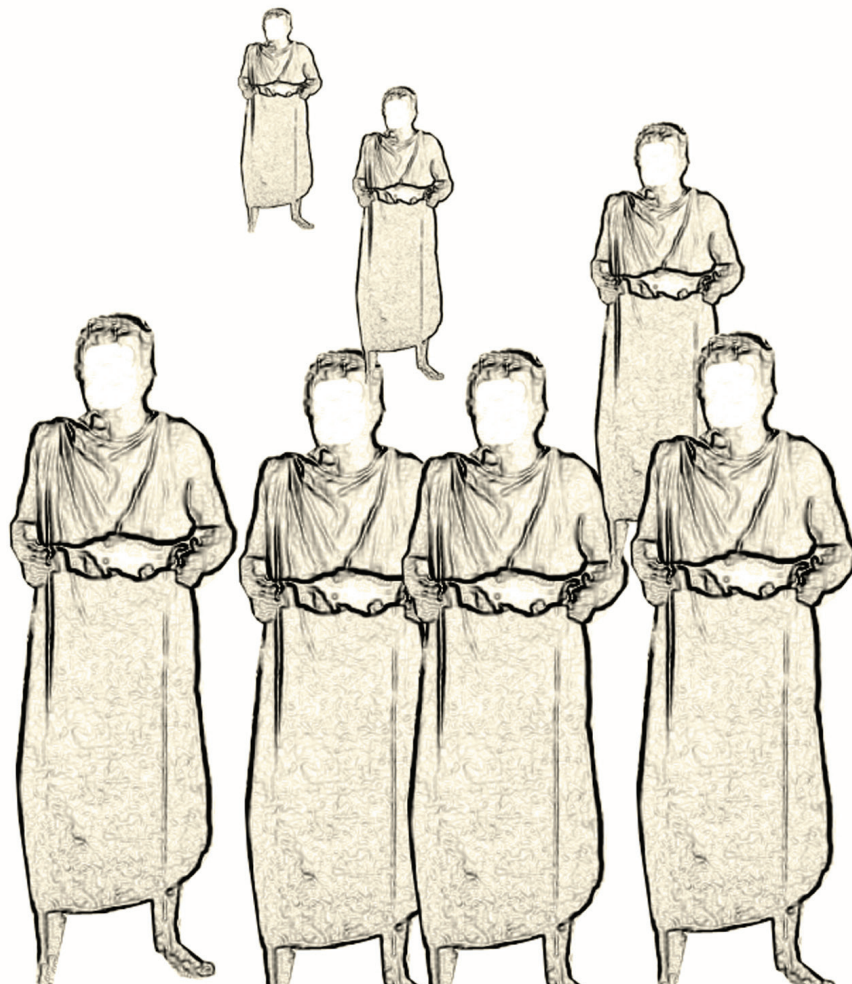


“Playing Johnny in the re-make really changed the course of my life. The original was incredibly scary and powerful.”

Bill Mosely, Johnny, 1990 NOTLD, September, 2017



The Farmhouse Seven

the making of the 1968 zombie
thriller **Night of the Living Dead**

“We wanted to make a scary movie to scare people.”

Filmmaker, March, 2015





The Farmhouse Seven

the making of the 1968 zombie
thriller *Night of the Living Dead*

Written By
Jeff Moreno

Foreword
Richard Ricci

Introduction
Anonymous Cast Member

Special Contributor's Note
Tim Ferrante

Personal Quotes
Judith O'Dea

american art series

This book is dedicated to Judith O'Dea, Tim Ferrante, Joe and Lorraine Unitas, and Donna Summer, and to the memory of William Mogush, Herbert Summer, John Kirch and Richard Ricci. My deep respect and gratitude for you all is immeasurable.

My deep gratitude and thank you to: Evans City Mayor, Dean Zinkhann for his support, the City of Evans City for the use of the Evans City Cemetery, the Evans City Historical Society, and John Kirch for the use of his 1968 theater schedule. Also, to the memory of George Romero, George Kosana and Bill Hinzman for all of their horror convention table interview's over the years. A heartfelt thank you to all of the celebrities that graciously provided me a personal quote on their experience with the film.

Also, thank you to The Pittsburgh Press and The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and to all of the newspapers and magazine's used for this project for all of your valuable history.

And lastly, a big thank you to my loving wife Ping.

