

Episode Three: The Oxford Biker

Superstitious

By: Amy Bartram

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### **\*Intro Music\***

**Interview Feature: S. Hernandez, M. Reed, R. Townsend, and B. Zimmerman**

### **On the Definition of Superstition**

Superstition has several different definitions. Many typically think of superstition as a belief in something that has little to no logical reasoning. Stevie Wonder describes superstition as a belief in things that cannot be understood. One definition describes superstition as "a widely held but unjustified belief in supernatural causation" or, anything producing or causing an effect, "leading to certain consequences of an action or event, or a practice based on such a belief" (Google Dictionary). It is therefore arguable that superstition also has a place within the realm of the paranormal.

### **\*Intro to Superstitious\***

Located in the northwestern corner of Butler County, Ohio, rests the small town of Oxford. The town, a quaint little village, was laid out in 1810, a year after Miami University was established. There's something antiquated about the town; something steeped in tradition. The roads here are paved in brick; a nice touch for the 10,000 inhabitants that live there. But once summer ends, and the students return, the size of Oxford changes.

### **BZ Size of Oxford**

"You know Oxford in and of itself, is a much bigger place than than the town might suggest, but it is located, you know, really hours away from a lot of places. You know, including Cincinnati and Dayton, and Indianapolis, really, for that matter" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

Oxford comes to life when the students of Miami University return every fall. The university was established before the village of Oxford. Initially, the land that would become Oxford had been set aside for Miami U in 1803, and after the school was chartered in 1809, drawings for lots started to take place. It wasn't until 1810 that the lots started to sell. And even then, only two were sold. But, the town had been laid out for future residents, totaling one mile square. Today, Oxford totals 7.5 square miles.

Oxford, Ohio has been around for over two-hundred years. And in that time various superstitions and stories, making their way into local lore, have gripped the little town.

Like the fictional Tarrytown in Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, Oxford stakes its claim to mysterious supernatural phenomenon.

According to legend, an accident took place in 1940s Oxford between Earhart Road and Oxford-Milford Road.

**BZ Encourages**

"You know, I wanna like, encourage people to like, look for this thing, because I think it's really cool" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

That's Brian, a 2003 graduate of Miami University of Oxford. Initially skeptical, Brian, while a student, had been told a story; a story about a man on a motorcycle. So, he decided to see what he could find, and he jumped into his car with some friends and headed for Oxford-Milford and Earhart roads in the middle of the night.

**BZ Oxford Biker The Story**

"There's lots of different variations of this story but the one that like for me is in my mind, or the one that I at least ascribe to is that, you know, there were these two young lovers who, you know, were being kept apart by you know, these kinds of, these kinds of social things that still exist today. You know, disapproving parents, and curfews, and you know, other things that are still you know, incredibly untimely today. The way that the story you know, went at least from how I understand it is that this couple had kind of this standing arrangement that

on certain nights, the motorcyclist you know would start heading toward you know, his you know girlfriend's house which was located again on this--alongside this, very rolling like kind of roadway, you know, a rural stretch of Oxford. You know, Oxford is a pretty small community of about I think it was about 10,000 at the time. You know the university you know triples the population of the city. But you know, as soon as you go a mile in any direction you're out in this very dark farm land. And so, anyway, getting back to the story, the motorcyclist would you know head down on this very narrow hilly road and would wait basically for this signal from his girlfriend which would be some sequence of lights that would flash from her house. And when the motorcyclist would see the lights flashing he would head to meet her in what was presumed to be kind of a safe time without them being caught or seen together. And so, one night you know the motorcyclist got to the end of the road which kind of takes a sharp turn right by his girlfriend's house and he crashes the bike and he dies. In some other interpretations he's decapitated by a fence nearby the -- at a neighboring farm. And it's you know, really creepy and mysterious and you know, there's been lots of different ways to describe the couple and their relationship and who they are. And I don't think that any one story is necessarily wrong. The one that I certainly ascribe to is this kind of tale of you know, love."

### Amy

Even in this variation of the story, the way in which the motorcyclist dies is a little flaky. You heard the first version: the biker dies in the curve of the road. In another version, the motorcyclist of Oxford was drunk, and on his trip to be with his true love he hits a tractor in the dark and is killed. In another version, he hits a boy on a bicycle and both are killed. In a third version, the motorcyclist simply loses control at the bend in the road, crashes into some barbed wire and decapitates himself.

But there are other stories regarding the Oxford motorcyclist. In another variation, it's said that a serial rapist was running amok in the town of Oxford. The young couple decided to set up a signal just in case the rapist happened upon the young woman's house. In this story, the young woman would flash her lover to call for help. It just so happens that one evening, she had to flash either the porch light or a flashlight, and this is why the biker was on his way to her home. Eager to get to her and

be her rescuer, the biker dies before he can get there. Again, the reasoning for his death is unclear. He either hits a tractor, a young boy on a bicycle, or loses control at the bend. And it's unclear whether or not he was decapitated.

