

Halloween: Candy Company Conspiracy?

ANNAFRANCESCA FUCHS

Halloween stands as a day where personified pumpkins, lots of eerie decorations, skyrocketing blood sugar levels, and a witch that looks remarkably like your physics lab partner are regarded as the norm. Most regard this holiday as a chance to dress up in a scary – or merely wacky – costume. Others see Halloween as an excellent way to stock up on lots of free candy. (And for NCSSM students, free food of any form is absolutely wonderful.) Maybe, just a few people ask themselves, “Why in the world do we have a holiday where you carve a pumpkin and go trick-or-treating?” The answer lies within many ancient (and even bizarre) customs of Ireland and Medieval Europe.

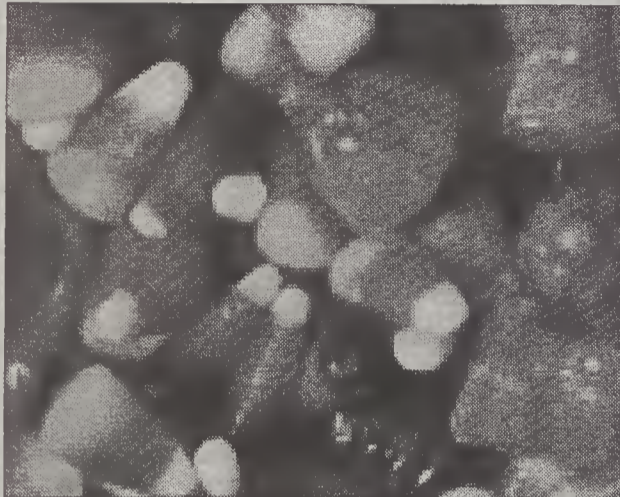
The word “Halloween” is a contracted corruption of “All Hallows Eve,” which occurred the day before the Catholic observance in honor of saints November 1st, on “All Hallows Day” (or “All Saints Day” or “All Hallowmas”). However, in 5th century BC Celtic Ireland, the summer officially ended October 31st. November 1st was actually the Celtic New Year, called “Samhain” (sow an), meaning “end of summer.” In Ireland, this festival was known as Samhain, or ‘La Samon, the Feast of the Sun. In Scotland, the celebration was known as Hallowe’en.

On this day, the Celts believed that the disembodied spirits of all those who had died throughout the preceding year

would come back to search for living bodies they could possess for the next year. This was the spirits’ only hope for an afterlife. On the first day of the year, the Celts believed that all the laws of space and time were suspended, thus allowing the spirit world to intermingle with the living world. Obviously, the still-living did not want to be possessed, so they would extinguish the fires in their homes to make them cold and undesirable the night before, on October 31st. Then, they would dress up in ghoulish costumes and parade noisily around the neighborhood, hoping their destructive manner would scare away any spirits looking to possess them.

An alternative explanation as to why the Celts extinguished their fires is simply that the Celtic tribes would relight their fires from a common source: the Druidic fire that was kept burning in the Middle of Ireland, at Usinach. Samhain was a sort of solar festival, and the Celts would practice sacred fire rituals. All fires except those of the Druids would have to be extinguished, and then households were levied a fee for the holy fire which burned at the Druids’ altars. Sometimes, the Celts would even burn someone at the stake they thought had been already possessed, as a sort of lesson to the spirits. The victim of a sacrifice would be burned in a wickerwork cage.

Eventually, the Romans adopted the Celtic practices, but favored burning effigies to human sacrifices. Belief in spirit possession also diminished, and dressing up like ghosts, witches, and hobgoblins took on a more ceremonial role instead. The Romans ini-



were least likely to survive the winter). Practitioners of Samhain write down their weaknesses on a piece of paper or parchment, and then toss it in a fire. Additionally, cakes are baked as offerings for the souls of the dead. In modern Scotland, some people still celebrate

by building bonfire on hilltops and high ground, and then dancing around the flames. The bonfire is called a Hallowe’en bleeze, and custom once included digging a trench

around the fire to symbolize the sun.

Conversely, trick-or-treating has its origins with ninth-century Europeans rather than the Irish Celts. On November 2nd, “All Souls Day,” early Christians would walk from village to village begging for “soul cakes,” which were made out of square pieces of bread with currants. This activity was called “souling”. With each soul cake a beggar would receive, he or she would promise a prayer on behalf of the dead relatives of the donor. It was believed that the dead remained in limbo for a time after death, and that prayers – even from complete strangers – would help a soul reach heaven. Another practice relat-

ing to trick-or-treating occurred in preparation for St. Colum Kill, in which old Irish peasants would go door to door asking for money, breadcake, butter, cheese, nuts, and fruit.

