

1st  
Nov. 2, '68

begin by bribing the kids with candy and apples, the  
state of bribery

Tricks or Treats

candy and  
assorted

nostalgic

I am not just sure ~~that~~ when we  
children stole Halloween away from the kids,  
but steal it away we did, and the  
scurrying is now <sup>not about</sup> complete. <sup>gone</sup> The Halloween  
just past not a single <sup>neighbor</sup> showed  
up at our house! <sup>and</sup> my wife and I were  
left with a glutinous mass of <sup>starchy</sup> <sup>calories</sup>  
sufficient to last a lifetime. <sup>It also</sup> <sup>left us with</sup>  
a lump in our throats. <sup>Halloween</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>apparently</sup> <sup>dead</sup>.

The erosion of Halloween was already  
well advanced when our youngest daughter  
Gracie <sup>was</sup> <sup>still</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>grammar</sup> <sup>school</sup>. <sup>The</sup> <sup>school</sup>  
authorities invited all of the kids to show up at  
the local gym that <sup>night</sup> <sup>for</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>"gala</sup> <sup>costume</sup>  
party" with prizes for the most original <sup>costumes</sup>.

and ingenuity <sup>my daughter</sup> Gracie went as a pumpkin, <sup>and</sup> <sup>the</sup>  
expense and toil that went into our contriving to make <sup>now</sup>  
that shining <sup>youngster</sup> daughter into a plump and  
illuminated pumpkin I cannot yet bear to describe  
much less contemplate. <sup>So</sup> <sup>bad</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>had</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>borrow</sup> <sup>a</sup>  
pickup truck to transport her <sup>there</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>gym</sup>.  
Then <sup>she</sup> <sup>had</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>hold</sup> <sup>both</sup> <sup>doors</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>get</sup> <sup>her</sup> <sup>into</sup>  
the <sup>gym</sup> <sup>place</sup>.

The <sup>gym</sup> <sup>place</sup> was awash with kids in  
all manner of costumes ranging from <sup>clowns</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>supposing</sup> <sup>angels</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>snaggle</sup> <sup>toothed</sup>  
witches <sup>on</sup> <sup>brooms</sup>. <sup>But</sup> <sup>Gracie</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>only</sup>  
pumpkin, and with the critical detachment and  
indulgent myopia of adoring parents we assured  
our <sup>ambitious</sup> <sup>child</sup> <sup>her</sup> <sup>was</sup>  
Gracie, she had a prize in the bag.

my companions and I when we were boys

At the mystic hour of nine o'clock -  
when I as a boy would have been frankly  
putting our shoulders to an anathema - the  
superintendent had <sup>all</sup> the milling <sup>costumed</sup> boys line up  
for the judging for the prize. ~~After~~ After much  
whispering and conferring, <sup>and proclamation it was decided</sup> this was accomplished by  
a system of elimination. If a youngster was  
deemed eligible to remain in the final judging  
he or she was told to remain in the line. Those  
rejected were sent to the far side of the gym.

<sup>stepped forward and stepped back,</sup>  
my wife and I held our breath when  
the judges came to our Grace. They surveyed  
and calibrated her, whispered a little, and then  
sent her to the far side of the gym! Our dear  
little pumpkin had been rejected. If you have  
never seen a reluctant and bewildered pumpkin  
our Grace portrayed one that night. As the  
judges kept steering and pushing her toward the  
side of the rejected, our <sup>incredulous</sup> little pumpkin kept  
coming back. <sup>When</sup> it finally <sup>clawed</sup> <sup>over</sup> her  
that she had <sup>finally</sup> been rejected the <sup>poor</sup> child <sup>ran</sup>  
as fast as a pumpkin can <sup>from</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>gym</sup> <sup>all</sup> <sup>right</sup> <sup>that</sup> <sup>night</sup>.

We found her crouched <sup>and shivering</sup> in the  
pursed perchus truck. To paraphrase the old song,  
"Have you ever seen a pumpkin crying?  
Well I have." It is not one of the more  
rewarding experiences of parenthood. And it has  
fitted me with <sup>over</sup> made me mad <sup>about</sup>  
what my <sup>tribing</sup> generation has done to Halloween.

