

Witches, black cats and pumpkins 'come into their own' on Hallowe'en

By SHELLEY RABINOVITCH
Witches, black cats, goblins and boogiemens are preparing themselves once again for October 31 - Hallowe'en. Similarly, mothers and fathers are madly preparing bags of candies and pennies for the pint-size assault. But what is the significance of October 31?

The history of All Hallows' Eve, or Hallowe'en as we now think of it, is shrouded in antiquity. We do know that the Druids had a night for the dead souls, as did the Celts, but the rites are long lost to modern man.

Today, Hallowe'en manifests itself differently in various communities. In Mexico the 'night of the dead' is a larger celebration than Christmas, where all the members of the town have a mummer's procession (costumed and masked actors) in the main thoroughfare. Relatives go to the cemetery in order to lay new flowers on graves and generally tidy up the plots, while

little cakes in the shape of a human skull (soul cakes) are baked, each with the name of a dead relative on it.

Even in Canada Hallowe'en customs are different. Most of us are acquainted with the Toronto style of "trick or treat", but few places in the world confine Hallowe'en to their youngsters as we do. "In rural Ontario," points out folklore professor Edith Fowke, "children really did mean trick or treat. If the person at the door did not give the child a treat, they would pull a trick on the house. Usual pranks were pushing the back house over, or soaping up the windows of the house."

In the Maritimes, different tricks are used. For instance, in some places where cabbages are a common crop, Hallowe'en is known as "cabbage night", as the children will leave cabbage stumps in the hall of anyone who does not give them candy.

At one time the residents of maritime towns would go

"souling" from house to house, knocking at the doors of their neighbours and asking for "Soul cakes". It was a challenge for the master of the house to guess who his costumed visitors were, and whether or not the guests stayed to eat their soul cakes was a matter of town tradition.

"All Hallows' Eve was originally thought of as the time when the souls of the dead would rise from the grave", says Fowke. "Soul cakes were used to symbolize the feeding and pacifying of the dead spirits."

Another tradition is the eating of kulchinon, a mixture of cabbage, potatoes and turnips which has a penny in it for wealth, a button for being an old maid, a ring symbolizing marriage, and a match for poverty. Used as a form of divining, kulchinon is as common to the Maritime Hallowe'en party as bobbing for apples is for us.

The pumpkin's symbolism in relation to Hallowe'en is un-



certain, except that it seems to make an eerier form of jack-o-lantern than a squash or gourd. In cosmopolitan areas, carved pumpkins seem to have replaced the soul cake as a symbol of the dead soul's skull.

Black cats, seen as the familiars of witches, are as at home at Hallowe'en as ghosts, it seems. The 31st of October is used by witches as a special day with rituals commencing at sundown,

which is why black cats, goblins and other creatures of folk-mythology 'come into their own' on Hallowe'en.

So, what Hallowe'en is to us in Toronto is not necessarily what it is in other places. However there are still the same warnings this year as for any other Hallows' Eve - drive with an eye out for the little people, and check the treats they receive.

Letters To The Editor

All letters should be addressed to the Editor, c/o Excalibur, room 111 Central Square. They must be double-spaced, typed and limited to 250 words. Excalibur reserves the right to edit for length and grammar. Name and address must be included for legal purposes but the name will be withheld upon request. Deadline: Mon. 4 p.m.

Reader says Edson creates 'cloud of misinformation'

After having read the latest issue of Excalibur, I am convinced that resident students at York and, indeed, the York population as a whole, are being very poorly informed regarding all the issues involved in the controversy over the rent increases. In four subsequent issues of Excalibur I have been subjected to a rehashing of Barry Edson's stand in the case with barely a paragraph presenting the administration's position.

If not for the facts that I am a resident of MacLaughlin College and that MacLaughlin College Student Council took the trouble to inform the students at the College of both sides of this dispute, I would have most probably found myself floating in this cloud of misinformation which Edson has created around this issue.

Rational thinking leads me to believe that the administration should have equally as sound a case against Edson as he appears to have against them, yet we have not been fully informed, if at all, of the administration's stand. Edson has managed to babble on about the issue but has not made it quite clear what his intentions are. He has stated on several occasions that he wishes to set up a bargaining committee comprised of himself, one representative from each college council, each residence council, and YUTA. While it is true that such a committee was indeed set up with the mandate to set topics for discussion with the administration, it should be pointed out that justification of the rent increase, the issue at hand, was only one of the topics for discussion.

"At a joint meeting of several student councils Tuesday night, a bargaining committee was set up to seek concessions from the administration in lieu of fines or demands for rent rebates."

Excalibur, October 15, 1976.

"This committee was given the mandate to set the topics for discussion with the administration (among them justification of the rent increase) and then following discussion to report back to a meeting of all councils for ratification or rejection of the tentative agreement with the university."

Open letter from Barry Edson. October 19, 1976.

"The poll, if implemented, will also ask tenants whether they wish the bargaining committee to begin negotiations with the York administration for con-

cessions," said Edson.

Excalibur, October 21, 1976.

It would appear that Edson's reasons for setting up a bargaining committee are not at all to seek justification of the rent increase but more for his own political reasons. As I see it, far from performing its ostensible purpose, the bargaining committee will be manipulated by Edson as a political fulcrum for the purpose of extracting concessions from the administration that are wholly unrelated to the rent dispute. Such a course of action may well advance Edson's political fortunes; however, it will also create an unnecessary threat to future communications between administration and the student body."