**“Of course I’ve
seen it, who hasn’t.
It’s the classic
horror film.**

**I especially love
it because it was
original and well
put together
without the help of
a digital world.”**

**Don Mancini, Director,
Chucky Franchise,
September, 2017**

*There's one of
them now*

I HURT

What's happening

**Why don't you
just keep calm**

I can handle the truck, no sweat

It was dead, but it

opened its eyes

*murder
happy
characters*

and tried to move

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YOU BASTARD'S

Foreword

Making *Night of the Living Dead* was a very special time in my life. I remember it was the friendships that we all made working together. With any business there is going to be disagreements about how something should be done, and we had our disagreements, but we always worked things out. I met George from my cousin Rudy, and we became friends, and in a short time we started making movies together. Our first movie was called *Slant*, about a girl that lived at the bottom of an incline. It was only about ten-minutes long, probably not that good, but we were doing what we wanted to do, and that made it all worth while. By the time that we were making our feature, the *Monster Flick* as it was known, we thought we really had the ability to make a great movie. Judith O'Dea agreed to play the part of Barbra, she was wonderful and talented enough to play the part. I knew Duane Jones, and I asked him to audition for the role of Ben, and we all knew that he was the best person for the role. We needed to keep Karl Hardman involved after it was decided that George would direct, because we needed Karl's sound studio, so him and his wife Marilyn played the parts of the Cooper's. I found Keith Wayne singing in a bar on Route 51, and he agreed to play the part of Tom. Judy Ridely was working for us, and she agreed to play the part of Judy late in the feature when we decided that Keith needed a love interest. We found as many people as we could to play ghouls, they were cheap to pay, I believe \$25 a day, but people enjoyed coming out to the house and spending the time with us. I even played a ghoul in a few different scenes myself. After the feature was completed, everyone went back to where they started, and we started seeing a little money come in, and it was great, but we never thought it would be what it is today. By the early 1970s, I don't want to say that the movie was forgotten, but we didn't think there would be anymore to it. Somewhere along that time it started playing late at night and people started watching it again. The more people that watched it, the more it was talked about, and more people watched it. Today, I can't believe that it has become so popular that fans from all over the world love it. We made a feature that started out small and it grew to be a true horror classic.

Richard Ricci, October, 2017



Introduction

In 1967, people were talking about *Night of the Living Dead* being made because it was such an unusual film. People were looking forward to it with great anticipation, even the local newspapers gave it a lot of hype, it was just an unusual thing to happen in Pittsburgh. I wanted to meet movie people, I thought that they were extremely hip people. My sister gave me the phone number to Hardman Associates and I called and introduced myself to Jack Givens, and he eventually invited me to the set of *Night of the Living Dead*. He was exceptionally kind to me, and when you are fifteen, you start looking for someone beyond your parents that you look up to. I finally made it to the set of *Night of the Living Dead*, and though I arrived late in the filming, most of the scenes were already finished, I was still able to be in a couple of scenes. I was overwhelmed with joy to have something to do with this film. I had a million questions while on the set and everyone was extremely kind to me. I also remember the premiere of the film, and going around at the reception and telling the stars how wonderful they were. Being a part of this film and all of the years later to be able to talk about it and share my memories is still such joy. This book is about the filmmakers, and about the making of *Night of the Living Dead*. I know that you will enjoy this book.

Anonymous Cast Member, October, 2017



Author's Note

There is so much that can be written as to why I decided to start this project, but to make a long story short, I wanted to celebrate the filmmakers story. I wanted to tell the story of the seven people that shared the Gass Farmhouse; *The Farmhouse Seven*. Over the years, I was able to personally meet and speak to most, not all, of the original cast and crew, and that is something that I forever cherish. When I decided to start this project in 2016, my original plan was to release a book for the 50th anniversary in 2018. I reached out to the primary filmmakers to obtain authorization and hopefully gain their participation, but unfortunately, we were never able to reach an agreement, hence, this unauthorized book. Along the way, I contacted Judith O'Dea and she graciously granted me permission to use her many quotes and her horror convention table interviews for this project. I also had the honor of having breakfast one morning with Richard Ricci in 2017 at the same hotel that we were both staying in, and not only did he graciously grant me an interview, he gave me permission to use parts of his interview for the foreword for this project. I contacted the legendary Tim Ferrante, and he graciously provided some of his memories of NOTLD and permission to use his notes for a special contributor's note for this project. I reached out to Joe and Lorraine Unitas, William Mogush and Herbert and Donna Summer, and they all graciously provided me permission to use their interview's for this project. Lastly, one cast member provided me an interview and gave me permission to use his interview as the introduction for this project, but he also requested to remain anonymous. Doing this project I also had the pleasure of interviewing over one hundred celebrities, directors and producers about their thoughts on NOTLD. Some had never watched the film, while others shared their fond memories of NOTLD. Though no one will ever have the complete history of NOTLD, too many years have passed, memories have faded, and the majority of the original cast and crew have passed away. My goal was to compile as much of the NOTLD history as I could find, to tell the story of such a wonderful, iconic film. Sadly, since the start of this project, George Kosana, George Romero, Charles Graig, Marilyn Eastman, Richard Ricci, Herbert Summer, William Mogush and John Kirch have all passed away. They were never able to read and enjoy this book, but their memories live on with their contribution to the film. With that said, I am honored and proud to present this project to the surviving cast and crew, and to all of the fans of NOTLD.

Jeff Moreno,
Los Angeles, May, 2022



Special Contributor's Note

There is one journalist that Duane Jones allowed to interview him about his experience with NOTLD. The year was 1987, a year before Jones death in 1988, and unknowingly, it would be Jones last interview. That journalist was the legendary Tim Ferrante, and Tim graciously provided his thoughts about NOTLD and his extraordinary time with Duane Jones.

American Art Series: When did you first watch NOTLD, and how did you become a fan?