Insert A

+

If a boy played his cards right -- hauling in the coal that the scintilla engines periodically dumped off for the flagman's stove -- he might get to wave the flag for ~~the~~ approaching train, and even to ~~sit~~ squat in the flag shanty <sup>at the feet of the</sup> with the producer, all so snug and cozy.

when "Why Mister Kane!" I <sup>horrifiedly</sup> said one day, I had played my cards right, and had watched old Dan take a fresh chew of Peerless, work it up, and then spit <sup>a sizzling stream</sup> at the glowing stove.

"Pay no mind, lad," old Dan airily said in his rich Irish brogue, which I despair of catching by mere writing -- "Tis great for humidifyin' the atmosphere."



for us  
monotonously  
leave a paucity  
about hygiene were conspiring to ~~bring us out of~~  
of outhouses to topple. And the sturdy built  
railroad flag shantis resisted our ~~most~~ best  
~~determined~~ efforts to unmoor them. So we hit  
upon the <sup>heady</sup> inspiration of <sup>putting a</sup> pail over the <sup>smoking</sup> chimney  
of old Dan's <sup>darkened</sup> flag shanty.

"But won't it asphyxiate old Dan if he's <sup>in there?</sup>  
one of our number inquired.

"New" our leader <sup>at his boarding house</sup> assured us.  
"Anyway, I just saw Dan <sup>getting there</sup> reaching the newspaper,  
~~in at his boarding house~~"

"Maybe it will set the place on fire,"  
another <sup>small</sup> <sup>conspirator</sup> suggested.

that will happen <sup>if that</sup>  
the pail will sail <sup>in</sup> ~~into~~ the air."

So like commandos we stealthily  
stalked ~~the~~ Dan's flag shanty and hoisted the  
smallest of our band onto the roof, where he  
gently placed the pail over the <sup>con</sup> smoking chimney.

They <sup>we</sup> raced to a nearby <sup>rocky</sup> knoll and ~~there~~  
<sup>munched apples and</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>silently</sup> <sup>there</sup> composed ourselves to await the trip of ~~the~~ our  
pail to the moon.

7

the watch

Things did not turn out exactly according to plan.

The pail <sup>stubbornly</sup> remained where it was, but still we kept the vigil. Still nothing happened. What emerged from our vigil was not what we expected. Suddenly the flag showing door burst open.

and a young locomotive fireman and a <sup>dishabilled</sup> woman --

both in <sup>an</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>aftermath</sup> advanced state of dishabille -- came choking and gasping and ~~groaning~~ <sup>grating</sup> their way out.

Halloween  
Tableau as

the We kids ~~thoughtfully~~ <sup>silently</sup> watched this pair grope their way to a parked Overland car. When <sup>at length</sup> they had driven away we quietly removed the pail from the chimney -- and then ran home. Another Halloween was over.

"Did you <sup>and your playmates</sup> have any fun tonight, son?" my mother inquired, looking over her glasses.

"Kind of," I said thoughtfully.

"Now, Mom -- kinda dull and quiet tonight, Mom. Halloween isn't what it used to be, Mom. <sup>Now</sup> ~~Kind~~ <sup>Now</sup> I have an apple."

And so another Halloween was over.

"You didn't get into any mischief, I hope?"

"Now, Mom, but Halloween doesn't seem what it used to be. <sup>Now</sup> ~~Kind~~ <sup>Now</sup> I have an apple before bed, Mom? <sup>Kind</sup> ~~I~~?"

"Yes, son."

And so another <sup>uneventful</sup> ~~Halloween~~ <sup>All Saints Eve</sup> had come and gone.

1st 7  
Nov. 6, 68.

No. 45

TRICKS OR TREATS

Two final  
+ letter of inv.

~~I cannot recall just~~ <sup>first began stealing</sup>  
~~I am not just sure when we oldsters, in state~~ Halloween  
away from the kids, but ~~steal it away we did.~~ <sup>that</sup> ~~And the~~ <sup>the theft is now complete,</sup>  
~~larceny is now just about complete.~~ <sup>Conclusive proof is that last</sup> ~~On the~~ Halloween

~~just past~~ not a single youngster showed up at our  
house. <sup>While it is true, ~~we~~ <sup>that</sup> live a few miles out of town, in</sup> Consequently my wife and I were left with  
glutinous mass of candy and assorted calories <sup>enough</sup> sufficient  
to ~~last a lifetime.~~ <sup>start a confectionery</sup> We were also left with a nostalgic  
lump in our throats. <sup>She</sup> Halloween <sup>at last</sup> was officially dead.

