

Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

Okay, ghouls and guys. It's Halloween, the season when adults punish their kids for the same stuff that they did when they were young.

Fortunately for the human race, I don't have any children, but I can put some very amusing thoughts into your little ones' sweet heads...

Keep in mind that I grew up in central New Jersey, not too far from the Great Swamp near Morristown, home of the infamous Jersey Devil, whose main diet consisted of Girl Scouts who wandered away from their campsites at night.

Mischief Night. Remember Oct. 30, Mischief Night, the night before Halloween, the time to play hilarious tricks on the neighbors?

Back in the dinosaur age when I was growing up in the 50's and 60's, when most TV sets had 13" black and white screens and video games hadn't been invented yet, I was a Good Little Girl and didn't go out on Mischief Night unless it was my turn to walk the dog.

At least, that's what my parents thought.

Once or twice I indulged in the popular pre-Halloween sport of ringing doorbells and running away. (Hey, this is *real* stuff!) but learned my lesson when I rang Mrs. Romaine's back doorbell and fell over a couple of stakes holding up a small tree in her backyard.

ET call home. As I became more worldly and wise, in about ninth grade, I

Harrowing Halloweens

learned how to make a fake UFO from an article in our local daily paper. This was in 1964, when central New Jersey was the scene of a huge UFO flap and we thought that every appearance of Venus in the nighttime sky was a flying saucer, as they were then called.

Having a top-secret nuclear missile installation at nearby Hadley Airport and a not so top-secret Nike missile base several miles north of us on the Watchung Military Reservation only added to the paranoia.

A rumor widely circulating around our high school that year said that the UFO's were coming to kidnap all of the 14-year-olds. I was 14 and ready for them. Boy, was I ready!

My best friend, Nancy and I decided to field-test the information in the "how to make a fake UFO" article, which we had seen in the *Courier-News* around Halloween time.

We stealthily obtained the necessary supplies and arranged to sneak out and meet in a field behind my house under the pretext of walking our dogs, who didn't get along with each other at all.

After assembling the UFO (I can only divulge that it was similar in construction to a hot air balloon and involved a clear plastic dry cleaner's bag and a wire coat hanger) and igniting the Top Secret Substance to make it light up and become airborne, we launched it.

Blazing merrily away, our fake UFO rose majestically a good four feet into the air and crash-landed in the dry weeds.

Nancy and I had to do some fast footwork to stomp it out before the entire field caught fire.

Now that my Dad, a faithful Dallas Post reader in Florida, has seen my misdeeds in black and white, I think I'm dead meat.

Unless he already knew about it. We don't call him "Eagle Eye" for nothing.

• Things that go bump in the night.

When I lived in Trucksville about 20 years ago, the kids loved to go out on Mischief Night with homemade devices which made an indescribable noise when set off against a window.

To make one, you simply carved notches in the edges of an empty wooden spool of thread, then wound it up in a rubber band. When you set it against a glass window and let it go, it made the most startling noise imaginable.

• A creepy family legend. My weird cousin, Lois Ann, loved telling strange stories, which she thought were hilarious and we hated.

This is her favorite. Imagine hearing it from a squeaky-voiced ten-year-old with a stuffy nose.

A local inn had a room where nobody would stay. Everyone who rented it usually left rather quickly.

After a new owner bought the place, he decided to find out why. The first night he stayed in the room, he was awakened at midnight by an eerie voice calling, "I am da viper. I am da viper."

Scared out of his socks, the innkeeper fled.

The second night, the innkeeper returned to the haunted room with the standard Ghostproofing Arsenal: a strong flashlight, holy water, garlic, a gun with a silver bullet, a crucifix and a shotgun.

Sure enough, just before midnight came the eerie voice: "I am da viper. I am da viper."

Still scared, the innkeeper followed the voice through the room and into the hall, as it continued its eerie chant, "I am da viper. I am da viper."

Finally he cornered the voice on the stairway and shined his flashlight where it seemed to be coming from.

In the beam stood a withered old man carrying a spray bottle of Windex and a roll of paper towels.

"Hallo," the old man smiled. "I am da viper. Do you vant your windows viped?"

Happy Halloween!

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

How many remember Scripto mechanical pencils? They were around before Hector was a pup, which is an old expression keeping me from naming a year. Just take my word for it - Scriptos have been an important part of American life for a very long time.

Originally one pencil cost only 29¢. It held a 4" lead. There was a neat grey eraser that worked. A shiny metal band held a clip for fastening the pencil to your shirt pocket, and young fingers always got a good grip on that octagonal shape. Finally, a simple twist advanced the lead and you were good for 22,000 words before a refill, or so their ads said. (They also said: "Keen students use Scripto pencils and never miss a point!")

Today you'll pay \$1.44 for the same pencil, this time on card blister-packed with six 1.1 mm leads. I mention the lead diameter because there are now three

The Scripto mechanical pencil, and U.S. industry

sizes to confuse buyers: 0.5 mm, 1.7 mm, and the far sturdier 1.1 mm Scriptos use.