Tim: I say this without reservation...NOTLD scared me to death. I was a teenager and I saw it at a drive-in theatre. It was the bottom half of a double feature with WILLARD. I knew the picture was supposed to be scary, but I wasn't prepared for just HOW frightening it would be. After I got home I laid awake for hours, running the scenes through my mind and trying like hell to wash any notion that a ghoul was coming up the stairs any second. Please don't misunderstand...I loved the fact this movie destroyed me! So few have. From that point on I was determined to learn everything I could about it, the folks who made it and why it was so successful in freaking people out. The resources of today didn't exist 50 years ago. That--combined with the stigma of being a fan of what was considered a terrible and disgusting movie--didn't make it easy to research. I recall defending NOTLD in the letters column of the March 1972 edition of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine (issue #89). It had printed a critical letter a few issues before by someone who would later become one of our great genre authors (and a friend!), Tom Weaver. The letter was a rebuttal where I declared, "As far as I'm concerned, NOTLD is more than just a fright film...it's a classic!" It's such a terrific movie for so many reasons and those of us who saw beyond the blood and gore just intuitively knew it would never go away. Like many works of art, the period in which they're created fail to see their brilliance. It often takes a very long time before something that was scoffed at is finally regarded as something exceptional. I'm delighted that NOTLD has received the recognition it deserves.

American Art Series: How did you come up with the idea of interviewing the original NOTLD cast members?

Tim: My 1988 Fangoria articles were the result of an undying appreciation for NOTLD. I successfully pitched the WHERE THE LIVING DEAD ARE BURIED idea to editor Tony Timpone who was, and remains, a good friend. Thanks to my business partnership with NOTLD scripter John Russo (we co-owned the Pittsburgh publishing company, Imagine, Inc. with three others) he was able to put me in touch with cast members who I hadn't already met. Interviewing everyone for that retrospective (now thirty years ago!) was especially rewarding. They couldn't have been more cooperative or pleasant. Some even sent me thank you notes! We couldn't locate Duane Jones or Keith Wayne at the time so those two are missing.

American Art Series: What was it like to interview Duane Jones?

Tim: Before long, Duane was located and he became a separate Fangoria article that, unfortunately, was published posthumously. It was thanks to Russo's asking that he agreed to talk about the movie with me. It was the coup of the century and in my mind, the most historically significant. There is no other interview in existence by any other person. If you should ever find one, let me know as I've been looking for one for fifty years! My wife went along to his home in Old Westbury, NY and we spent several hours with Duane. He was just the nicest, most charming human being you could imagine. He explained how he privately didn't draw attention to his iconic role among friends. He disliked how it would often change the dynamic of a friendship when suddenly someone learned that he starred in NOTLD. I still feel very privileged to be the person who he permitted to document his thoughts and recollections of the movie and that period in his life in general.

Tim Ferrante, June, 2018



From The Mayor

Having lived in Pennsylvania all of my life, I am proud to have represented the great borough of Evans City Pennsylvania as the Mayor for the past six years. The Night of the Living Dead Weekend Festival was started when I became Mayor, and I am proud to continue the support of the festival year after year. The festival brings people from all over the world to our city, and brings a lot of support for the borough both financially and for the socialization. The citizens that live in Evans City embrace the festival because it is the biggest event that happens in the city. We have a beautiful cemetery that is maintained meticulously, and we maintain the memory of NOTLD, and we are really proud of that distinction. So please visit our wonderful city anytime of the year, as you enjoy the history of NOTLD.

Evans City Mayor, Dean Zinkhann, October 2017



The Grand Tour

The fans are what truly make any film a success or in NOTLD, a classic. George Romero used the humble town of Evans City Pennsylvania, about forty miles outside of Pittsburgh, as the backdrop for the authenticity of his creative thought. Every October there is an annual tour of the filming locations of NOTLD and other George Romero films. The tour transports fans of all ages throughout Evans City and the surrounding area, yearning to devour the locations of the last remaining remnants of NOTLD. The film tour is in conjunction with the annual Living Dead Weekend Festival celebration of NOTLD in Evans City.



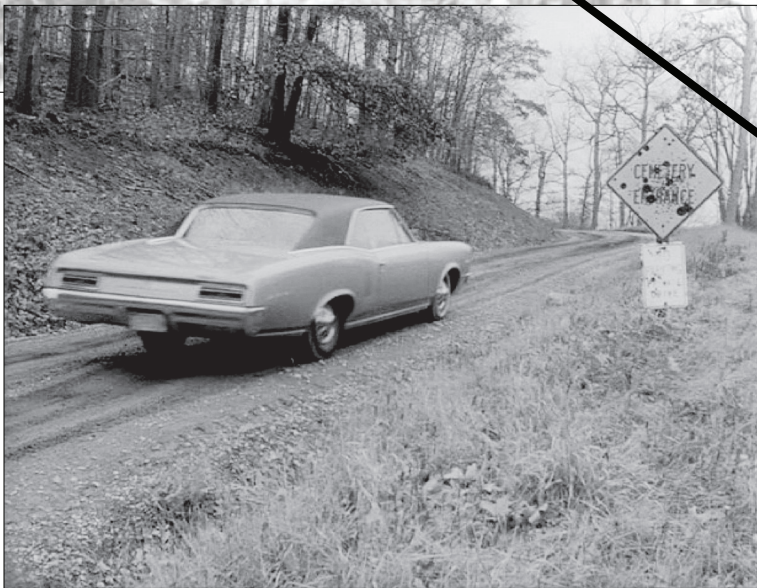
This Page: Evans City, 2017.
Opposite Page: A memorial marker of NOTLD in Evans City, 2016.