Remains year, they began ~~stealing~~ <sup>with</sup> their last bags even before dark! ~~fallen~~ <sup>off</sup> ~~But this Halloween~~  
there were none.

If this gradual

stealth rather than by strongarm tactics. was accomplished not by force but by slyly rather

The erosion of Halloween began by bribing the kids with candy and apples. In fact the state of bribery was already well

advanced under way when our youngest daughter Gracie, now married,

was still in grammar school. That Halloween the school

slyly

authorities invited all of the kids to show up at the

local gym that night for free candy and apples and a

"gala" costume party" with prizes awarded for the most original

getups. And poor trusting kids fell for it.

# We kicked the bids out of it by being thrown away from community parties and gym crabs by the hooks of hell

Our daughter Gracie went as a pumpkin. Now the ~~expense~~  
~~and~~ toil and ingenuity that went into ~~our contriving to make~~

our skinny daughter into a plump and illuminated pumpkin, ~~at the same~~  
~~time allowing her to walk and breathe,~~

I cannot yet bear to describe much less contemplate ~~much less describe.~~  
It is enough to say that by comparison the designing of ~~stand~~ the first  
We had to borrow a pickup truck to transport her to the  
gym. ~~Then~~ we had to hold both doors open ~~wide~~ to get  
her into the ~~place~~ building.

The gym was awash with kids in all manner of costumes  
ranging from clowns to swooping angels to snaggle-toothed  
witches complete with broom. But Gracie was the only  
pumpkin and with the ~~critical detachment and indulgent~~

myopia of adoring parents we assured our anxious child ~~she had her~~  
~~her prize was~~ in the bag. Then we took our seats in the

stands along with all the other grand parents and  
complacently awaited the confirmation of our ~~instructions~~  
predictions.

*a little room*

*at the same time helping  
moderately  
her ambulant and  
breathing - -*

*and expense*

*transforming*

*at the same*

*much less describe.*

*the first  
capsule of  
must know how a  
child's play.*

*already*

*esotic*

*bull-nosed*

*our*

*on the premises,*

*traditional myopia and*

*she had her*

7

At the mystic hour of <sup>eight</sup> nine o'clock--<sup>a time when</sup> when my companions would and I when we were boys/most likely have been ~~prankishly~~

putting our shoulders to <sup>our first</sup> ~~an~~ outhouse--the superintendent

had all the milling costumed kids line up for the

<sup>grand</sup> judging for the prizes. After much <sup>handelling and</sup> conferring and

<sup>florid</sup> proclamation it was decided this was <sup>that</sup> ~~to~~ be accomplished <sup>that would best</sup>

by a system of elimination <sup>presided over by three faculty judges,</sup> If a youngster was deemed

eligible to remain in the final judging he or she <sup>would</sup> ~~was told to~~

remain in the ~~line~~ line. Those rejected from further

consideration <sup>would to be banished</sup> ~~were sent~~ to the far side of the gym.

X

My wife and I held our breath when the judges came *down the line*  
~~to~~ *and stopped before* our Gracie. They surveyed and calibrated her, *took two steps*  
~~stepped~~ forward and *two steps* ~~stepped~~ back, whispered a little--and ~~then sent~~ *banished* her to the  
far side of the gym! *The unbelievable had happened--* Our dear little pumpkin had been  
rejected. If you have never seen a *lost and* ~~reluctant and~~ bewildered  
pumpkin our *little* Gracie portrayed one that night. As the *stern* *swelling*  
~~pointing~~ judges kept *pointing* steering and pushing her toward the *rejected knot*  
~~side~~ of the rejected, our incredulous little pumpkin  
kept coming back *in line.* When ~~it~~ *it* finally dawned on her that  
she had *flatly* ~~finally~~ been rejected ~~the poor child~~ *she* ran as fast  
as a pumpkin can out into the night.

