroom furniture. These things and other furnishings left in the house, like the DeFeo's bed, were not included in the purchase price. George paid out an additional \$400 for these items. He also got for free

seven air-conditioners, two washers, two dryers, and a new refrigerator and a freezer.

There was a lot to be accomplished before moving day. In addition to the physical move of all their belongings, there were complicated legal questions, relative to the transfer of the title, that required sifting and sorting out. The title to the house and property was recorded in the names of Ronald DeFeo's parents. It seemed Ronald, as the sole survivor, was entitled to inherit his parents' estate, regardless of the fact that he had been convicted of murdering them. None of the assets in the estate could be disposed of before being legally settled in Probate Court. It was a difficult legal maze that the executors had to travel, and more time was still needed to provide the proper legal administration of any transactions related to the house or property.

The Lutzes were advised that provisions could be devised to protect the legal interests of all concerned if the sale of the house was consummated; but to arrive at the proper procedure to accomplish this could take weeks or longer. Eventually it was resolved that, for the closing, \$40,000 was to be put in escrow for the mortgage until a legal deed could be completed and executed.

The closing date was set for the morning George and Kathy planned to move from Deer Park. They had arranged to close on the sale of their old house the day before. Confident that everything could be worked out, and probably influenced by their anxiety to get settled in their new home, the couple decided to try and get everything done on the same day.

Packing was to be mainly Kathy's job. To keep the children out of her hair and away from George, she assigned them minor projects. They would gather their own toys and arrange their clothing for packing. When the chores were completed, they were to start cleaning their rooms to make their old house presentable for the scrutiny of new owners.

George planned to close his office in Syosset and move it into the new house to save on the rent money. He had included this item in his original estimate of how he and Kathy could afford an \$80,000 house. Now he figured that the basement, a well-finished layout, might be the best place. Moving his equipment and furnishings would be time consuming enough, and if the basement was to be the location of the new office, some carpentry would be needed.

The 45-by-22-foot boathouse, out behind the house and garage, was not there just to be ostentatious and an unused decoration for the Lutzes. George owned a twenty-five-foot cabin cruiser and a fifteen-foot speed-boat. The facilities at his new house would again save him a lot of money he normally had been paying to a marina. The task of getting his vessels to Amityville with a trailer became an obsession with him, despite the priorities that he and Kathy were constantly discovering.

There was work to be done at 112 Ocean Avenue, both inside and outside. Although he wasn't sure where the time was going to come from, George planned to attend to some of the landscaping and the garden to prevent frost damage, maybe put framed burlap

around the shrubs, put in bulbs and after that, spread some lime on the lawn.

Handy with his tools and equipment, George made good progress on many interior projects. Now and then, pressed for time, he got his hopeful projects confused with his musts. He soon dropped everything to clean the chimney, then the fireplace. After all, Christmas was coming up.

It was quite cold on the actual moving day. The family had packed the night before and slept on the floor. George was up early and singlehandedly piled the first full load into the biggest U-Haul trailer he could rent, finishing in barely enough time to ...

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