

Terrifying Traditions

Halloween thrives after 2,000 years

By KENDRA KINGSLEY
THE BATTALION



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For many students, the day associated with ghosts and goblins has been celebrated as an annual rite for a very long time. Yet, behind the pumpkin-carving and commercialization, Halloween's roots lie deep in folklore and ancient tradition.

Originating from the 2,000-year-old, pre-Christian Celtic calendar, Halloween — known as Samhain — marked the most celebrated holiday of the Celtic year. The Celts believed that Samhain, which was celebrated Nov. 1 and marked the beginning of winter months, was the time of year that the ghosts of the dead were able to mingle with the living. To keep such unwelcome guests away, communities sacrificed animals, fruits and vegetables and lit bonfires to encourage unearthly visitors to continue their journey to the afterworld.

However, the Halloween of modern times is not exactly an untouched Celtic tradition. After Christian missionaries attempted to alter "pagan" Celtic religious practices, they renamed the Celt's Nov. 1 holiday to a feast of All Saints to honor the church's saints. All Saints Day, also known as All Hallows, linguistically transformed into today's Oct. 31 celebration of Halloween.

In addition to its foundation, many Halloween traditions can be traced to the Celtic heritage. One of the holiday's most popular traditions, trick-or-treating, originates from the Celts' belief in fairies. Believed to have sided with either God nor Satan, fairies were thought to walk the earth condemned until judgement day. Halloween, however, people would imitate the fairies and go house to house begging for treats — and played practical jokes on house-

holds that failed to supply an offering.

Surviving several decades, trick-or-treating is still a widely-practiced Halloween tradition. Yet, those who feel they have outgrown the cavity-inducing ritual continue to find ways to celebrate the Celtic tradition.

Amy Puente, a sophomore kinesiology major, said she and her friends decided to host a costume party in an effort to rekindle the trick-or-treating experience from their childhoods.

"For kids, it's understood that Halloween is about dressing up going out trick-or-treating," Puente said. "But when you get to a certain age, the anticipation for [Oct. 31] is gone. [My friends and I] thought a costume party would be the perfect excuse for people our age to get dressed up again and remember what it's like to celebrate Halloween again."

Yet the continuation of Halloween rituals and folklore does not end with childhood traditions.

For example, the legend of werewolves, the metamorphosis of man into wolf, long has fascinated the public and is thought to have originated from pre-historic Europe where hunters believed wearing wolf hides would allow them to possess the same powers as their predator.

Additionally, Lycanthropy — a disorder in which the victim believes he can transform himself into a wolf (tearing open raw meat, howling at the moon and attacking victims in a bloodthirsty rage) — has strengthened an interest in werewolf folklore.

Now commonly associated with Halloween, the topic of werewolves has been publicized through popular 1980s movies such as *The Howling*, *An American Werewolf in London* and *Teen Wolf*.

This crossover from European legend to the silver screen plays a large role in determining what has kept ancient folklore alive for cen-

turies. In fact, many students opt to experience the terror and thrill associated with Halloween with the flick of a remote. Michelle Bertino, a sophomore business major, said her customary Oct. 31 celebration has always included renting scary movies.

"Ever since I can remember, I've always watched horror films on Halloween," Bertino said. "My personal favorites are *Friday the 13th* movies, but I'll watch anything that will get me in the mood to be really scared."

From frequenting haunted houses to spending an evening glued to a scream-worthy movie, many students will experience Oct. 31 as the Celts would have intended — continuing a haunting tradition of otherworldly proportions.

NO MORE CANDY, ALL GROWN UP

Students hang up trick-or-treat bags, create new ways to celebrate Halloween

By BETHANY BROWN
THE BATTALION

For many Aggies, Halloween used to mean going door to door dressed as a witch, monster or their favorite super hero and asking for a tasty treat.

But most Aggies feel they have reached the age at which they must hang up their trick-or-treat bags and find other forms of entertainment for Halloween. The problem is, many Aggies are not sure what activities will be as fun as trick-or-treating used to be and have trouble deciding what to do on Halloween.

Some students will spend Halloween celebrating with their campus organizations. Student organizations will host such activities as haunted houses and costume parties. Mike Hopkins, a sophomore business major, said he plans to attend Aggie Fish Club's skate-n-date party this Halloween.

"Basically, we all dress up in our craziest Halloween costumes to look as ridiculous as possible and then skate around at Wolf Pen Creek, which we have rented out for the night of Halloween," Hopkins said.

Hopkins said he is excited about his night of skating and said it will be the perfect substitute for trick-or-treating.

"Halloween is a fun time for everybody to get together with their friends and instead of doing the old boring 'get candy, which equals get cavity' we thought we would do something different," Hopkins said.

"Everybody out there knows how much fun skating is if all their social misconceptions are gone, and if you add a costume party to top it off, with lots of candy — you just can't beat that."

Other students plan to attend some of the events at bars and clubs around town, such as Shadow Canyon's costume contest or the Blue October show at Hurricane Harry's.

Katie Lewis, a freshman business major, said she is going to the

Blue October concert mainly because she just really likes the band.

"Blue October is a great band, and I love going to live shows," Lewis said.

According to Lewis, seeing a band is a great way to spend Halloween. She said Halloween is pretty much like any other day to her, and she plans to just kick back and enjoy the music.