X

We found her crouched and shivering in the parked pickup truck. To paraphrase the old song; "Have you ever seen a pumpkin crying? Well I <sup>to</sup> have." It is not one of the more <sup>enriching</sup> ~~rewarding~~ experiences of parenthood. <sup>In fact ever since then</sup> ~~And it~~ <sup>I have been used by</sup> ~~has made me mad over what my~~ <sup>crafty</sup> ~~bribing~~ generation has <sup>has done</sup> ~~done~~ to Halloween.

Things were different when I was a boy. In those <sup>distant</sup> days we brought imagination and ingenuity to our Halloween pranks. We were <sup>not</sup> ~~not~~ to be baited and bribed by our oldsters by free candy or apples or prizes or any of the other <sup>organized</sup> ~~allurements of~~ <sup>for us</sup> ~~organized~~ glee. We ran in packs <sup>and racing teams</sup> ~~and~~ as free as the wind <sup>and racing teams</sup> ~~and~~ our aim was not conformity but <sup>sheer impish</sup> ~~sheer~~ "divilment"—as old Dan Kane might <sup>have</sup> ~~put~~ it.

X

that far-off

distant

All of which reminds me of the Halloween night we  
~~that~~ turned our attentions to/Dan's flag shanty. <sup>old</sup> In those <sup>such</sup>  
<sup>primitive</sup> days the principal railroad crossings in town were presided  
 over by warning flagmen, who ~~were~~ mostly retired railroaders

who had lost an arm or a leg to their craft. Between

trains <sup>these flagmen</sup> they retired to their snug flag shanties, cozy  
<sup>even padded</sup> places with leather benches and pot-bellied coal stoves.

boarded his windows and

and on <sup>cool</sup> At night <sup>of</sup> the ~~flagmen~~ flagman banked his fire so the  
<sup>snug</sup> place would be <sup>and warm</sup> ~~warm~~ next day. <sup>at the</sup>

X

If a boy played his cards right--<sup>hauling in</sup> ~~the~~ the  
<sup>chunks of</sup> coal ~~that~~ <sup>a passing</sup> the switch engines ~~are~~ periodically dumped off  
 for the flagman's stove--he might get to wave the flag  
<sup>an</sup> for approaching trains ~~and~~ <sup>or</sup> even to squat ~~in~~ the  
 flag shanty at the feet of the proprietor, <sup>in the flag shanty itself</sup> all so  
 snug and cozy.

~~had flagged for a passing one day and later~~  
 "Why Mister Kane!" I horrifiedly said one day when  
 I had played my cards right and <sup>sat watching</sup> ~~had watched~~ old Dan take  
 a fresh chew of Peerless, work it up <sup>against</sup> into a massive cud, <sup>← cud</sup>  
<sup>deliver a</sup> sizzling stream ~~at~~ <sup>of tobacco juice against</sup> the glowing stove. "Why mister Kane!"  
 I repeated.

"Pay no mind, lad," old Dan <sup>declaimed</sup> ~~airily~~ said in his rich <sup>booming</sup>  
 Irish brogue <sup>in</sup> which I despair of catching ~~by~~ mere writing. "It makes a  
 grand spittoon, that it does, an' moreover 'tis  
 it is great for humidifyin' the athsmosphere."



X

"But won't it asphix--asphix--won't it ~~strangle~~ <sup>maybe choke</sup> old

Dan if he happens to be in there?" one of our ~~number~~ <sup>band</sup> <sup>anxiously</sup>

inquired.

"Naw," our leader assured us. "Anyway, I just saw

<sup>old</sup> Dan at his ~~boarding house~~ <sup>in the window of his boarding house</sup> settin' there reading the <sup>that</sup> newspaper."

"Maybe it will set the place on fire," another

small conservative suggested.

"Naw, <sup>probably</sup> when the smoke builds up all that will <sup>probably</sup> happen <sup>light</sup> is that the pail will sail in the air."