“The black and white movie, the opening in the cemetery, who can forget. I thought it was good, and at that time it was unique, because there was a underline political message that resonated with people, more than the current zombie trend, which is to ‘kill the other.’ In newer movies, it’s, ‘here are the zombies mentality sorta thing,’ but in the original dead it was different, maybe because it was a new approach. A great movie.”

**Ari Lehman, Jason, Friday The 13th,
April, 2017**

“I like to go to the cemetery early in the morning and just admire the beauty and stillness.”

Filmmaker, October, 2016



The entrance to the Evans City Cemetery in 1968 and 2017.

“The entrance to the cemetery is one of my favorite scenes with the cemetery

entrance sign. It’s no longer there.”

Judith O’Dea, September, 2016

“I saw the movie on Hollywood Boulevard at the World Theatre. You could watch three movies for a dollar. During that time I was a mail-boy at 20th Century Fox and I used to go see every movie. I saw some Italian feature and NOTLD was the third feature. I knew a little about it, but I paid my 99 cents so I wanted to see the third feature. I watched it, and it f*ing blew me away. I thought this is actually good. It happened to me twice, once with Texas Chain Saw, and once with Night.”**

John Landis, Director, October, 2017

“I loved it. It was like a seminal experience, the Living Dead and Eraserhead were very disorienting, because you’ve never seen anything like it before. My favorite scene is when they’re trapped in the house, because there’s a real sense of claustrophobia there, and the audience already knows the characters by then. It’s a great film.”

**Robert Englund, Freddy,
A Nightmare On Elm Street,
April, 2017**

“I felt a sense of fear at times when we were filming, because it felt like it was really happening.”

Judith O’Dea, April, 2013

The Monster Flick

In 1960, classmates George Romero, cousins Rudy and Richard Ricci and Ray Laine starting a production company called Ram Productions in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The company opened a small shop in Pittsburgh's South-Side, located at 1829 East Carson Street. With eager possibilities, the young filmmakers followed their passion and made their first short ten minute film titled *Slant*, about a woman that lived at the bottom of an incline, but wanted to live high above. With motivation, the filmmakers made a longer film titled, *Expostulations*, with a 16mm camera and a few thousand dollars of pocket money. The filmmakers used family, friends and friends of friends as actors that were unpaid or paid very little to be in their comedy film. One such actor, Russell Streiner, a friend of Rudy Ricci from the Carnegie Institute of Tech, was asked to play a small part in the film for an amusement park scene. Even with the determination of the young filmmakers, the film was never finished and landed on the company's to-do shelf. Streiner became good friends with Romero, and eventually became associate producer in the company shortly before it disbanded in 1961. Romero and Streiner formed their own production company in 1962 called, *Latent Image Incorporated*, and remained in the same Carson Street office of former Ram Productions. The new company included Russ's brother Gary, and Larry Anderson, an experienced copywriter and ex-advertising executive. Romero and Streiner also started the *Theatre Service Corporation* for a short period, to make commercials for the drive-in theater market. Bill Hinzman joined the company as a still photographer for Theater Service, and eventually left the company in 1965. The young filmmakers struggled to make ends meet with low paying, commercial and educational projects in and around the Pittsburgh area. One such educational project was in September of 1962, when Romero, the director, and cameramen Streiner and Ricci, were commissioned to board a seven-passenger Sikorsky S-55 helicopter to film seven and eleven-year-old brother's Bobby and Chip Strotz, to capture their experience of the flight for a children's educational segment for television station WQED. The filmmakers also filmed other segments of the series for WQED at the Pittsburgh Gulf Building, Cathedral of Learning and the Story Book Forest. Never giving up, Latent Image managed to make commercials for Duke and Iron City Beer's, Calgon Soap and the Buhl Planetarium in Pittsburgh for the drive-in theater market. Romero, the company President, Anderson, the Vice President and Streiner, the Secretary and Treasurer, had envisioned completing a successful full feature film of some type by 1970 that would be made entirely in the Pittsburgh area. In a Pittsburgh Press article from March 1964, Anderson was quoted, "We'd like to win an Academy Award, we're not necessarily in any hurry." The article

"We agreed to make a feature film, and if we completed it, we were successful."
Filmmaker, March, 2015

revealed the filmmakers optimism about completing a feature film of some genre. Latent Image moved from the Carson Street location to a larger studio at 247 Fort Pitt Boulevard in early 1964. The company's phone number at their new location was 261-5591. The filmmakers planned a twenty-minute film

