

## **Out and about Suite 777: The ghost suite**

**WILLIAM R. HOLLAND**  
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Since Halloween is only a few days away, I thought I'd share a scary Halloween tale with you about Suite 777, "The Ghost Suite."

As the tale goes, this suite mysteriously appears around Halloween every two years, and then, as quickly as it appears, vanishes into the dark of a moonless night for another two years, leaving behind a trail of doubt as to who, if anyone, actually occupied the suite for any constructive purpose.

The main characters of this hair-raising tale are Colorado's 4th Congressional District representative, Marilyn Musgrave, and a small town newspaper publisher, who's left bewildered as he unsuccessfully tries to find Suite 777 at 5401 Stone Creek Circle in Loveland -- the address Musgrave claims is her campaign office.

The tale begins in early August when the newspaper publisher from Musgrave's hometown of Fort Morgan obtains a copy of a "Dear Friend" mailing sent by Musgrave from Suite 777.

The mailing is a letter written by Musgrave endorsing Bob Watson of Sterling, who, at the time, is campaigning to become district attorney.

The tale continues with the publisher taking a closer look at the letter and uncovering what he believes to be an unethical use of Musgrave's congressional letter writing privileges.

Not known for ignoring an indiscretion as blatant as a sitting congressperson apparently abusing the ethics of his or her position, the publisher writes a column about Musgrave's letter assuming she used congressional funds to pay for the letter's printing and mailing.

The next morning, with vampires asleep in their caskets for another day, the publisher receives a phone call from Musgrave. She is not a happy Halloweener.

Musgrave states the letter was written on "campaign" stationery, not "congressional" stationery, and that she's done nothing wrong.

Musgrave also states that Watson's campaign paid for the printing and mailing. (It should be noted that neither Musgrave nor Watson has provided the publisher, or any other media after repeated requests, any physical proof to prove Watson's campaign actually paid for the letter.)

Musgrave even goes so far as to call the newspaper publisher ignorant and ignominious -- even though ignominious isn't a real word.

The tale unfolds further with the publisher, undaunted by Musgrave's attempt at intimidation, continuing to search for the reason Musgrave is so upset with his column.

In late August, the publisher has his answer. An official with the House franking office in Washington, D.C., verifies that his office reviewed the Musgrave letter prior to its mailing and had to approve it as campaign stationery.

The official states he believes the letter was deliberately written to appear as congressional stationery.

What makes the letter "campaign" stationery as Musgrave claims, are the words Suite 777 shown as the 5401 Stone Creek Circle address from where the letter originated.

Musgrave's congressional office address is listed as 5401 Stone Creek Circle, Suite 204 on her congressional Web site.

Two weeks before the election, the publisher, aboard his trusted white steed, "Her Nightmare," with a camera on his side, rides off to Loveland in search of Suite 777, a suite he believes doesn't exist.

Once at 5401 Stone Creek Circle, he expects to find a seven-story office building since the number 777 indicates that possibility. To the publisher's surprise, the building is only two stories.

As he approaches the building's main entrance, the publisher reads the business names of the occupants clearly visible on the left-hand glass sidelight to the door.

The names include Wells Fargo, Land Title Guarantee, Senator Wayne Allard and Marilyn Musgrave -- Member of Congress. No listing for a Musgrave for Congress office is shown.

The publisher thinks maybe that's a mistake and Suite 777 actually exists. He's confident he'll find it once he enters the building.

Once inside, the publisher notices a directory of offices for the second floor. It reads, Wells Fargo: Suite 201, Land Title Guarantee: Suite 202, Senator Wayne Allard: Suite 203, and Marilyn Musgrave -- Member of Congress: Suite 204.

He goes to the second floor, and looks around, but is still unable to find Suite 777. The lettering on the door to Musgrave's congressional office makes no mention of a campaign office.

Puzzled, the publisher goes back to the first floor where he noticed a framed floor plan hanging on the wall that details all the suites and offices in the building.

Having studied architectural design and worked for an architectural firm in the early 1970s, the publisher uses his knowledge to study the floor plan.

The floor plan shows there are only eight office suites in the building; Suites 101 to 104 are on the main floor with Suites 201 to 204 on the second floor. But no mention of a Suite 777 or an office 777. Now the publisher is really confused.

Assuming Suite 777 has to be somewhere in the building -- maybe tucked away in a corner of the basement -- the publisher asks a receptionist if she could direct him to Suite 777.

The receptionist, with a look of confusion, says, "I'm not aware of any suite with that number in this building."

The publisher then asks, "Can you direct me to the Musgrave for Congress campaign office?"

The receptionist says, "Oh, all right. Go back out the front door and take a left. At the east

end of the building you'll find an outside door. I think the office is at the top of the stairs."

As the publisher approaches the door, he notices there is no signage on the outside of the building for a Musgrave for Congress campaign office.

The door is unlocked, so the publisher climbs two flights of stairs and finds two separate doors side by side on the second floor. But still no signage for a Musgrave for Congress campaign office or Suite 777 is seen.

In front of the doors, the publisher has to step over two empty medium-sized cardboard boxes, indicating to him that this can't be a legitimate office entrance.

One door doesn't have a door knob, obviously designed so it can only be opened from the inside.

The other door appears to be an emergency exit door, with what appears to be a key lock handle on the outside, allowing an occupant from inside the building to escape in the event of a fire etc. but not allowing unauthorized public entry from the stairwell.

The publisher walks back down the stairs headed for home, having not found any public access or signage for a Suite 777.

Approaching his trusted steed, he encounters a little girl and boy dressed in costumes depicting Musgrave and Johnny Cochran, the famous attorney from the O.J. Simpson trial.

The girl's costume is a pink dress suit, blonde wig and a purse to hold her candy. The boy is dressed in a dark suit and tie, black leather gloves and a briefcase for his candy.

As the publisher greets the trick or treaters, the girl says, "Thank you for visiting Musgrave Land, the world of make believe."

With a giggle in his voice, the boy says, "Sir, if in doubt, vote her out."

This haunting Halloween tale finally ends with the publisher convinced Suite 777 is a ghostly figment of someone's imagination for political manipulation.

Until next time...I'm Out & About with some doubt. {SECTION}Out & About appears most Fridays on the Opinion page. Send your comments to my attention at The Times or e-mail me at [publisher@fmtimes.com](mailto:publisher@fmtimes.com)