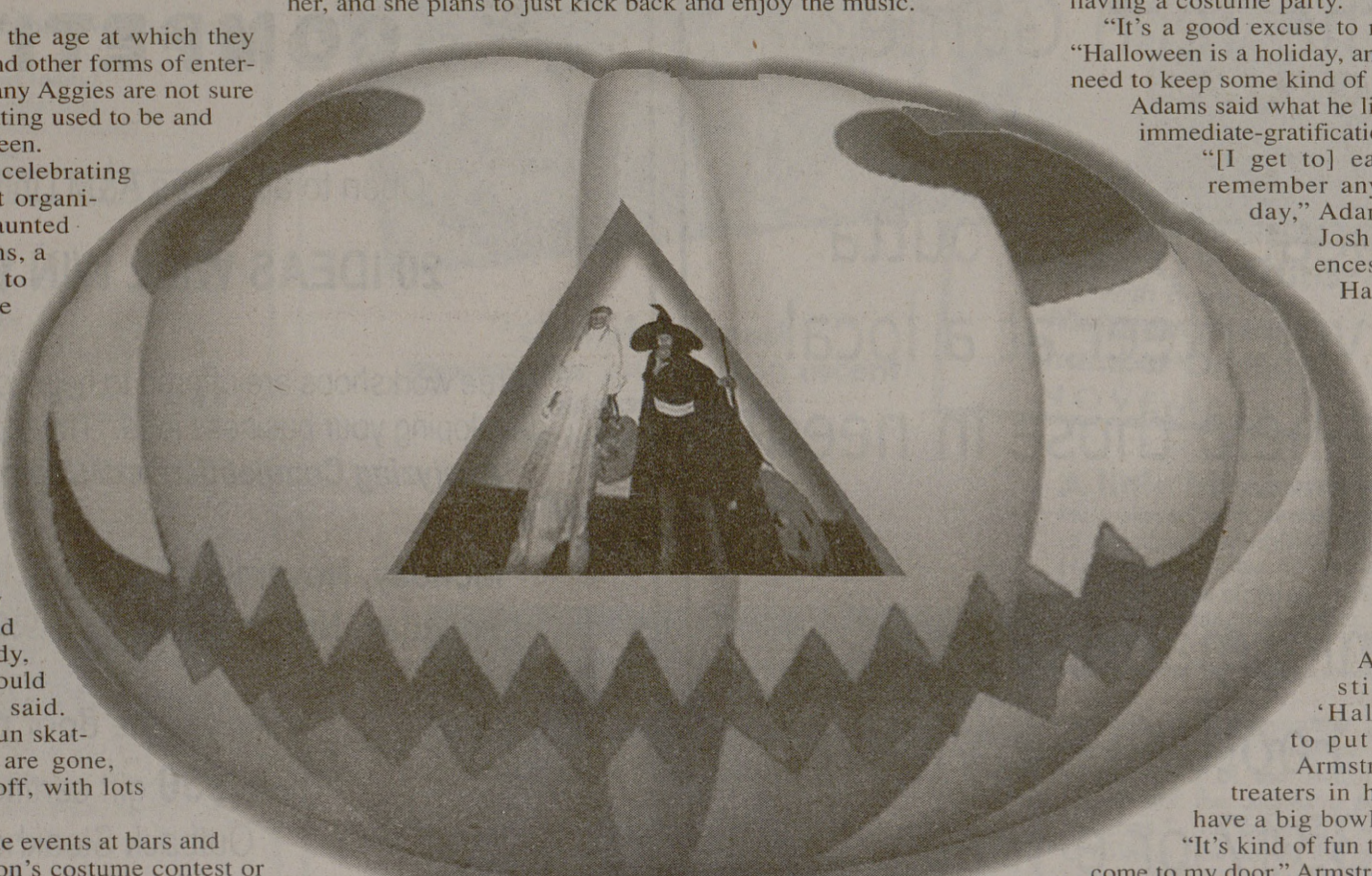
"I never really do anything on Halloween, but I can't think of a better way to celebrate than hanging out with friends and seeing a good band," Lewis said.

James Adams, a senior environmental design major, said he and his roommates will be celebrating Halloween this year by having a costume party.

"It's a good excuse to make the party more fun," Adams said. "Halloween is a holiday, and if we aren't going to trick-or-treat, we need to keep some kind of tradition."

Adams said what he likes most about Halloween is that it is an immediate-gratification holiday.

"[I get to] eat candy, party and I don't have to remember anything special that happened on this day," Adams said.



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Josh Armstrong, a senior biomedical sciences major, said he is going to spend his Halloween at home this year.

"It's tough when Halloween is in the middle of the week like it is this year," Armstrong said. "I want to go out, but I know I have to worry about the tests and homework I have for the rest of the week and it would be hard to have a good time."

Armstrong said he plans to rent scary movies and invite friends over for some laid-back fun.

"We decided to get a really scary movie, like *The Exorcist*, and just hang out here," Armstrong said. "That way we can still celebrate by doing 'Halloweeny' stuff but we don't have to put a lot of effort into it."

Armstrong also said he gets a lot trick-or-treaters in his neighborhood and that he plans to have a big bowl of candy waiting for them.

"It's kind of fun to see how excited the kids are when they come to my door," Armstrong said. "I remember how much I use to love to go trick-or-treating and since I'm too old to do it now, it's nice to still get to experience it in some way."