in the spring of that year, that would lead them to their full feature film. Latent Image made their first commercial for \$150, and by 1965, the Calgon Soap Company paid Latent Image \$90,000 for a one-minute commercial. The commercial could in fact be the first sci-fi commercial ever created, at least for Calgon and Latent Image. The commercial, *The Calgon Story*, was a love story, sci-fi and cleaning story all wrapped into a one-minute commercial. The story was about a submarine going into a washing machine to show that using other brands of laundry soap will cause your laundry to look dull, gray and be covered in left-over detergent filth. In the commercial, the Captain of the ship and his assistant cleaned the clothes, and another successful mission was completed. The *Calgonats*, as they were called, headed out for another machine to clean, just before the assistant says to the Captain, "I think I'm in love with you." Karl Hardman played the scientist in the commercial whom was shocked to see that the Calgon box was never opened. Hardman was the President of *Hardman Associates Incorporated*, a sound production company, located at 213 Smithfield Street in Pittsburgh. Hardman became business contacts with Romero and Streiner for sound and post production services. For the Calgon commercial, it was never fully released due to the company, *Hagan Corporation*, going through a change of ownership shortly after the completion of the commercial. The success of the Calgon Story was a milestone for the filmmakers, not only financially, but they were confident that they had the ability to complete a feature film. The name Latent Image fast became known as the company that could produce quality commercials for companies on a tight budget or companies that didn't want to spend a lot of money. A much needed business loan in 1965 from the *Pittsburgh Regional Industrial Development Corporation* (RIDC) for \$40,000, that was backed by Romero's uncle Monroe, allowed the filmmakers to start production of their new full feature film. RIDC company President Robert H. Ryan, backed the filmmakers and their efforts to keep the television and commercial business in the Pittsburgh area. With money and eager anticipation, the filmmakers started their film called, *Whine of the Fawn*, about a teenagers discovery of life. Unfortunately, the film never produced any desired results and ended up on the shelf just as *Expostulations* had for Ram Productions. The loan did help the company purchase a new film camera, and better lighting and production equipment.

"Originally, we didn't exactly envision a monster movie, but that's the market today and we are being realistic."
Filmmaker, on choosing a film genre, William Allen Article, Pittsburgh Press, June, 1967

Latent Image had become a fully fledged professional production company, with art and casting departments, a six-hundred foot shooting studio, projection, editing booths and a complete laboratory for processing still photography. A friend of Romero, John Russo, joined the company in 1965 when he returned from the Army. The filmmakers continued making commercials that were very well produced, so much that in 1967, their Duke Beer commercial won an award for the beer company for best beer commercial at the *Tenth International Film and Television Festival Awards*. With their commercial business a success, the filmmakers urge to make a feature film was never far behind them. The filmmakers lacked something big, bigger than life, and bigger than their expectations. On a cold day in the middle of winter in Pittsburgh in 1967, the young naive filmmakers had lunch and created the Night of the Living Dead project. According to John Russo's 1985 Book, *The Complete Night of the Living Dead FilmBook*, the filmmakers sat in Samreny's Restaurant on Market Street around the corner from their Fort Pitt Boulevard studio. However, Walter Samreny never opened a restaurant on Market Street. Samreny's original restaurant, the first Lebanese restaurant in Pittsburgh, was located at 1029 Webster Avenue, in the Hill district of Pittsburgh. Samreny was forced to move his original restaurant in the late 1950s after the Pittsburgh Redevelopment Project moved small business owners like Samreny out of the area for larger building projects. Samreny moved to 4808 Buam Boulevard in 1961 where he remained in 1967. Whatever restaurant the Night of the Living Dead was created in, it was in fact in Pittsburgh, and in the middle of winter. The filmmakers discussed making a motion picture just as they had done years earlier about completing a film by 1970. They knew that a film could be made in Pittsburgh that could be as good as anything made in Hollywood. They had the camera equipment, motivation and actors, but they lacked two very important components; financial resources and a script to carry out such a wild imaginative project. In Russo's 1985 Book, he notes that *he* was the one that suggested that day at *a* restaurant, that Latent Image make a feature film. Night of the Living Dead was created that day when all but a few principals of Latent Image agreed to take on such a large project. Russo's book also notes that *he* was the one that suggested making a monster film, when the other principals of the company were unclear on what genre their feature film should be. During the next few months, the filmmakers discussed their options in raising money to make a feature film. None of the filmmakers had enough money on their own to finance such a project, but collectively, the filmmakers could raise a few thousand dollars with a novel idea. The idea was simple, each member of the new company, *Image Ten*, would contribute \$600 and bring in one additional investor for a certain number of shares in the project. Image Ten, the first subsidiary of Latent Image Inc., was named after the original *ten* members of the group; George Romero, Russell Streiner, John Russo, Vincent Survinski, Gary Streiner, Richard Ricci, Rudy Ricci, Karl Hardman, Marilyn Eastman and Dave Clipper. Initially, Image Ten raised over \$12,000, but the filmmakers knew that was far from enough money to make even a modest, low budget film. With innovation and determination, the filmmakers began to shoot footage for a film with no real direction, and no completed shooting script, but it was enough to attract more investors to the project. Eventually, the filmmakers raised between \$60,00 and \$150,000, depending on the source, and the making of a Hollywood style motion picture was now foreseeable. The filmmakers were on their way starting production of a feature film, however, no one still knew what kind of film to make; another comedy, western or horror? Russo began writing ideas for a script, and a story began to develop for a sci-fi alien comedy film, that may have been juvenile in its conception, but was good enough that the company principals agreed. That film may have been made if not for the expense of the props that Russo had imagined in his script. Romero put his ideas into a different genre script, as he said in earlier interviews, "*I was inspired by,*" and in later interviews, simply put, "*I ripped off the idea from Richard Matheson's I am legend,*" about the dead returning to life. Romero's version had the dead cannibalizing the living, while Matheson's version was about vampires. Romero thought that he had created a totally new monster in his flesh eating ghouls, which was far from the zombie conceptualization of filmmakers and writers of the time.

