



# Taking a byte out of the vampire myth

*Dave Barry is a humor columnist who is published in 500 newspapers in the U.S. and abroad. He won the 1988 Pulitzer prize for Commentary and has published 24 humorous books.*

*When he isn't making millions laugh with his humor, he plays in a literary rock band called Rock Bottom Remainers. Other band members include Stephen King, Amy Tan, Ridley Pearson, and Mitch Albom. He and his wife, Michelle, live in Miami with their two children Rob and Sophie.*

**By DAVE BARRY**

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Santa Claus, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowperson are starting to appear in the store displays at the mall, and you know what that means!

It means it's almost Halloween.

Halloween is that very special night when your children head out for a few hours of fun, while you stay home with a Buick-sized cache of miniature Snickers, listening for the doorbell. There it is! You open the door and ... Surprise! It's some neighborhood children, costumed as police officers! No, wait, those are REAL police officers, informing you that they have your children in custody. Something about a municipal sewage station and a grenade launcher. Ha ha! Those little pranksters!

Yes, Halloween is a lot of fun for the older kids. But it can be a scary time for the younger ones, who hear stories about spooky creatures \_ ghosts, goblins, Yoko Ono \_ and can develop serious anxieties. That's why the president of the American Academy of Child Psychologists, Dr. Karl A. Fronkman, offers this Halloween advice for parents of young children:

"Sit the child down in a familiar, non-threatening place, such as the child's bedroom, and explain to the child that Halloween is 'just pretend,' and that there are no such things as witches, or ghosts, or werewolves, or vampires, or demon slime-eels of death that can ooze under your door at night and bore right through your eyeballs and SUCK OUT YOUR BRAINS LIKE JELLY HAHAHAAAAHA."

That is sound professional advice. Our children have enough real things to worry about, without being needlessly scared by silly legends. A human being cannot turn into a wolf! Although I have a friend, Buzz Burger, who once turned into an alligator for several hours. But that was New Year's Eve.

Also I should note here, in the interest of accuracy, that vampires are real. I found them, needless to say, on the Internet, where they have a number of sites. An excellent one is the Vampire Church (<http://www.vampire-church.com/>) which is very serious, and which describes itself as "an online community where others may find and contact other real vampires." It offers a number of resources for the vampire community, including a section called (really) "Dark Fonts," where you can download computer fonts with names like "Frankenstein" and "Bloody Stump."

Picture the scene: A dark night in Transylvania, a castle bedroom, a beautiful young woman in bed, sleeping, defenseless. The windows are open; the curtains flutter; a bat flies in. There's a swirl of fog, and the bat turns into ... Dracula! He approaches the bed. He opens his mouth; his canines are the length of Bic pens. He leans over the sleeping girl, his glowing red eyes riveted on her slim, vulnerable neck. He leans toward her and ... Whips out his laptop computer! He boots it up! (This takes 17 minutes, because Dracula has Windows XP.) Finally the woman, sensing an evil presence in the room, wakes up and to her horror finds herself face to face with ... the word "BOO" in Gothic Leaf, 18-point, boldface! AIEEEEEEE.

In all fairness, I should point out that the whole Dracula thing is a stereotype that is offensive to the vampire community. If you read the messages on the Vampire Church message board, you discover that vampires are a very sensitive group of people (or whatever) who feel they are misunderstood by society. To be honest, I was disappointed by this attitude: I wanted to post a message that said: "Stop this self-pitying victim-group whining! You're VAMPIRES, darn it! Get out there and BITE SOMEBODY!"

But apparently real vampires don't go around biting people. It's a stereotype! Some vampires, however, DO drink blood, to judge from

these messages, which I am not making up:

"I have recently lost my only donor. She is my girlfriend, but she moved back to the states \_ I haven't fed in nearly 2 weeks and I grow weak and tiresome."

"I didn't know anyone like me until I met one of my co-workers. He told me that he is a blood drinker like me. And so we started talking about it. And now I don't feel alone."

Good for you, Mr. Rather!

No, seriously, it is not a laughing matter, this vicious stereotyping of the vam-


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pire community. So, parents, when you talk to your small children about Halloween, remind them that the world is full of many different kinds of people, and just because a person drinks human blood, that does NOT mean this person can be warded off with garlic. I mean, get REAL.

(Dave Barry is a humor columnist for the Miami Herald. Write to him c/o The Miami Herald, One Herald Plaza, Miami FL 33132.)

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