Today on Across the Fence just in time for Halloween has have there's a witch in my sock drawer it's a Vermont authors newest book that conjures up some spooky fun and unravels a mystery that we can all relate to all those missing socks. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I'm Judy Simpson. Over the past 10 years Thea Lewis of Burlington has become the leading authority of the city's ghost tales. She's been dubbed the queen of Halloween for her popular ghost walks with the queen city and her first book entitled haunted Burlington is filled with intriguing stories of the city's haunted history. Thea's new book sticks to her favorite theme but it is for children. Thea is with us this afternoon to discuss the book and all things related to the spirit world thanks for being with us.

Thea.: Thank you Judy.

Judy.: As I mentioned your first book is loaded with all kinds of local ghost stories. How did you come to write a book for kids?

Thea.: Well I've got kids and that was a great starting point. Certainly Halloween is almost in my blood I guess you could say. So I love the idea of a little girl who makes this great discovery of having somebody that she didn't realize was a guest in your home around Halloween.

Judy.: In the story the main character Lucy has a big problem maybe you could explain that.

Thea.: She is a really big problem. Like me Lucy is a huge procrastinator and she has a messy room that doesn't make her mother very happy. Her mother finally lays down the law. If she doesn't get that room clean by the time it's time to go out trick and treating there will be no trick are treating so this throws Lucy into a tailspin.

Judy.: A real definite panic.

Thea.: O yes.

Judy.: It's a fiction story but does Lucy remind you of anybody that you know?

Thea.: Certainly I've going to say I am a procrastinator but I have kids who are not so great about keeping their rooms spic and span. We think about food and bedrooms and think that's something that definitely is going to invite trouble. In Lucy's case it's a little bit more than she had bargained for.
Judy.: I think all parents can relate to messy bedrooms and telling children don't eat because it's going to attract mice or ants. Imagine the surprise when that really does happen.

Thea.: Oh yes.

Judy.: The book also reveals the answer to a mystery that I think almost everybody has experienced if you've ever done laundry.

Thea.: Oh right I do the laundry and whether it's my laundry or the kids I think I'm being very diligent about putting all the socks in the laundry together and then what you now unfolding and inevitably there's missing socks. We find out through Lucy's story and the meeting of her friend Zula who's the little witch in her sock drawer that little witches have their own schooling that they have to abide to and one of those things is spiriting away people's socks. So there's the answer to that lifelong mystery.

Judy.: We're looking at one of the illustrations and there's Zula who's taking a nap.

Thea.: She's taking a nap and she's dreaming about a big Halloween spook-a-thon she's going to be attending later on that night.

Judy.: And she's napping of course in the sock drawer.

Thea.: In the sock drawer witches she tells Lucy is very comfortable.

Judy.: So the illustrator of your book is Ian Webb. How did you get connected with Ian?

Thea.: He is a guy who's an artist in the local scene and wonderfully talented. We met at an arts event in the south end in Burlington and we definitely hit it off. I have to say there's the expression it went for my lips to god's ear. That's what it was like working with the Ian. He looks of the manuscript and I would look at the illustrations that he was sending back to me and find in the most minute detail really captured everything that I was trying to convey about Lucy and Zula. And about Lucy's room.

Judy.: How much collaboration was there in the process?

Thea.: We collaborated quite a bit. He got the manuscript initially and then he would send back rough sketches of the individual drawings for the book. I would take a look at those and I would say. Oh gosh at one point we talked about Lucy's mom and he had sent me some illustrations of Lucy's mom pencil drawings and I thought that Lucy's mom would be a little younger a little hipper so I was sent him an e-mail and let him know that. The next thing I knew I would get something back and loses mom would be perfect exactly as I imagined. It was a nice collaboration.

Judy.: We did see that one illustration of Lucy in her Halloween costume as a witch.

Thea.: Lucy in her costume. The character sketch that he sent me of Lucy was one of the first drawings I got to see and he just nailed Lucy from the get go. It was almost like he could see the Lucy I could see which was very nice for an author doing the first children's book.

Judy.: So the new book is there's a witch in my sock drawer. Where can viewers find it?

Thea.: People can find it at a lot of independent bookstores in the area it's also being carried at creative habitat on Shelburne road which is nice. People should look at the face book page for Thea Lewis on thealewis.com we will let people know where I'm going to do readings and signings.
Phoenix Books. You can also find it at crow book shop in downtown Burlington. The catamount store on Church Street is carrying the books and they have a big supply.

Judy.: Excellent. Your first book haunted Burlington is also on the site as and in stores. What are some of your favorite tales of the queen city?

Thea.: I have to tell you we have a new story this year that I've really love. It's a story of a young French Canadian mill worker named Marie Bley. Her story was just very well known in the early 1900s. In the city of Burlington and surrounding states and in Montreal she had come from Canada and she met with a tragic end in Burlington south a near lake side neighborhood. The story is so compelling and I've loved telling of this year.

Judy.: Is she still around?

Thea.: You will hear people say that Marie Bley is a frequent visitor to that Lakeside neighborhood.

Judy.: No kidding. A lot of stories and heart of Burlington have been featured in your tour queen city ghosts walks. For folks who do not know what is the ghost walk all about?

Thea.: We take people on a guided tour. A haunted walking tour around downtown Burlington. It's about 3/4 mile walking and a lot of standing and listening to these amazing tales of the Fallott house which people will recognize the beautiful white column to house up on the hill on college street has a wonderful story of a gentleman who was instrumental in bringing the railroad into Burlington and bolstering the business district in Burlington. He unfortunately died in a very tragic way but we have lots of stories like that on the route. There's about five stories in each walk and it's wonderful to watch people's faces as we walk and listen to them talk and listen to people talk about alleys and Burlington they never knew existed and history in Burlington that they never learned in school.