Night of the Anubis

Monster Flick

"It will be lights, action and all that jazz in the vicinity of Evans City for a couple of weeks. The folks at Latent Image, who have always threatened to shoot a full-length movie here, will be doing just that."

**William Allen, Pittsburgh Press Business Editor,
June, 1967**

Romero's monster concept that was far different than his predecessors, is that his monster's ate human flesh, and were controlled by some unknown physiological power, rather than another human being. Another original concept of Romero's monster's, was that the only way to kill one was to smash or shoot it in the head. Romero and the rest of the Image Ten company principals quickly agreed to scrap the comedy idea, and a horror film became the filmmakers direction. The filmmakers were past the idea of a spec (speculation) script, and needed a full shooting script that the majority of the company principals could agree on, and could be completed at a cost that would not bankrupt the company. Romero and Russo each wrote half of the shooting script, often away from each other and often without ideas from other company principals. Romero and Russo would each write sections of the script with their own ideas, and then the group would blend the two together into a shooting script. However, there was never one single shooting script, as the script was changed and improvised along the way when someone came up with an idea, or in Duane Jones case, completely changed the script version of Ben. The script never described exactly how the dead came to life, and more importantly, why did the dead need to eat human flesh? The working title of the film became the *Monster Flick*, for the simple idea that no one had a unique name that worked or could be agreed upon in the early stages of production. The name may have also come from a company principal, Vince Survinski having an eye for organization, and writing *Monster Flick* on the outside of a production envelope. After numerous meetings and discussions, Romero assumed the title of director and principal cinematographer, whereas, the film is known today as, *George A. Romero's Night of the Living Dead*. The other principals of the company assumed title's from producer to production manger and assumed different roles throughout the filming. By June of 1967, the filmmakers started production of NOTLD

“I think that the whole concept of the film was well written and laid out. What was not known, was all of the things that could go wrong.”

Judith O'Dea, September, 2016

in Evans City Pennsylvania. The filmmakers also continued to work on their Latent Image commercial business and created educational films like *Time Present* and a ten-minute film, *Autumn in Pennsylvania* in 1967. For NOTLD, the title of the film was changed and referred to by many different names throughout the production. Romero came up with the title, *Night of Anubis*, named after Anubis, the Egyptian God of Death. With a title that had to be explained among its creators, it would certainly have been confusing for the movie going public. Russo came up with the title of *Flesh Eater's* that was somewhat well received, and eventually the film became *Night of the Flesh Eater's*. The name can be seen written on clapboards of still photographs taken by Bill Hinzman during the cemetery filming, and stamped on the back of some publicity stills taken during production. In an article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette from 1967, *Night of the Flesh Eater's* was the title given, and touted as a chiller-thriller designed especially for the late-night drive-in circuit. In April of 1968, the Post-Gazette ran another story on Image Ten and the film was then referred to as, *Night of the Anubis*. The movie's distributor, Continental, the film division of The Walter Reade Organization, changed the final title to *Night of the Living Dead* because of fear that Vulcan Productions might sue over name similarities. In 1964, Vulcan produced a film titled, *The Flesh Eaters*, starring Martin Kosleck, about microorganisms, and not anything close to a zombie or ghoul. Jerome Pickman, the President of Continental and Walter Reade Jr., the President of The Reade Organization, both defended their decision in later years to change the title of the film, and as everyone that knows film history, that decision changed the industry and the fate of NOTLD forever.



“The zombies arose because the Venus probe which had been shot out to Venus was returning to Earth, and it had picked up some mysterious radiation, so rather than let it get too close to the Earth, and infect all the populous of the Earth, it was exploded in space and some of the pieces floated down to Earth in specific areas around the country and infected those people.”

Filmmaker, Joe Bob Briggs Interview, December, 1992

“We didn't know what we were doing. Ya, we did a few small films and they were 'pretty good,' but we didn't know how to make a full film. We were learning as we went along. We shot in 35mm plus-X and people think it was shot in 16mm because it was so grainy. At the time we thought we were really pushing the envelope. Today, it's mild compared to what is being made.”

Filmmaker, March, 2015

This Page Above: Image Ten advertisement, courtesy, The Pittsburgh Press, 1968. Opposite Page: Latent Image/Image Ten 1968 Headquarters, 247 Fort Pit Blvd., 2017.

The Flesh Eaters

“Image Ten people say the film is as good as any Hollywood made horror picture - and in some respects better.”

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, March, 1968

“Night of the Living Dead is taut and uncompromising, ending on a note of bitter irony.”

Kevin Thomas, The Los Angeles Times, January, 1969

“Pittsburgh’s First Movie Real Shocker.”

The Pittsburgh Press, June, 1969

“It was ground breaking work. They did something that no one up to the time had done, and that’s why everyone goes back to it, because they were the first.”