You'll also confront a bewildering variety of competitive brands, like these: "Quicker Clicker," a see-thru version with 0.5 lead costing \$2.97, but you can also get a three-pack economy model for the same \$2.97; Pentel's "Starter Set" is for the "first-time" user and costs \$1.17; Pentel will also sell you a five-pack for \$2.97 (there's that price again) and claim theirs are "healthier for the environment;" finally, the popular \$2.97 will buy you an "Executive Style Zebra" in impressive chrome and black steel. Most of these are made in Japan. Some, like Scriptos, are assembled in Mexico from U.S. and Japanese parts.

There are others of course, too many to list, except for the ingenious "Sensematic - The World's First Hasslefree Pencil. No Clicking! No Twisting! No Jamming! Senses when more lead is needed and advances just the right amount." Two of these will cost you only 78¢ and they have only one problem...they don't work!

Here is a delightfully nostalgic reminder for long-ago Scripto fans, a quote from one of their pre-war ads, which undoubtedly appeared

in Colliers and the Saturday Evening Post magazines:

"Scripto is no 'flight of fancy' says Elizabeth Zymek, Eastern Airlines Flight Attendant. You'll find the ceiling unlimited on Scripto performance. So naturally, Captain Rickenbacker, president and general manager, has instructed Eastern flight attendants to use Scriptos in their work. Like EAL, they have a great record of dependability."

Now - no pun intended - time for the point. Eddie R. isn't around anymore and EAL itself has fallen on its financial sword. (Even ex-astronaut and super manager Frank Borman couldn't save it.) And good old 100% American Scripto is no more either, having moved its headquarters to California from Atlanta and changing its name. Scripto is now called "Scripto-TOKAI." A red Rising Sun logo dominates its stationery and product packaging, and, oh yes, they aren't called pencils now. They're "writing instruments" and Scripto-Tokai claims their new graphics convey an "upscale high-tech image."

Yeah, sure, but I'll bet the company cafeteria serves saki.

All I can say is, "Whither goest thou, America?"

Letters

Seeks witnesses to Shavertown accident

Editor: Would anyone who was stopped behind a red Chevrolet Sprint, at the stop sign at the intersection of West Center Street and Pioneer Ave., Shavertown, on the after-

noon of Saturday, October 1, between 2:15-2:20 p.m., please call me.

I need a witness or witnesses to confirm that I was at a complete stop on West Center Street, prior

to the accident on Pioneer Ave. I need your assistance. Please contact me as soon as possible, at 696-4415.

Gladys H. Wood Shavertown

Library news

Enjoy fresh citrus while aiding the library

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Friends of the Library are sponsoring the third annual fresh citrus sale for the Back Mountain Memorial Library. Orders will be taken now for delivery on December 4 and 5. This year's crop of fruit promises to be the best yet—we can guarantee quality! Two fifths of a bushel of ruby red grapefruit (16-24 count) for \$10 and 2/5 bushel of naval oranges (32-48 count) for \$10. Orders must be prepaid by November 14. Order forms will be available at the library. Checks may be made payable to the Back Mountain Memorial Library and received with the order. The Citrus Sale has proven to be a popular fundraiser for the library.

The library began selling current magazines, in good condition, a few years back and the project has been going well. Patrons bring their magazines as they finish with them and we add them to our sale table. The maga-

zines sell for 10¢ each. The magazine sale has brought a profit of \$78.27 to the library during the first nine months of 1994. Average monthly sales amount to \$7. June sales were \$12; July \$8 and August \$14. This has become another way patrons share their magazine with others and the library benefits with the proceeds.

New books at the library: "Motherless Daughters" by Hope Edelman is the story of the legacy of loss. For any woman who has lost her mother and who has looked for comfort and understanding, here at last is a brave and powerful book of experience and insight. Any woman whose mother has died will tell you that her life is irrevocably altered; that this one fact forever changes who she is and who she will be. Gone is the caregiver, teacher, adversary, role model and guide to being a woman. Often, whole parts of the mother's role transfer to the daughter; grieving can be cut

short, cut off, or dismissed in order to "keep the family going". A daughter's relationship with her father and siblings changes and losses can be overwhelming.

"The Maltese Angel" by Catherine Cookson is an immensely powerful and enthralling novel which spans more than three decades, from the 1880s through World War I and beyond, as it tells the story of a young man's fateful decision and enduring influence it has on future generations. Ward Gibson's heart and mind were in turmoil as he rode home from Newcastle, across the Tyne, to the prosperous Durham farm he had just inherited from his father. In terms of property he was already his own assured man, though still only in his twenties. But what about marriage? He knew what was expected of him by the village folk, and especially by the Mason family, whose daughter, Daisy, he had known all his life. He then meets a dancer.

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