Judy.: We're coming up on Halloween is there a ghost walk tale that's particularly fitting?

Thea.: I love the story of the building that is the American flat bread company. When you're talking about getting close to Halloween and the crisp autumn there there's nothing like talk of smugglers in the early 1800s in downtown Burlington. Secret passageways and secret tunnels to set your hair on end.

Judy.: And there's more than one eyewitness account to some of these incidents?

Thea.: It's amazing that people are seeing downtown full body apparitions of the spirits. I like to tell the people on my tour you find ghosts downtown and the most unexpected places. The lingerie is not the only thing that sea through at the Victoria secret in the Burlington Town center.

Judy.: Really?

Thea.: Absolutely.

Judy.: I'll have to check that out. You've added a new dimension to your ghost walks it involves an institution with more than 200 years of history the University of Vermont?

Thea.: That's right the University of Vermont as such a rich history and there's a team that I work with called Vermont's periods text of agency I've been able to do a couple of ghosts investigations at the University of Vermont and that piqued my interest more than anything else. To do really full blown haunted tour at UVM our guests on the Burlington tour downtown darkness falls for have been asking us for years will you do UVM? This year was the perfect year to begin. People have loved hearing the stories of Ira Allen and the things that happened to him while being someone who's
instrumental in starting the University of Vermont. You could say that he's the founder of the University of Vermont because of the wonderful gift he made to the state. There are other apparitions. Williams hall has full body apparitions that have been cited there. Bittersweet house is a very famous ghost story of a woman who was named daisy Smith who lived there for a long time. It's been a special treat to take people around the campus and talk about all of those famous ghosts.

Judy.: Have you seen any famous ghosts yourself?

Thea.: I have not seen the famous ghost that I was able through the Scientific Data that was collected on our bittersweet investigation the Vermont spirits. I was able to hear the voice of the ghost. We do believe that we caught daisy on our recordings and one of the investigators was asking the question how you feel about what's been done to the place? And daisies answer when we listen to back to the recordings was it's not very comfortable.

Judy.: Really?

Thea.: I can imagine. Daisy was a character who in her life spent some time been very pampered. I would imagine somebody who grew up with servants with lookup on a place that had been cut up into have into very nice as office spaces but office space is nevertheless and say loud this used to be my house and right now it's not what I'm looking for.

Judy.: You are also hosting special walks with the proceeds benefiting a special project?

Thea.: That's right. We're going to be doing some cemetery tours at Elmwood cemetery on Elmwood Avenue in Burlington. It's a wonderful cemetery and there are some characters there that people will find fascinating. Dr. John Pomeroy whose home is on battery street in Burlington is buried at Elmwood cemetery and we're going to be donating a portion of our proceeds for those for special walks to two on the 16th and two on the 23rd of October to the fountain restoration at lake view cemetery. The lake view cemetery fund could really use our support and cemeteries are such a wonderful historic part of the city that I think that people pitching in on a fun walk like this will be so great to help out with that goal to restore the fountain.

Judy.: People are really interested in history and it's interesting that you pointed out a cemetery because you don't often think of looking in a cemetery to find out about local history.

Thea.: It's true. I know visiting green mountain cemetery and looking at some of the documents that have been recorded about the citizens who are buried there it's been so helpful to my research for the Burlington walks and I'm one of those people now who with local history I've got three books that are the historic guides to Burlington's neighborhoods. I went on vacation to Maine in July and brought my books with me. So while other people are reading magazines at the beach I'm reading about people who used to live in Burlington 150 to 200 hundred years ago.

Judy.: Why do you think it's important to keep those stories a live to keep them going to tell other people about them.

Thea.: Burlington for instance Burlington's formative years there were characters that were larger than life. I think that throughout history you see that sort of thing repeated. Somebody who wields so much influence that they're able to shape place one way or another and they say history repeats itself and I just think that people need to pay attention to what's gone on in the past so they can have a clear vision of what might happen in the future. It so much fun for me to talk with an adult who doesn't know of Burlington character like Yiddian King or Timothy Fallott. I talk too small kids on my field trips about these people and I can spread the word to young people who will value Vermont history Burlington history them and then their parents get prod into the act too. It's a great thing.
Judy.: So you get a lot of different age groups then?

Thea.: A lot of different age groups. Our darkness falls tours downtown are good for we recommend ages nine and 10 and up. It's a lot of spooky history and chilling stories. Some of them may be a little bit sensitive subject matter. The UVM tours are decently spooky. Be modified those for our summer field trips and we will also do some school field trips. There are so many ghosts in Burlington that it's not hard to modify a tour so that you can meet all requirements for people in different age groups.

Judy.: Are you surprised at how many ghosts you've been finding?

Thea.: I am surprised but in New England is such a wonderfully creepy chilling place. You have Salem and all those which tales and ghost stories and Vermont is no different. If you get under computer and look online as you were going to find lots of ghosts throughout the states and the most amazing tales of psychics and spiritualists and all kinds of people who figure into Vermont's history.

Judy.: How can someone find out more about the ghost walks schedule cost and details that kind of thing?

Thea.: You can visit our web site queen city ghosts walk.com and there are you going to find really comprehensive information about the evening walks when the cemetery tours can be found. Tickets for the walk are being sold at the catamount store on Church Street in Burlington. We're hoping that we're making tickets for people a lot easier to obtain and find. Please be sure to visit with a countdown the Halloween page on our web site and people will find even more spooky information about what we are up to there.

Judy.: Thea thanks so much for joining us it's always great talking to you.

Thea.: It's great to talk to you thanks for having me.

Judy.: Sure. That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on across the fence.

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