

Memories of Halloween

by L. Jarod Pearson

Halloween is one of my favorite times of the year and some of my best memories center around this joyous occasion. It may seem unusual that somebody my age loves to reminisce as much as I do, but people who know me know how nostalgic I am. So, with that in mind, I appreciate every opportunity to go down memory lane.

Halloween has been a part of my life from the very start. One need only see my baby photo album to understand. There on page 3 is a photo of me, a six month old chunk of lead, dressed up for my very first Halloween along with my older sister and my older cousins. I obviously don't remember this particular Halloween, but I certainly treasure the photograph.

Sorting through the files in my head, my earliest Halloween memory must have been at the age of three. I see myself with my sister and older cousins trick-or-treating in the Holders Cove area. In those days we traveled by "bus" – my Aunt Janie Turpin's baby blue Volkswagen Bus! I remember at one point we ended up at the home of Mrs. Bobbie Cox, owner of Cowan's famous Corner House restaurant, where she had cupcakes wrapped and ready for all of us to take home. I also remember going across the street from Bobbie's house to the home of Mrs. Geneva Buchanan. Geneva had candy and licorice whips.

At age 4 I had a Halloween that I would rather forget. I woke up that morning with nausea and a slight fever. As the day wore on, I felt better and got to spend the evening at a huge Halloween party hosted by my Aunt Cheryl Boswell. Cheryl went all out with cupcakes, popcorn balls, candied apples, games and toys, but I ended up laying down on my cousin Travis' bed because I started feeling sick again. When we got home that night my mother called our pediatrician and I was supposed to see him first thing the next morning. I didn't make the appointment because around midnight I ended up in the Emergency Room at Harton Hospital where I was transferred to Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in Nashville. I spent four weeks at Vanderbilt because of acute appendicitis! I remember it all very well, though it's not what I would call a Halloween to remember!

Fortunately all subsequent Halloween's were nothing but good times. Halloween night at the Ikard home place in Alto was one of my favorites. The historic farm house was the perfect setting for Franklin County's finest Halloween party. Our host, Mrs. Donna Wells, put together a party fit for a king. I remember Donna's amazing witch costume that qualified for the Wizard of Oz movie set, and I remember dozens of hand-carved Jack-O-Lantern's, but the feast they prepared stands out most in my mind. Even the pigs-in-a-blanket were served on crystal china! I also remember the elder members of the Ikard family being at the party: Mrs. Elizabeth Limbaugh, Mrs. Lorraine Wells, and my Aunt Vera Pearson. They enjoyed watching us as much as we enjoyed being there!

Another early memory I have was the Halloween party that my sister's Girl Scout troop held at the Scout House. I obviously didn't fit in with this crowd, but fortunately my childhood buddy B.J. Rigsby was there too. The two of us tried in every way to frighten the girls so we could hear their glass-shattering screams. At some point I put on my plastic Incredible Hulk mask, B.J. put

on whatever mask he had, and we both crept around back of the Scout House and jumped up in view of the window. Well, the girls barely noticed us, and we certainly didn't hear any screaming. However, the whole place was filled with screams later that night when my mother told them ghost stories with the lights turned down. I'll bet the neighbors just loved that!

At age 9 we held a barn party at our farm. There must have been at least a hundred kids there with some incredible costumes. We played several games, but the one I remembered most was our Michael Jackson dance contest. I remember seeing about twenty kids trying to break dance and do the moonwalk. It was funny then, but it's even funnier now looking back. Louie Elliott, a kid that lived on Montgomery Street, won the contest!

At age 11 I got to venture out on my bicycle and go trick-or-treating across town all by myself. I remember stopping by the Myers House on Anderson Street and finding the doors standing completely open. I knocked and yelled "Trick or Treat", but nobody came. A minute later I did the same thing and, again, no answer. But then I heard a little rustle coming from the shrubbery and my heart skipped a beat. I figured that their son Dane was hiding and about to pull a trick on me, so I jumped on my bike and headed down the street as fast as I could.

That same night I stopped by the home of Father Peyton Splane on Willow Street and I could see that he had company. Mrs. Splane came to the door, gave me a treat and then lectured me about how I needed to be careful riding my bike at night. She then dismissed me and returned to her out-of-town guest. I did not know who the out of town guest was until 16 years later when I saw him again in person. The out of town guest was Bishop Gray, the Bishop of Mississippi. My memory served me well because I remembered seeing him for the first time on Halloween night in 1987!

Between the ages of 4 and 8 I remember getting apples from Mrs. Maggie Mae Kuehn, lollipops from Aunt Vera, caramel candies from Grandma Pearson, candy corns from Nana Sernicola, and enough hugs and kisses to last me until Christmas. From age 9 until my early teenage years I remember hayrides through Hawkins Cove, a barn party at the Bynum farm, a bonfire and hotdog roast at our pond, and I shall never forget my midnight venture to the old Holder Cemetery!

As an adult, I still love Halloween. I love to see the kids in costume and seeing their parents' pride in dressing them up. And I love it even more when I see Donna Wells in her usual costume!