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Plot: The angry barking of dogs, that died years ago, surround an abandoned house...the ghost of an unhappy professor haunts the college grounds...a gypsy fortune-teller gathers her power from a curse embodied by a terrifying frog creature...Nancy Drew is called in to solve these and other bewildering and frightening mysteries. And as she and her friends fight to confront the ghostly visions that haunt their investigations, they find themselves entangled in some VERY real, dangerous and evil plots. Armed only with their determination to find the truth, the young detectives struggle to foil the treacherous schemes of kidnappers, thieves, and imposters...and in the process must challenge the ghostly images that seem to dance before them, taunting them on... (From the back cover.)

Reviews:

THE CAMPUS GHOST When Nancy's friends, George and Bess, tell her about the mysterious hooded ghost of a dead college professor who haunts the grounds of Clermont College, Nancy's interest is piqued. When Nancy's father asks her to look into the matter since he is representing the deceased professor's estate regarding the formula for a manufactured substance that the late professor discovered, Nancy jumps at the chance. Dean Tapley is little help, but a fellow professor, Abel Martin, gives Nancy some insight into the late Professor Sophie Hanks, who died when her car ran off the road and her body was thrown into a flooding creek where it was washed away, never to be seen again. Nancy then meets with the professor's niece, Alice Durand, who seems completely unaffected by and disinterested in her aunt's death. An old friend of the professor's, Vanessa Lee, provides Nancy with even more clues to help her uncover the secret behind the ghostly appearances. It's not until she meets with Norman Craig, a doctor from New York, that everything comes together for Nancy and she reveals not only the true "ghost," but the thieves who plotted to steal the late professor's formula and make a fortune!

THE GHOST DOGS OF WHISPERING OAKS “Those ghostly dogs had better beware,” George said with a grin, “Nancy Drew is coming!” With those words, Nancy and her friends, George and Bess, journey to Whispering Oaks, the old homestead of Sally McDonald Butler, a childhood friend of Nancy’s. It seems that since the death of Sally’s great-grandparents, no one has lived in the grand home because of ghostly dogs that haunt the place! Trass Sabuch, who looked after the farm, mistakenly buried the McDonald’s dogs behind the old icehouse rather than with Sally’s great-grandparents, and now they haunt the property. When Nancy and her friends are witness to the terrifying ghosts, they are tempted to leave and never return; but Nancy is determined to find out the truth behind the apparitions. When Trass’ two sons, Red and Jimmy, scoff at the girls’ fears, Nancy begins to suspect there is more going on than meets the eye. A fallen tree, a shove into the ice house, and a fire set to kill the young detectives all lead up to finding the ultimate secret – a treasure of carved gold dog statues!

BLACKBEARD’S SKULL When Nancy, Bess, and George take a trip to Pelican Island, just off the shores of North Carolina, the last thing they expect to find is another mystery. When some gold doubloons disappear from the ranger’s station and a skull that is believed to belong to Blackbeard himself left in its place, Nancy finds herself on the trail of yet another ghostly adventure. With the aid of Ranger Lane, Nancy investigates the mysterious disappearance. Is it the ranger’s assistant, Arthur Huber, who thinks the rangers can find the missing gold without Nancy’s help? Or is it the elusive Colin Hudson, who disappears without a trace? Or could it be Gerald Curran, the old World War II buff? A trap door, a skeleton in a sunken ship, and a fearful kidnapping all lead Nancy not only to find the treasure and the culprit who stole it, but also to a fateful meeting with a real ghost!

THE GHOST JOGGER When two children disappear and no one has any clue where to look for them, Nancy gets a helpful hint from a ghostly jogger! Intrigued by a mysterious message given to her by the hooded, white clad jogger, Nancy and her friend, George, search for a barn with a flaming horse – only to discover that the message has led them right to the place where the kidnappers are holding the children! The two men and one woman get away with the children, but Nancy is not deterred! The ghostly jogger gives Nancy another clue – find a riverboat with an old sea captain! Nancy’s father recalls an old riverboat named *Magnolia*, and with the aid of Pete, an old river man, Nancy discovers the ghost has once again pointed her in the right direction when she discovers the kidnappers once again holding the children for ransom! A high-speed river chase leads Nancy to a very startling discovery about the kidnapping – and about the ghostly jogger who guided her to the exciting conclusion of this mystery!