X

So like <sup>diminutive</sup> commandos we stealthily stalked Dan's <sup>dark and boarded</sup> flag  
 shanty and hoisted the smallest of our <sup>silent</sup> ~~band~~ <sup>number up on</sup> onto the  
 roof, where he gently placed the pail over the smoking  
 tin chimney. Then we raced <sup>galvanized</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>back to for our</sup> a nearby rocky knoll  
 there and <sup>gladly</sup> ~~silently~~ munched apples and composed ourselves to  
 await the <sup>expected</sup> ~~trip~~ <sup>blastoff</sup> of our pail ~~to~~ <sup>toward</sup> the moon.

Things did not turn out exactly according to plan.  
 The pail stubbornly remained where it was, <sup>there as we silently</sup> ~~but still we kids~~  
 kept the <sup>vigil</sup> ~~watch~~. Still nothing happened. What emerged  
 from our ~~vigil~~ <sup>was shattered, to</sup> was not what we expected. <sup>we knew</sup> Suddenly the  
 flag shanty ~~door~~ <sup>young</sup> burst open and a young locomotive fireman <sup>we knew</sup>  
 and a dishevelled <sup>young</sup> woman—both in an advanced state of  
 dishabille—came choking and gasping their way out.

X

~~We~~ <sup>we</sup> ~~silently~~ <sup>strange</sup> watched this Halloween tableau  
as the pair groped <sup>blindly</sup> ~~their way~~ <sup>toward</sup> to a parked Overland car.  
When at length <sup>the car lurched and snorted</sup> ~~they had driven away~~ we quietly removed  
the pail from the chimney ~~and~~ <sup>ran home.</sup> ~~ran home.~~ <sup>My mother</sup>  
~~was reading the~~ <sup>newspaper.</sup> ~~newspaper.~~

"Did you and your playmates have ~~any~~ fun tonight,  
son?" <sup>she dutifully</sup> ~~my mother~~ inquired, <sup>up</sup> ~~looking~~ <sup>us</sup> over her glasses.

"Kind of," I said thoughtfully.

"You didn't get into any mischief, I hope?"

"Naw, Mom, but Halloween <sup>isn't like</sup> ~~doesn't seem~~ <sup>like the former</sup> what it used to  
be. Kin I have an apple before bed, Mom? Kin I?"

"Yes, son.

<sup>And be sure to wash behind your ears.</sup>  
<sup>quietly munched</sup> ~~So I ate my apple and~~ <sup>then crept off</sup> ~~went to bed and lay~~ <sup>there for a long time</sup>  
~~And so~~ <sup>blinking into the dark.</sup> ~~another uneventful All Saints Eve had come and~~  
gone.

TRICKS OR TREATS

by

Robert Traver

I cannot recall just when we oldsters first began stealing Halloween away from the kids but I am quite sure that the theft is now complete. <sup>Rather</sup> Conclusive proof <sup>to my mind,</sup> is that last Halloween not a single youngster showed up at our house. While it is true that we live a few miles out of town, in previous years the little brigands began invading our premises with their loot bags even before dusk. But this Halloween there were none. Consequently my wife and I were left with enough candy and assorted calories to start a confectionery. We were also left with a nostalgic lump in our throats. The Halloween we had <sup>as youngsters was</sup> known/officially dead.

This gradual erosion of Halloween was accomplished by stealth rather than by strongarm tactics. We bribed the kids out of it by the lures of free community parties and assorted gimcrackery. In fact the bribery was already well under way when our youngest daughter Gracie, now married, was still in grammar school. That particular Halloween the school authorities slyly invited all the kids to show up at the local gym that night for free candy and apples and for a "gala costume party," with prizes awarded for the most original getups. And the poor trusting kids fell for it.

Our daughter Gracie went as a pumpkin. Now the toil and ingenuity and expense that went into transforming our skinny daughter into a plump and illuminated pumpkin--at the same time

keeping her moderately ambulant and breathing—I cannot yet bear to contemplate much less describe. It is enough to say that by comparison the designing of the first space capsule must have been a breeze. We had to borrow a pickup truck to transport her in to the gym. Once there we had to hold both big doors wide open to get her into the building.