Jeff Kober, Joe, The Walking Dead, April, 2017

Night of the Living Dead



The Gass Farmhouse

Barbra runs toward the old house to escape the cemetery ghoul, as written in the original NOTLD script. George Romero and John Russo had written an *old house* into their script as the primary filming location. It meant that it had to be someplace that was permanent. In other words, the filmmakers could not use a temporary, overnight location if their film was to be believable. With very little money in the production coffers, the word went out in 1967 that a house was needed for filming. The filmmakers became excited when they heard of a possible house that could be used, and were quickly disappointed when they arrived and viewed a potential house that didn't have what they were looking for. They needed a dilapidated house that would not be too expensive to make it look livable, and had lots of room for filming. The script called for a burning pickup and ghouls breaking into the house, so even more than a suitable house, the location had to be able to withstand some type of damage. The filmmakers could not afford to pay a homeowner for any damage, unintentional or consequential, nor did they have the money to build such a house to do any damage. The filmmakers knew that a film could not be made without a suitable primary location, so any lead was taken seriously. A sod farm owner, Gilbert Gass

(1928-2000) and his wife Norma Jean (1929-2016), of Evans City Pennsylvania, about forty miles outside of Pittsburgh, were planning on tearing down an old farmhouse on their property. The farmhouse was on their sod farm called *Penn Turf Nurseries*. In the late 1950s, the post 1900 farmhouse and its ninety-six acres of land was owned by the *Beaver Valley Gospel Tabernacle* and run by Rev. Hattie M. Christopher as a summer camp for underprivileged children. The house and land became known as *Camp Deer Head*, and provided a summer location for local 4H clubs and local churches for children to learn a Christian education and enjoy outdoor recreation. By 1967, Camp Deer Head was long closed, and its ninety-six acres of land had been divided up and sold as agriculture parcels, including the sod farm that Gass had purchased. The farmhouse, situated about five-hundred feet from Connoquenessing Creek in Evans City off of Ash Stop Road, was a cream colored, colonial two story farmhouse that was isolated and far away from any neighbors; a suitable location for filming. In 1967, the farmhouse didn't have running water because of a broken water well, so water had to be brought in for drinking, bathing and flushing toilets; not an ideal house to live in, but perfect to film in. It was almost as if the old farmhouse sat quietly over the years aging and weathering in the harsh Pennsylvania winters, waiting to become the main prop of NOTLD. Russo notes in many interviews that the farmhouse didn't have a working fireplace or a basement. In fact, there were four sources of heat, two fireplaces and two steam heaters on the lower level of the house. Russo points

out that Vince Survinski made a working fireplace which can be seen when Ben lights a fire in the parlor of the house. The farmhouse did in fact have a basement that was connected to a storm cellar. The storm cellar-door can be seen on the creek side of the house when Barbra is running toward the back door just before she enters the farmhouse.

“The house was found by a real estate agent. We lived in the house with no running water, so we had to go down to a nearby stream to get water to bathe. When we weren't filming vandals broke in the house and smashed windows.”

Filmmaker, March, 2015

“I drove up to Evans City and met Mr. Gass. Ordinarily an agreement between the film company and the property owner is you leave the property as good or better when you're done. We couldn't make that commitment, but Gass was going to knock the house down anyway.”

Filmmaker, May, 2017

TRIVIA

The Gilbert Gass farmhouse was on the property known as Camp Deer Head. When Gass bought the property the land became known as Penn Turf Nurseries. The farmhouse was razed by Gass in the spring of 1970, and the main prop of NOTLD was lost forever. The employee of Penn Turf that used a bulldozer to push the burning farmhouse into the basement fill, said that nothing was saved from the farmhouse.

The basement may have in fact been too small for filming, and the decision was made to use the Latent Image office basement on Fort Pit Blvd. to film all of the major basement scenes. The top of the actual farmhouse basement steps are in a few scenes, like when Ben and Harry are unlocking the basement door, with Romero standing on the basement floor, filming upward. For the rental of the house, there seems to be some confusion among the filmmakers memories on how the Gass farmhouse was acquired, and the person that can take credit for finding it. Russo and Streiner believe that Jack Ligo, an Image Ten intern found the house, while Romero believed that a real estate agent found the house. In a 1968 News-Tribune article in Beaver Falls Pennsylvania, reporter Dave Benard, reported that Gass said, "He [a filmmaker] remembered as a child the farmhouse was used for a summer camp, and now wanted to rent it for a film." Perhaps the news reporter was speaking about Jack Ligo? Or perhaps Jack Ligo was involved in real estate in later years after NOTLD? Gass was quoted in the same 1968 News-Tribune article, that he was going to tear down the house anyway, so he let the filmmakers do it for him. Thanks to a real estate agent or Jack Ligo, Gass eventually rented the farmhouse and property to the filmmakers for about \$300 a month in the summer of 1967, with the provision that they could do whatever they wanted to the house. The filmmakers now had cart blanche, in that they could destroy the old farmhouse as they needed. However, before the filmmakers could start filming in June of 1967 and start destroying the farmhouse, it needed to be dressed up and made to look lived in. The farmhouse needed to be as if a family, except one, had escaped the onslaught of ghouls and left the house fully intact, hence, fully furnished. The house had four rooms on the lower level: the kitchen that Barbra enters, the living-room, a parlor where Barbra sees the stuffed animal mounts, and a dinning room. The upper level of the house was only used for a few short scenes in the film; when Barbra sees the eaten corpse face, Ben drags the same dead body into a bedroom, and Harry Cooper throws molotov-cocktails out of an upstairs window. Russo notes in his 1985 book, that \$50 was all that was spent at a local goodwill store to purchase items to dress up the house. The filmmakers brought in items from their own homes to add to the character of the farmhouse. One such item was the antique radio that was used, it was owned by Karl Hardman. Today, the farmhouse is gone, it was demolished by Gass in the spring of 1970, just as he had planned. A new home was built on the original foundation, and out of privacy for the current home owners, their address is not printed. With the primary location in place, the filmmakers now needed to find another location, a suitable cemetery to film in that had all of the script requirements; close to the primary location, close to a gas station and permission to film on such sacred ground.

