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## BEYOND THE GRAVE

# Ghost may haunt South Eugene High School

*Creaking footsteps and fluctuating lights lead to ghost legend*

By Kristen Sheley  
 Freelance Reporter

Some people love their school so much they can't bear to leave — even after they die.

Such would seem to be the case at South Eugene High School. The school, built in the early 1950s, has what many believe to be a ghost lurking in the auditorium.

Reports dating back to the early 1970s tell of lights mysteriously switching on and off, funny noises like footsteps on the catwalk and sightings of someone hanging around the theater after it had been locked up for the night.

Many believe that it is Robert Turnbull Grankey's spirit who haunts the theater. Shortly before 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 1958, 16-year-old Grankey was changing lights in the auditorium. It was pretty routine work, but what happened next was far from routine.

As Grankey, a sophomore, was crossing approximately six feet from one catwalk to another on two-by-six-inch beams, he lost his footing, crashed through the plaster ceiling of the auditorium and fell 55 feet, according to a Register-Guard article.

Thirty students were present in the auditorium and witnessed the fatal slip. Grankey was killed almost instantly from a broken neck and severe head injuries. So great was the impact from the fall that the two chairs on which Grankey landed — Row G, Seats 10 and 11 — remained dented from the accident until they were removed during remodeling in 1994.

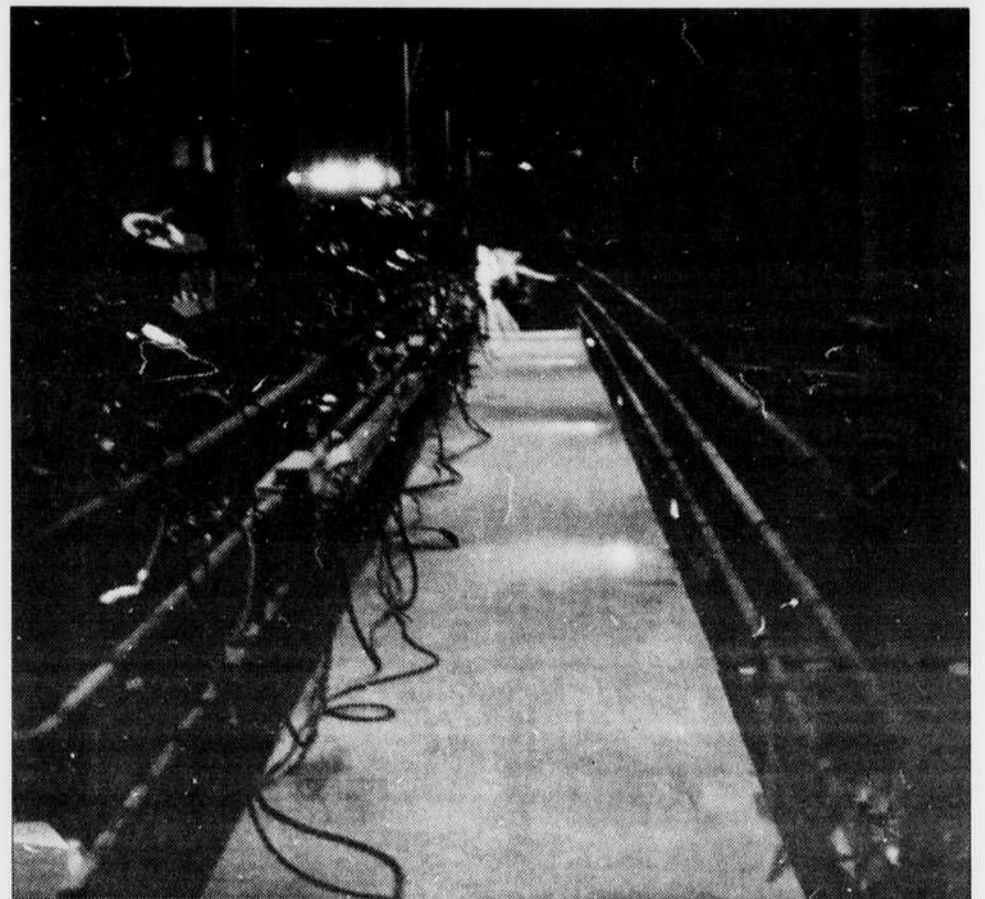
Joe Zingo, South Eugene's drama teacher for the past 14 years, has had his share of strange experiences in the theater.

"Our lights always go off and on," he said. "And [the ghost] doesn't like heavy metal music. He'll turn the music or lights off then."

But Zingo takes it all in stride: "Every theater has a ghost."

Mysterious noises, such as strange creaking and footsteps, have also been reported, usually emanating from the catwalk where Grankey took his last steps. Once, a custodian heard a piano playing in the locked theater after hours. Some claim to have heard their names called by an eerie voice in the empty auditorium. A variety of students and faculty over the years have reported seeing someone sitting in the old balcony or standing at the back of the locked auditorium. But when they check, no one is there. And no one can get in or out without a key.

During remodeling in 1994, history nearly repeated itself when a workman fell through the ceiling of the auditorium and landed on the seats. Unlike Grankey, however, the work-



COURTESY PHOTO

*This photograph, originally taken for a school brochure, may have captured the image of the infamous ghost. Imperfections in the photo were left intact for accuracy and validity.*

man lived, suffering only a broken foot. Some claim it was the ghost who helped save his life.

Recently, a couple of students were taking photographs of the auditorium for a brochure to promote the theater. The catwalk was one of the last places to be photographed, and one of those present for the photo shoot, senior Andrew Leung, admits they were rushed. The pictures were developed quickly and, in the snapshot of the catwalk, something strange showed up.

"We didn't see or feel anything at the time," he insists. "I swear we didn't stage it."

Could this be the ghost of South Eugene High? Or merely a photographic flaw? By Leung's own admission, the picture and negative were developed in a hurry. It would be easy to dismiss the picture as the result of a human error.

Nevertheless, rumors of the ghost persist. "Every Halloween," Zingo chuckled, "people ask about this."



COURTESY PHOTO

*Here, the ghostly image is magnified. Is it a photographic flaw, or the real thing?*

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