

— Enjoy Halloween At Any Age —

Most any child will tell you that their favorite holiday, aside from Christmas of course, is Halloween. The word Halloween is really a result of fast talking slurs of the phrase to go "All Hallowe'en", which meant to go out on October 31st and celebrate All Hallow's Evening, which got shortened to All Hallow's Even' and then to Halloween. The tradition of dressing up in a Halloween costume came about because on All Hallow's Eve, people in Europe were still nervous about leaving their homes at night and so they often disguised themselves with masks and costumes so that the evil spirits who were out roaming wouldn't recognize them. Many dressed up like the spirits they wanted to avoid; ghosts, witches and goblins.

On this special night each year, it is customary for youngsters to dress up in costume and go house to house asking for treats, usually candy, with the familiar question, "trick-or-treat?" That's why on October 31st, homeowners should always have a treat on hand to give out to those who come knocking, otherwise they might get a trick, which refers to an idle threat to perform mischief on the homeowners or their property if no treat is given.

When I was a child growing up in the eighties, my mom would take my older

brother and I trick-or-treating on Halloween night. Mom would drive us to historical downtown Cleveland, TN to the neighborhoods around my grandparent's house because we



The Old Geezer on 1st. Street

lived in the country where very few homeowners participated in the festivities (which may have been the reason so many homes in the country got TP'd). We would go door to door filling up our bags with candy and treats dressed up as our favorite scary monster or T.V. character. One of my earliest costume memories was when I dressed up as Wonder Woman with a plastic mask resembling her face that was held in place by a rubber band and a "poncho-like" plastic cloak designed to resemble her outfit. That year, my brother dressed up in a similar plastic costume designed as The Incredible

Hulk from the eighties T.V. series.

For many Cleveland residents, it has been a yearly tradition since 1986, whether young or old, to visit the downtown Hal-

loween Block Party around the courthouse square and enjoy food, music, games, costume contests and of course, fill those bags with treats. However, for my brother and I, we couldn't let Halloween pass us by without a visit to Centenary Avenue.

Before the Block Party originated and became the normal destination for the Halloween crowd, the majority of local residents would pay a visit to Centenary Avenue where each year homeowners go all out with decorations and invite trick-or-treaters into their haunted houses, and (in my opinion) hand out the best treats!

Centenary Avenue is where the main attraction and most recognized goblin in Bradley County, Tall Betsy was first seen on Halloween night in 1980. Each year, large crowds would gather in hopes to receive a visit from the 7ft. 6 1/2in. tall goblin. I'll always remember my first time seeing Tall Betsy as she leaned over to hand me a piece of bubble gum from her doorway. Needless to say, I was quite frightened by her. As the legend goes: Be in by ten or you're a has been, because tardy trick-or-treaters are her favorite treat to eat! A State resolution was adopted May 24, 1989 naming Tall Betsy as the official Halloween goblin of Bradley County. Tall Betsy officially retired in 1998, but you never know when she might make a return appearance.

Trick-or-treating on Halloween is definitely fun for



By Tonya Brantley

all ages. However, as is the case for many, the older you get, the least likely you are to go trick-or-treating and the more likely you are to be the one handing out the treats. For me, I look forward to Halloween each year, because it is my chance to dress up and hand out treats to all those who visit my house (which to me is just as much fun as I had when I was a young trick-or-treater). I live downtown, very close to the Block Party and each year for the past five years, I have decorated my front porch with spider webs and jack-o-lanterns and I have dressed up in costume as what I like to call "The Old Geezer on 1st. Street." I know it doesn't quite com-

pare to Tall Betsy, but The Old Geezer gets his kicks from scaring those who reach into his candy bowl. Hundreds of passers-by on their way to the Block Party stop in each Halloween to make it a memorable experience.

No matter what your plans are this Halloween, be sure to make it a safe one for you and the youngsters out to enjoy the night. Be on the look out for Tall Betsy, and if you're heading to the Block Party, swing by and pay a visit to The Old Geezer on 1st. Street. And above all, have a safe and very happy Halloween!

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