ON THE SET

The Gilbert Gass farmhouse was built sometime in the early 1900s, and faced Ash Stop Road.

LOOK CLOSELY

The farmhouse was never fully destroyed by the filmmakers, with the exception of some broken windows, a cut wall for a make-shift door, and burnt grass.

“To flush the toilets, we had to go down to a nearby creek and in buckets, these large buckets, we had to carry water back to the house.”

Judith O’Dea, September, 2016



The Evans City Cemetery



Evans City Pennsylvania was founded in the early 1800s by Thomas B. Evans, and was known as Evansburgh until the early 1900s. The small borough of Evans City is in Butler County, and in 1967 the population was about a eight-hundred residents. A small fifteen acre municipal cemetery, located at 8600 Franklin Road a few miles from the center of town, was formed in 1891. Over the years, the cemetery grew in size to its present area of over forty acres. In 1967, the filmmakers chose the cemetery because of its proximity to the Gass farmhouse, only a few miles away on the opposite side of town. The cemetery was isolated, had a hill for a car scene and the biggest reward, there was no cost for its use. In one of John Russo's original scripts, he named a cemetery, *Willard Cemetery*, however, in the actual film there is no mention of the name of the cemetery, only a bullet-ridden cemetery entrance sign is seen just before Johnny and Barbra actually enter the cemetery proper. In the film, the Town of Willard, and the Willard Medical Center is said to be seventeen miles from the farmhouse. The filmmakers visited the Evans City Cemetery in 1967, and planned out the filming sites within the cemetery grounds for their short time frame of filming of only one day in June, and two days in October. One of the biggest concerns for the filmmakers to shoot in the cemetery, was being sued if a full name on a tombstone was shown. Out of the five primary tombstones identified in the film, only the partial name of Air, for *Blair* is seen when Johnny and Barbra are at their father's tombstone; the *Cole* tombstone that portrayed their father's tombstone. On a close up of the tombstone, B, for Blair can be seen when Johnny is touting Barbra with one of his famous lines, "*They're coming for you, Barbra,*" and his gloves touch the edge of the large tombstone. When Johnny hits his head on a small tombstone, it is the *Myers* tombstone, and the name can be seen for a split second. The most famous tombstone in the cemetery is of course, the *Kramer* tombstone that Barbra





clings to while she watches Johnny fight to the death with the ghoul. When Barbra is running away from the ghoul, she falls in front of the last tombstone to be seen, the *Lucas* tombstone. The filmmakers ingeniously filmed at certain angles to capture the moviegoers cognitive feeling of a tombstone, yet protected the occupants privacy. After the film was out, the cemetery became a shrine and travel destination for fans of the film. In May of 1985, a cluster of tornado's occurred over Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. On Friday night, May 31, 1985, the small town of Evans City was hit by an F4 tornado. The city was heavily damaged and six people were killed in a short few hours. The city cemetery took a heavy hit, and the majority of old growth trees throughout the cemetery were uprooted, including the tree that was next to Johnny and Barbra's father's tombstone. Over three-hundred tombstones were toppled or displaced from their original site during the tornado. Rumors quickly started throughout the country that bodies were pulled up from their graves in the cemetery to mimic the zombie apocalypse that had occurred just seventeen years earlier. Sadly, they were false rumors, no ghouls were ever seen nor were any bodies ever exposed. Only a few caskets from a partially destroyed mausoleum were exposed. A section of the mausoleum that was damaged was re-purposed for a marker at the entrance of the cemetery by the Tri-Boro Monument Company of the Boylan Funeral Home in Evans City. The bodies that were in the mausoleum had interment in the cemetery. The cemetery continues to attract fans of all ages, to experience Johnny and Barbra's fateful day at the cemetery. The families of Blair, Cole, Myers, Kramer and Lucas, have all shared their loved-one's monument with the millions of people that have seen the film, and the thousands that visit the cemetery in person each year.

“We needed a cemetery that we could use, and Evans City Cemetery was only a few miles from the farmhouse, so naturally we chose it.”

Filmmaker, October, 2016

TRIVIA

There were false rumors made by a filmmaker that after the 1985 tornado bodies were exposed in the cemetery. The only damage from the 1985 tornado were uprooted trees, toppled tombstones, and some caskets exposed, but no bodies were ever exposed.



“The movie is a legendary movie, no need to say anymore. I know that it has a cult following and people look at it as the beginning of the horror genre of zombies.”

Danny Hassel, Dan, *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, April, 2017