The gym was already awash with kids in all manner of exotic costumes ranging from bulb-nosed clowns to swooping <sup>angels</sup> angles to snaggle-toothed witches complete with broom. But our Gracie was the only pumpkin on the premises, and with the traditional myopia and critical detachment of adoring parents we assured our anxious child she had her prize in the bag. Then we took our seats in the stands along with all the other proud parents and complacently awaited the confirmation of our ~~predictions~~ predictions,

At the mystic hour of eight o'clock—a time when my companions and I when we were boys would most likely have been putting our shoulders to our first outhouse—the superintendent had all the milling costumed kids line up for the grand judging for the prizes. After much huddling and conferring and florid proclamation it was decided that this would best be accomplished by a system of elimination presided over by three faculty judges. If a youngster was deemed eligible to remain in the final judging he or she would remain in the line; those rejected from further consideration would be sent to the far side of the gym.

My wife and I held our breath when the judges came down the line and stopped before our Gracie. They surveyed and calibrated her, took two steps forward and two steps back, whispered a little—and banished her to the far side of the gym! The unbelievable had

happened—our dear little pumpkin had been rejected. If you have never seen a lost and bewildered pumpkin our little Gracie portrayed one that night. As the stern judges kept steering and pushing her toward the swelling knot of the rejected, our incredulous little pumpkin kept coming back in line. When finally it dawned on her that she had flatly been rejected she ran as fast as a pumpkin can out into the night.

We found her crouched and shivering in the parked pickup truck. To paraphrase the words of the old song: "Did you ever see a pumpkin crying? Well I did..." It is not one of the more enriching experiences of parenthood. In fact ever since I have been irked by what my crafty bribing generation has done to Halloween.

Things were different when I was a boy. In those distant days we brought imagination and ingenuity to our Halloween pranks. Not for us to be baited and bribed by our oldsters by free dances or candy or apples or prizes or any other <sup>of the</sup> organized allurements of communal glee. On Halloween we ran in wild packs as free as the rustling windblown leaves. Our aim was not conformity but sheer impish "divilment"—as old Dan Kane might have put it.

All of which reminds me of that far-off Halloween we turned our attentions to old Dan's flag shanty. Back in those days the principal railroad crossings in town were presided over by warning flagmen, mostly retired railroaders who had lost an arm or a leg to their craft. Between trains these flagmen retired to their snug shanties, cozy places with worn padded leather benches and

pot-bellied coal stoves. And on cool nights the flagman boarded his windows and banked his coal fire so that the place would be snug and warm next day.

If a boy played his cards right--sweeping the crossing or bringing in the chunks of coal a passing switch engine periodically dumped off for the flagman's stove--he might get to wave the flag for an approaching train or even squat at the feet of the proprietor in the flag shanty itself.

"Why Mister Kane!" I <sup>exclaimed</sup> horrifiedly <sup>later</sup> said one day when I had played my cards right and sat watching old Dan take a fresh chew of Peerless, work it up into a massive cud, and ~~then~~ deliver a sizzling stream against the glowing stove. "Why Mister Kane!" I repeated.

"Pay no mind, lad," old Dan declaimed in his rich booming Irish brogue which I despair of catching in mere writing. "It makes a grand spittoon, that it does, an' moreover 'tis great for humidifyin' the athmosphere."

On this particular Halloween we kids met after supper on a knoll overlooking old Dan's flag shanty. The smoke looked so pretty curling straight up from the chimney into the windless October night. As we watched we pondered the possibilities in such a tranquil scene.

Imagination was called for because early primitive notions about community hygiene and zoning were already conspiring to leave us a paucity of outhouses to topple. And the sturdily built flag shanties had monotonously resisted our best previous efforts to unmoor them. Suddenly we hit upon the heady inspiration of

putting a pail over the smoking chimney of old Dan's darkened flag shanty to see what might happen. It wasn't all mischief: there was a certain detached scientific curiosity involved in our pranks ~~back~~ in those days...

"But won't it asphix--asphix--won't it maybe choke old Dan if he happens to be in there?" one of our band anxiously inquired.

"Naw," our leader assured us. "Anyway I just saw old Dan settin' in the window of his boarding house reading the newspaper."

"Maybe it will set the place on fire," another <sup>quacking</sup> small conservative suggested.

"Naw, when the smoke builds up all that will happen is that the pail will probably sail in the air."

