

## Tragedy in Pennsylvania

By Judy G. Burford © 2014 (Spring Hill Writing Group)

( For writer's group, we had writing exercise of creating a story using the highlighted words.)

"History has it that "Monongy", otherwise known as "man-fish", resides in the dark depths of the Mongahela River in Pennsylvania. Some of the seniors, in these parts, are still sharing tales of the much feared creature. Every year, Cryptozoologists flock to these parts, hoping to get a sighting of the beast. Tomorrow, renowned Cryptozoologist Alfred Jackson, will arrive in Pittsburgh to join in the search. For those of you who don't know, and that included me, I had to look it up. A Cryptozoologist is a pseudo-scientist who studies animals whose existence has not been proven. Jackson will be doing a talk and a book signing, at the main branch of the Pittsburgh library tomorrow afternoon at 4:00 PM. He has been studying this creature for many years and has written several related books. Don't miss out. Call the library for reservations. Tickets are \$7.50 per person. This is Mike Pintek, KDKA News Radio 1020."

A long-time sufferer of xenophobia, nineteen-year-old Dale Baxter shuddered at the broadcast and butted out his marijuana cigarette.

"I need coffee to sober me up."

His forearms were covered with goose-bumps.

Dale remembered some of the stories Gramps used to tell, before he passed away, in 2004.

"Well you know, people fer miles around feared fer their lives. That dad-blasted fishy creature was more than seven feet tall. It wobbled around on flipper-like feet and every time anyone came near it, it bared three rows of teeth the size of porcupine quills."

Gramps had nothing but disdain for the creature.

Dale got a queasy stomach just thinking about it.

"One gash with those teeth was sure to infect the flesh. Why, one feller had to have an amputation. The infection travelled clear up his arm past his elbow."

Gramp's stories made Dale dream of demons. Actually, they were more like nightmares. One night he woke up screaming. He was sure he'd felt a scalpel cutting into his right arm.

Just then, Dale's thoughts were interrupted by two abrupt thuds against the windows right beside him. He jumped nearly a foot in the air. When he got the courage to look over at the windows, he saw splat marks and a couple of feathers stuck to the panes. Obviously, some birds misread their flight pattern. Dale's heart-rate slowly returned to normal.

Then, he heard a scraping sound coming from outside. His teeth began to chatter against his will. He knew he should look out but feared the worst.

*Get a grip on yourself!*

He took in a long breath, held it for a few seconds and let it out until his lungs felt empty. After several repeats, Dale felt more relaxed.

Then, the scraping started up again.

"I can't take this."

Dale wasn't sure if he was having an anxiety attack or if it was just paranoia from the pot. Pacing back and forth now, his heart rate began to increase once again. Suddenly, a crushing anvil weighed down on his chest. He stumbled and fell to his death.

That evening, Alfred Jackson took note of a broadcast on the radio of his rental car.

"Nineteen-year-old Dale Baxter suffered a fatal heart attack earlier today. Investigators are unsure why this happened but noticed porcine droppings below the window of the room Baxter collapsed in. An autopsy will be done tomorrow morning. This is Robert Mangino, KDKA News Radio."

Having studied the "fish-man" for several years, Jackson recalled that its droppings were much like those of a pig. He needed to find out where this Dale Baxter resided.