In a final variation of the story, it's believed that the boyfriend biker is called of to war, which, if the story is true and takes place in the 40s, would not have happened until after the bombing on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. So, it is plausible. As the story goes, the biker, returning home from WWII was eager to be with his girlfriend. He comes to her home only to find her in bed with another man. Blinded by rage, he takes off on his motorcycle, crashes and dies. Of course, in this story, we hear nothing about using a light as a signal. Regardless, this particular version makes it onto the list of Oxford biker possibilities.

### **BZ Variations**

"There are so many different variations of this story. You know, I mean I've heard that there are, you know, that you know, that the motorcyclist was like a veteran of the military too, and that he had returned home from service. There's just so many different variations and I couldn't tell like historically you when this happened in real time. You know, although, with a Google Search there is certainly information or you know, estimation when this transpired" (Zimmerman, 2017).

### **Amy**

No one can seem to pinpoint the exact origin of this story and what could be true. In a 1992 article of the Hamilton Journal, which was published on Halloween, an Oxford resident states, "The problem with the legend is that longtime residents have never heard of such an accident" (Rick, 2011).

It doesn't seem to matter. For so many the ghost light of Oxford exists.

The students of Miami University are generally unaware of the phenomenon until they get to Oxford.

### **BZ Miami Students**

"You know, even though a lot of Miami students come from like that region, you know, very few of them, you know, have any real connection to Oxford before they come" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

Once classes begin, most students become educated in the legend and eventually travel out to Earhart and Oxford-Milford roads in order to summon the ghost biker.

**BZ Something they Couldn't Explain**

"So many students before us had had, you know this experience, you know, of actually coming into connection with something they couldn't explain" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

There's a process to summoning the motorcycle ghost, and the conditions have to be just right.

**BZ Flash Three Times**

"You know, in terms of like, more modern times they say that if you go and drive to the girlfriend's house um, and you pull into the driveway and flash your headlights three times, and then turn your lights off and back out of the driveway and go back along the windy bend up the road and pull to the side of the road, and again, flash your lights three times and then turn your car off and wait, you will, in effect, see a singular light from presumably, the motorcyclist going up and down the rolling hills" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

Many do not understand where the ghost biker story originates, and it doesn't matter. Once the Oxford biker has been seen, residents and Miami students feel the need to see it again.

**BZ Sequence Attempt**

"I have tried this on multiple occasions and there was one time in particular where the sequence must have been right or the circumstances must have been right because we did, in effect, as a group of students, you know, in this car in the middle of the night, see a singular headlight. You know, moving very purposefully up and down the roadway. And as it got closer and approached, literally, it just vanished. And we had no other, like, recourse like to believe that it existed. Or that we had saw something, you know, because, there was nobody else there. The road had, absolutely no where else uh, to go but straight at us" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

But there are those who are skeptical about the light. In the 1992 Hamilton Journal article, one resident claims he has lived in the area of the supposed accident. In fact, he lived in the same house the young girl would have lived in. In 1992 this man was 70 years old. Today he would be 95 years old. He claimed to know nothing of the story and did not believe the motorcycle light could be attributed to any ghost. And others are skeptical as well, claiming that the light is a natural phenomenon.

But is it? The light in the distance does not appear unless it's signaled, and there are many YouTube videos and first hand encounters with the motorcycle ghost of Oxford.

**\*Music\***

This would normally be an enlightening experience to try out on Halloween night, but it seems that whether you're a skeptic or not, summoning the ghost biker isn't an easy feat to achieve on such a night.

**BZ Halloween Night**

"I can remember, you know, at least three, three attempts, you know, so to speak. And, I can't speak for, uh, I guess in other words I don't really remember the other two occasions um, very clearly because I just know that we weren't successful. But, but there was one evening in particular when we had tried it, and it was on Halloween night. It didn't work in particular that evening because when we pulled into the driveway which is now completely vacant, you know, we got a light flashed on us. And the light was from a police cruiser who was situated in the parking lot waiting for unsuspecting students like us. To basically tell us to get the heck off this property. So, you know, I mean again, I guess what's kind of cool about that is that though is that it's just a validation that like, it's something that exists and that it's something that people know about and that, you know, the neighbors and local law enforcement are trying to put an end to it because, not because it's not a cool story or not because it's not a cool experience, but because it is inherently dangerous. It's the same reason that this motorcyclist presumably crashed his car. I mean this roadway is incredibly narrow and hilly" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**Amy**

And dangerous. Residents and police all agree: the intersection of Oxford-Milford and Earhart roads can be perilous. No one wishes for a second ghost light.