So like diminutive commandos we stealthily stalked Dan's dark and boarded flag shanty and hoisted the smallest of our number up on the roof, where he gently placed the galvanized pail over the smoking tin chimney. Then we raced back to our knoll and there munched apples and composed ourselves to await the expected trip of our pail to the moon.

Things did not turn out exactly according to plan. The pail stubbornly remained there as we silently kept the vigil. Still nothing happened. Suddenly our vigil was shattered. The door of the flag shanty burst open and a young locomotive fireman we knew and a dishevelled young woman--both in an advanced state of dishabille--came choking and gasping their way out.

Silently we watched this strange Halloween tableau as the pair <sup>groped</sup> blindly toward a parked Overland car. When at length the car lurched and snorted away we quietly removed the pail from the chimney and ran home. My mother was reading the evening newspaper.

111

"Did you and your playmates have fun tonight, son?" she dutifully inquired, looking up over her glasses.

"Kind of," I said thoughtfully.

"You didn't get into any mischief, I hope?"

"Naw, Mom, but Halloween isn't like it used to be. Kin I have an apple before bed, Mom? Kin I?"

"Yes, son."

So I quietly munched my apple and then crept off to bed and lay there for a long time blinking into the dark. Another uneventful All Saints' Eve had come and gone.

TRICKS OR TREATS

by

Robert Traver

I cannot recall just when we oldsters first began stealing Halloween away from the kids but I am quite sure that the theft is now complete. <sup>Rather</sup> <sup>to my mind,</sup> conclusive proof is that last Halloween not a single youngster showed up at our house. While it is true that we live a few miles out of town, in previous years the little brigands began invading our premises with their loot bags even before dusk. But this Halloween there were none. Consequently my wife and I were left with enough candy and assorted calories to start a confectionery. We were also left with a nostalgic lump in our throats. The Halloween we had as youngsters was known/officially dead.

This gradual erosion of Halloween was accomplished by stealth rather than by strongarm tactics. We bribed the kids out of it by the lures of free community parties and assorted gimcrackery. In fact the bribery was already well under way when our youngest daughter Gracie, now married, was still in grammar school. That particular Halloween the school authorities slyly invited all the kids to show up at the local gym that night for free candy and apples and for a "gala costume party," with prizes awarded for the most original getups. And the poor trusting kids fell for it.

Our daughter Gracie went as a pumpkin. Now the toil and ingenuity and expense that went into transforming our skinny daughter into a plump and illuminated pumpkin--at the same time

keeping her moderately ambulant and breathing---I cannot yet bear to contemplate much less describe. It is enough to say that by comparison the designing of the first space capsule must have been a breeze. We had to borrow a pickup truck to transport her in to the gym. Once there we had to hold both big doors wide open to get her into the building.

The gym was already awash with kids in all manner of exotic costumes ranging from bulb-nosed clowns to swooping <sup>angels</sup> ~~angels~~ to snaggle-toothed witches complete with broom. But our Gracie was the only pumpkin on the premises, and with the traditional myopia and critical detachment of adoring parents we assured our anxious child she had her prize in the bag. Then we took our seats in the stands along with all the other proud parents and complacently awaited the confirmation of our ~~prediction~~ <sup>prediction</sup> ~~s~~ ✓

At the mystic hour of eight o'clock---a time when my companions and I when we were boys would most likely have been putting our shoulders to our first outhouse---the superintendent had all the milling costumed kids line up for the grand judging for the prizes. After much huddling and conferring and florid proclamation it was decided that this would best be accomplished by a system of elimination presided over by three faculty judges. If a youngster was deemed eligible to remain in the final judging he or she would remain in the line; those rejected from further consideration would be sent to the far side of the gym.

My wife and I held our breath when the judges came down the line and stopped before our Gracie. They surveyed and calibrated her, took two steps forward and two steps back, whispered a little--- and banished her to the far side of the gym! The unbelievable had

happened--our dear little pumpkin had been rejected. If you have never seen a lost and bewildered pumpkin our little Gracie portrayed one that night. As the stern judges kept steering and pushing her toward the swelling knot of the rejected, our incredulous little pumpkin kept coming back in line. When finally it dawned on her that she had flatly been rejected she ran as fast as a pumpkin can out into the night.