Christina Bogucki.
MacLaughlin College.

Fertile Canadians

I wish to correct certain points which appeared in the article by Debbie Pekilis ("Population and birthrates spark fertile discussion at Stong", October 21).

The survey which I mentioned in the discussion with the visiting demographers and planners from France concerns the general matter of fertility in Canada. The survey is being designed at the present time and has not been funded to date. I made it clear in my presentation that I was discussing plans, rather than a study which is presently being conducted. As the plans call for inquiry into practices of family limitation and planning, attention will be directed to as wide a variety of contraceptive practices as are current in Canadian society. It would be unbalanced to single out any one type of practice, e.g. abortion, from the total context of family planning.

C. Michael Lanphier
Associate Professor of
Sociology

Administration is fair

I should like to address a few remarks to the rent review issue. As a student who first came to York in 1970, it has been my observation over the intervening years that the university administration is

singularly considerate and fair in dealing with student interests. Resident students will agree that perhaps the best example is the vast improvement in food services since the bad old Versafood days.

If my understanding of the legal situation is correct, Edson is threatening the university with a legal action on the basis of what amounts to an administrative blunder. He has misrepresented this blunder as "arrogant and high-handed" behaviour when the truth of the matter is that the Rent Review Board was about to approve a rent increase of 19.5 per cent for York when rumours of Bill 60 suspended the proceedings. Armed with that knowledge and notwithstanding the fact that rents had not been increased at York over three years of double digit inflation, the university restricted itself VOLUNTARILY to an increase of only 13.5 per cent. Under the circumstances I think that 13.5 per cent was eminently reasonable.

I would like to publicly register my objection to Edson's behaviour over the past few weeks. If he persists in his abrasive, demanding, threatening manner in dealing with the administration, he will jeopardize the good relations which I have seen between students and administration at York over the past six years, and would like to see continue for many years to come.

Maggie Laws

Conception or contraception

I have just discovered that in my letter regarding abortion which was printed in your edition of October 7, you misprinted the word 'conception' to read 'contraception'. I wanted to say that life begins at conception. The difference between the two words need not be explained.

This stupid mistake, admittedly discovered after the fact, has caused me great embarrassment. Its effect is worse than slander or libel. It has already exposed me to ridicule. A certain professor of English read it to his class as a glaring example of ignorance of the English language. I would be ashamed if anyone I knew thought me capable of writing like that.

If, by a slip of the pen, I had written contraception, it would still

have been the duty of the layout personnel and the people in charge of proof-reading to change this mistake.

The merit of the letter itself is not of the highest rank. When a letter of five or six hundred words has some of its most important sections excised to reduce it to three hundred words, literary value suffers. When that letter is submitted to the unintelligent hands of the Excalibur staff who reduce it to two hundred and fifty words, it is not surprising if the result is unimpressive.

Please, don't do to anyone else what you have done to me.

Edmund Thomas

Down the garden path

This letter concerns itself with the latest crusade by Barry Edson against the increase in residence fees by the university. It is not the legal arguments that I wish to comment on, but the narrow view and approach Edson is using in presenting his side of the case. As with any legal dispute there are always two arguable views. Nevertheless, Edson has presented his view as being not only airtight, but the only one as well. He has come across as being self-righteous in his convictions wishing to appear, no doubt, as the champion of the students.

Edson is trying to accomplish this by threatening the university with a lawsuit if it does not comply with his demand that it financially reimburse residence students for the money it has supposedly taken from them illegally.

However, in the same breath Edson says he is willing to forgive and forget, providing the university grant several concessions to the various student councils and the CYSF in areas totally unrelated to the rent review issue.

It is at this point that I begin to question the motives behind Edson's actions. Is he trying to squeeze as much mileage and public attention as possible from this for his own political gain? It is a well known fact that Edson is as active off campus as he is on campus when it comes to political affairs.

This being the case, I for one do not want to be lead down the garden

patch at my expense for his own benefit.

Bryan D. Moir
Stong College

No credit for course

I am writing to complain about a half course that I have been taking down at the University of Toronto, which will not be accepted by the Psychology Department at York, because supposedly, as expressed by Dr. Herzberg, the subject matter of "Parapsychology" has no credibility.

Parapsychology could be described as the study beyond awareness of the physical environment, and the ability to have an influence on the environment. It is being taught by Dr. Howard Eisenberg, M.D., who is also head of the EGO programme at York. Dr. Herzberg claimed that the whole field of Parapsychology offers no credibility in any way whatsoever. Talking to a Dr. Ian Howard at the Behavioral Sciences Building in the summer concerning the same subject, I received a reaction from him more as though I had mentioned that I had the plague. The feeling I have gotten is that of a prejudice towards the subject, an absolute disagreement with the whole concept itself.

I should note that Psychology has come into use for the most part in the last hundred years or so. But called "science of the mind", but man's history has spanned thousands of years in such fields as religion, physics and mysticism. To admonish the interrelationship of these in a matter of a hundred years is an interesting phenomenon that should not be taken lightly.

I am not saying that Psychology should be scrapped, or that casual relationships do not exist. What I am saying is that one cannot necessarily perceive everything in our so called normal state of reality, because if we could have, these twentieth century thinkers would have destroyed once and for all concepts such as God, reincarnation, extra-sensory perception, or any other forms of spirituality.

May the people involved in the Parapsychological field prove them right.

Jamie Roher