



Just after Navy service in the Korean War, I worked on an afternoon newspaper called the Beverly Hills Citizen, now long gone. The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, about two miles from my office, was the place to be for movie stars to be seen, meet, dine, drink, book rooms and fool around ever since it was first built in 1927.

The general belief in tourist minds today is that glamorous stars, agents, moguls and hangers-on still haunt the Hollywood Roosevelt, and evenings can be fun times for autograph hounds, paparazzi and cell-phone photo freaks. The hotel is right across the street from the city's most famous tourist trap, Grauman's Chinese Theater (now the Mann Theater), so the walk-in traffic is always heavy. However, after 80 years, today both the hotel and theater are a bit threadbare. This era's really A-list stars and their snooty companions rarely visit seedy Hollywood Boulevard, and do most of their living and playing in the hills of Beverly, Holmby, Malibu and in other posh communities west to the ocean.

When I did get to the area for a news or feature assignment in the 1950s, I often visited the hotel like any other tourist. I can recall seeing in the bar, restaurant, pool or hallways such now long-gone stars as Frederic March, Yul Brynner, Irene Dunne, Judy Garland and Bill Powell. I think I saw Marilyn Monroe once leaving the hotel surrounded by a group of reporters, but she was gone so quickly, I've never been sure. Many bleached blonde starlets of those days looked and wiggled like Marilyn.

Often there were film crews working in the lobby, auditorium, night club and pool areas. Once I got close enough to see them shooting scenes from the movie, "Sunset Boulevard". Standing by with their scripts were Bill Holden and Jack Webb. In the movie, Webb had a relatively small role, but a few years later he became a major TV star as Sergeant Friday on "Dragnet." The hotel has served as a set for movies from the silent films to today's digital extravaganzas.

In the 1950s, the haunting stories had not yet started, and today's most famous ghosts were then still alive and at the height of their careers. I was there recently to visit my LA-based kids, both in showbiz production, and we went to the old hotel just for a drink and some nostalgia moments. We also wanted to hear about the ghosts. We asked the bartender about the ghost stories. Hoping for a large tip, he was eager to tell us.

According to legend, actor Montgomery Clift stayed at the hotel for three months in 1953 while preparing for his role as the Army bugler in "From Here to Eternity." Now, according to the bartender, Clift's ghost often roams around his old Room 928, and in the nearby hallway in his pre-World War II Army uniform. Some witnesses say they've seen and heard him playing bugle calls or reading his script aloud.

Rumors persist that the ghost of Marilyn Monroe also haunts her old Hollywood Roosevelt haunts, and is reportedly often seen preening in a hallway mirror just outside her favorite poolside Suite 1200. While visiting her rooms and in other spots of the hotel, people have reported a sudden rush of cold air and the sound of sobbing.

Although our family had several drinks and went to the areas where the ghosts were said to roam, we didn't hear, feel or see anything out of the ordinary. Tthe only haunted faces we saw were on the wrinkled ones of elderly guests limping through the hallways.

*Submitted by John F. Michaels, Indio CA*