We found her crouched and shivering in the parked pickup truck. To paraphrase the words of the old song: "Did you ever see a pumpkin crying? Well I did..." It is not one of the more enriching experiences of parenthood. In fact ever since I have been irked by what my crafty bribing generation has done to Halloween.

Things were different when I was a boy. In those distant days we brought imagination and ingenuity to our Halloween pranks. Not for us to be baited and bribed by our oldsters by free dances or candy or apples or prizes or any other <sup>of the</sup> organized allurements of communal glee. On Halloween we ran in wild packs as free as the rustling windblown leaves. Our aim was not conformity but sheer impish "divilment"--as old Dan Kane might have put it.

All of which reminds me of that far-off Halloween we turned our attentions to old Dan's flag shanty. Back in those days the principal railroad crossings in town were presided over by warning flagmen, mostly retired railroaders who had lost an arm or a leg to their craft. Between trains these flagmen retired to their snug shanties, cozy places with worn padded leather benches and

pot-bellied coal stoves. And on cool nights the flagman boarded his windows and banked his coal fire so that the place would be snug and warm next day.

If a boy played his cards right--sweeping the crossing or bringing in the chunks of coal a passing switch engine periodically dumped off for the flagman's stove--he might get to wave the flag for an approaching train or even squat at the feet of the proprietor in the flag shanty itself.

"Why Mister Kane!" I horrifiedly <sup>exclaimed</sup> ~~said~~ one day when I had played my cards right and <sup>later</sup> sat watching old Dan take a fresh chew of Peerless, work it up into a massive cud, and ~~then~~ deliver a sizzling stream against the glowing stove. "Why Mister Kane!" I repeated.

"Pay no mind, lad," old Dan declaimed in his rich booming Irish brogue which I despair of catching in mere writing. "It makes a grand spit<sup>t</sup>toon, that it does, an' moreover 'tis great for humidifyin' the athsmosphere."

On this particular Halloween we kids met after supper on a knoll overlooking old Dan's flag shanty. The smoke looked so pretty curling straight up from the chimney into the windless October night. As we watched we pondered the possibilities in such a tranquil scene.

Imagination was called for because early primitive notions about community hygiene and zoning were already conspiring to leave us a paucity of outhouses to topple. And the sturdily built flag shanties had monotonously resisted our best previous efforts to unmoor them. Suddenly we hit upon the heady inspiration of

putting a pail over the smoking chimney of old Dan's darkened flag shanty to see what might happen. It wasn't all mischief: there was a certain detached scientific curiosity involved in our pranks ~~back~~ in those days...

"But won't it asphix--asphix--won't it maybe choke old Dan if he happens to be in there?" one of our band anxiously inquired.

"Naw," our leader assured us. "Anyway I just saw old Dan settin' in the window of his boarding house reading the newspaper."

"Maybe it will set the place on fire," another <sup>quaking</sup> small conservative suggested.

"Naw, when the smoke builds up all that will happen is that the pail will probably sail in the air."

So like diminutive commandos we stealthily stalked Dan's dark and boarded flag shanty and hoisted the smallest of our number up on the roof, where he gently placed the galvanized pail over the smoking tin chimney. Then we raced back to our knoll and there munched apples and composed ourselves to await the expected trip of our pail to the moon.

Things did not turn out exactly according to plan. The pail stubbornly remained there as we silently kept the vigil. Still nothing happened. Suddenly our vigil was shattered. The door of the flag shanty burst open and a young locomotive fireman we knew and a dishevelled young woman--both in an advanced state of dishabille--came choking and gasping their way out.

Silently we watched this strange Halloween tableau as the pair <sup>groped</sup> blindly toward a parked Overland car. When at length the car lurched and snorted away we quietly removed the pail from the chimney and ran home. My mother was reading the evening newspaper.

"Did you and your playmates have fun tonight, son?" she dutifully inquired, looking up over her glasses.

"Kind of," I said thoughtfully.

"You didn't get into any mischief, I hope?"

"Naw, Mom, but Halloween isn't like it used to be. Kin I have an apple before bed, Mom? Kin I?"

"Yes, son."

So I quietly munched my apple and then crept off to bed and lay there for a long time blinking into the dark. Another uneventful All Saints Eve had come and gone.