The Jack-o-lantern, on the other hand, probably originated from Irish folklore. The Irish tale describes Jack, a man notorious for being a trickster and drunkard, tricking Satan into climbing a tree. Jack then carved the image of a cross on the tree’s trunk, and Satan was trapped. Jack made a deal with the devil that, if he would never tempt him again, he would promise to let him down from the tree. After Jack died, he was denied entrance to Heaven because of his evil ways, but he could not cross in to Hell either because he had tricked the devil. Instead, the devil gave him a single ember that would light his way through the frigid darkness between Heaven and Hell. To keep the ember glowing longer, Jack placed it in a hollowed-out turnip. The Irish initially used a turnip as their “Jack’s Lanterns,” but when they immigrated to America, they realized pumpkins were much more plentiful. In this manner, the Jack-O-Lantern in American became a hollowed-out pumpkin lit with an ember. The light from the pumpkin symbolizes the souls of the dead or goblins freed from the dead.

And it is in this manner that Druidic fire rituals, beggars asking for soulcakes, and a poor drunkard named Jack became an integral part of our culture. It’s amazing how complex our holidays truly are.

What’s up with the Real World?

BRETT STEWART

Can we get a reality check? I mean, come on, no one lives anything like the seven on MTV’s “The Real World”. Yeah, we all have our issues, but we aren’t thrown into some huge house with seven of the most difficult people to live with. However, “The Real World,” along with TRL, still manages to grab the highest ratings on MTV. It’s actually the unrealistic qualities that keep us glued to the TV set at 10:00 every Tuesday night

The cast is usually the same each season; each member is opinionated, strong-willed, and has some unusual quality. First off, Julie just doesn’t know what to do with herself. She left her Mormon life at Brigham Young University to live in an environment where her religion is dependent upon her dedication. The only thing is, she’s got a bigger problem, her parents. Her struggle to gain respect from her parents to live independently and make deci-

sions on her own is something that she’s going to have learn how to handle. She is naive and confused, but her open-minded qualities give her a great deal of potential in life.

Melissa is the “I’ve gotta be the center of attention all the time” girl. The girl has issues...she is nothing more than a drama queen and she needs to learn how to compose herself. Her identity crisis and attention obsession is enough to keep us watching just to see what ludicrous thing she will do next. It is time for Melissa to deal with her problems and move onto lead a happy life, if such a thing is possible.

David, is the “I’m gonna be perfect” man. He has an obsession like Melissa; however, his obsession is living up to high self-expectations. He works out everyday, has a 4.0 GPA, doesn’t drink, doesn’t smoke, and has high aspirations. He’s pretty detached from all the events occurring in the house. He has all the women

he can handle and doesn’t seem to seem to have any complaints.

Matt, the individual among the group, is the one that thinks creatively. He, like David chills out and stays away from conflict. “Supafly,” as he has come to be known, says enough about his style. The man loves hip-hop culture, and knows more about break dancing than any white guy I’ve seen. Cruising the streets in some souped-up Honda, Matt is sure to attract people with his extraordinary personality and good taste.

Cocky, confident, and ambitious, Jamie is the practical one on “The Real World” scene. The guy knows how to manage a good balance between his friends, relationships, and his career. Recent advancements on the show some spark between Jamie and Julie, but their contrasting personalities and view points would prove to be devastating to a relationship. He is cunning and on the edge kind of guy...if he doesn’t get

caught up in his close group of guy friends, he might just be the next businessman of the year. We’ll just have to see won’t we?

Loyal to her friends and family, Kelly is Miss Charm. She has heads turning from every direction as her beauty catches every eye. With her overwhelming self-confidence and attractive qualities Kelly is sure to be a success at no matter what she does. Kelly’s current dilemma involves her dedication to her boyfriend, Peter. Her supposed love for him makes her want to stay, but the logical side of her makes her see the reasons for not leaving. Watch out! When Kelly comes into play, she’s bound to get her way.

Lastly, we all know that every “Real World” show has a homosexual cast member. It’s almost assumed that one member of each tribe of Real Worlders will either develop a homosexual relationship or discover his or her’s queerness. This season’s pick is none other

than Danny. His role on the show mainly involves late night escapades with Kelly and Julie. I have to say, most guys would be pretty jealous of his intimate relations with the girls. Despite these temptations Danny remains loyal to his boyfriend Paul. His faith and devotion to the relationship shows signs of promise for the two of them after the show ends.

Regardless of all the ridiculous whining and complaining, we seem to still love the drama between the cast members. As complicated as the entanglements on “The Real World” can be, we still some how try to find their relevance to our own lives. The exaggerated drama shown in the multiple relationship disasters, unknown identities, and parental conflicts is something that everyone hopes to be caught up with. As far as it all goes, the annoyance, unreal qualities, over exaggeration will continue to make “The Real World” a success.