THE CURSE OF THE FROG When a young gypsy, Nikki, asks for Nancy’s help in expose another gypsy who is conning people with the threat of a “frog curse,” Nancy agrees to investigate. But when Nancy meets Madame Zurga for herself and holds the giant frog in her own hands, she finds herself overwhelmed, nearly exposing some of her own secrets! Realizing there is more than meets the eye, Nancy visits with Nikki

and her cousin, Yvette, who has been having her own troubles since visiting Madame Zurga. After a fright from the nightly appearance of a ghastly giant frog, Nikki and Yvette reveal that Yvette's uncle had died with a mysterious secret that he tried to pass on to Yvette – *Seven stones tell the truth. But it is better that my secret stay bottled up forever!* Stone carvings in Yvette's fireplace, a ship in a bottle, a secret passage, and an unexpected visit from a journalist all help Nancy find a long lost treasure – and put an end to the curse of the frog once and for all!

THE GREENHOUSE GHOST When Mr. Drew asks Nancy if she would like to own a little house on the outskirts of town with a beautiful greenhouse, the redheaded detective is somewhat taken aback – until he informs her that there is a mystery he wants her to solve! Ever since the owner, a botanist who had been working on a solution to create blue orchids, had died, the house had been haunted by a ghost in the greenhouse, and prospective buyers were being scared away! Not one to shirk away from a mystery, Nancy and her two friends, Bess and George, agree to stay the night and see what happens. They are greeted by Joe Hendricks, the gardener, and later meet his assistant, Kiki, a young botanist from Hawaii. Upon entering the house, Joe and Kiki are scared off by the appearance of the ghost – a mysterious apparition of a woman in white! When she disappears beneath the stairs, Nancy is quick to follow. She finds no evidence of a ghost, but what she does find leads her to formulate suspicions and begin to track down the real culprits. One clue after another – a person left out of the botanist's will, bluish tracks left behind by the "ghost," a wig found in a drawer, and a hoax played by Nancy on the "ghost" – all lead Nancy to revealing the identity of the ghost and finding the mysterious formula worth a small fortune!

Personal Thoughts and Opinions:

In honor of Halloween, I thought I'd re-read the first volume of Ghost Stories and share some thoughts about the six stories. Unlike the Nancy in *The Kachina Doll Mystery*, most of these stories feature the Nancy I remember – analytical, skeptical, and not so easy to accept the idea of a ghost. Each story has its own, unique take on ghosts, and they move quickly. Although in some instances the villains are easily discernable, the stories are still enjoyable, and Nancy's sleuthing skills definitely shine their brightest as she puts the clues together to expose each "ghost." I was rather disappointed, however, that one story, "Blackbeard's Skull," *did* feature a real ghost that the girls seemed to take in stride, but it was still a rather enjoyable read.

A couple of the tales – "Curse of the Frog" and "Greenhouse Ghost" – were both interesting enough that they could have been fleshed out into complete books. Perhaps a change of title might have been in order though, as I don't see a Nancy Drew Mystery Story titled "Curse of the Frog" selling very well!

It also seemed that there were a lot of references to Bess' weight problems in

these stories. Every time Bess was mentioned in the story, she was eating, cooking, or complaining that she was hungry. If she truly ate as often as these ghost stories made it appear she ate, it's no wonder she was often referred to as "pleasantly plump."

These paperbacks are not the original texts - they may not be as rich in details and the characters may not be as multi-dimensional, but the stories are entertaining and original, and the cover style and the art are definitely high standard. Give them a chance - start "wander-ing" through these first Nancy Drew paperbacks - you might just find you like them!