**BZ Explain What it is**

"You know I've heard of some students, who have, who have kind of felt like encouraged to kind of test the theory um, you know, in maybe more of a dramatic way by seeing the light and kind of driving, you know, kind of hastily toward it you know, in an effort to -- you know, in an effort to, I guess, further validate, or, you know, or further explain what it is" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**BZ Motorcycle Ghost Intro**

"You know, I never heard of any like tragedy directly involved, you know, with with people seeking out this motorcycle ghost. But it's still, it's still like, plausible, you know, to you know, to understand, you know, how it could be. Anybody who goes to do this today needs to be so incredibly careful" (Zimmerman, 2017).

**\*Music\*****Amy**

One thing is for certain, whether you believe in the phenomenon or not, the story is unforgettable. Brian remembers his experience at the bend of the road where the motorcycle ghost perished as one that brought he and his fellow classmates together. It was a moment in which they all felt as though they could confirm both life and afterlife.

**BZ Something Cool That Night**

"There were like four of us huddled in this like really basic compact car. I mean, I think we all felt like some solace, like, being, you know, together. But there was still this like real exhilaration you know that like we were seeing something. And of course one of the four people who were with us had seen it before. And it still was really like a profound thing for them. And I can remember sitting in the car and just like watching and you know it felt like the light was kind of jumping around the sky you know for what seemed like several minutes. Though I'm sure it was a matter of seconds. You know, like afterwards like

you know whatever we may have done for the rest of the day I mean I think that like we had that verification that we had done something really cool that night and no matter what we did it was kind of enough" (Zimmerman, 2017).

### Amy

The Oxford motorcycle ghost is a tragic story of love lost. And for those so intrigued to answer the mystery behind the light, typically find themselves believers upon experiencing the phenomenon.

### BZ That Says Something

"I definitely believe in this legend. It's something that exists, that it's something that has played out you know, multiple times you know, in history. And, it certainly makes sense to me. It was really one of those kinds of experiences in my life that I won't ever forget and I think that says something" (Zimmerman, 2017).

### Amy

And once you realize how sad this story actually is, you feel a sort of sympathy; a kind of sadness. And yet, hope. Hope that if this story truly holds a place somewhere in history, the couple can somehow find one another along that dark road.

### **\*Music\***

### BZ All of This Time Later

"You know, it just makes you wonder, like, if this is really playing out. I mean, if ghosts are a thing, and if, you know, and if, this love story was, you know, was as strong and powerful as it supposedly was. If this passion that linked them together and was destroyed by tragedy. If it's any indication - - I don't know, it just seems plausible to me that you know, that there could be something that's still existing or that's still playing out in some way that they're still trying to connect or that they're still trying to meet all of this time later."

### Amy

Every week Superstitious posts a survey asking for your thoughts or opinions regarding an upcoming show. When Brian approached me about the Oxford biker, I posted a survey asking you all if you believed in ghosts. Out of those who responded, 45.45% said

yes; 54.55% said no. I'd like to imagine that perhaps some of us are on the fence about the existence of ghosts simply because we have not yet experienced any phenomenon. Perhaps we don't want to suffer from believing in things that we don't understand. Perhaps we don't want to be superstitious.

**(Pause. Music?)**

### **Idioms for Idiots**

Each episode of Superstitious features a segment called "Idioms for Idiots". Since we took a look at a superstition featuring a ghost, I asked you all to vote on your favorite ghostly idiom. This week, we'll be delving into the popular phrase "graveyard shift".

You've probably had a friend who has worked the graveyard shift. Perhaps even you have worked the graveyard shift. What does it mean? In every day contemporary lingo: to work all night. And there's something a little eerie about the phrase. Generally the graveyard shift occurs when most people are in bed and the ghosts come out to play. Or that could just be me.

The term "graveyard shift" originated in the 1800s in a time which some people were thought dead but buried alive. Popular belief states that men working in graveyards would listen for bells attached to string and buried with a coffin's inhabitant. If a bell rang, the person in the coffin was still alive and needed to be dug out immediately. This is a plausible scenario, however, this is mere myth. To work a graveyard shift simply means to work in the middle of the night.

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This episode of Superstitious is dedicated to special guest, Brian. Without your input, this episode would not have been possible. Thank you for sharing this story, for being enthusiastically involved, and thank you for being you.

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"Superstitious" is available on iTunes and Stitcher, so if you enjoyed the show, make sure to subscribe and rate; it would be greatly appreciated!

Join me for the next episode of Superstitions on Monday, October 16th!

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