

Mark on sugar, cross-dressing costumes, and Sonny as Cher

by Mark Owens

Boo!
Nope, no ghost -- just little ole me. I know it's been a while since I've checked in

Skywalker, Evil Kenevil, Fozi the Bear or some other childhood idol. I also couldn't wait to collect the 3.7 metric tons of candy from my neighbors. Mom was

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with you, but I've been seeing someone. My therapist says I'm almost cured of my fixation concerning carpet and R-rated pictures of David Shields. Frankly, I'm feeling much better now.

But let's talk about ghosts, since it's Halloween - one of my favorite holidays, right up there with Christmas, Arbor Day and Dave Shield's birthday (hey, it's almost cured).

As a kid I couldn't wait to hop into my costume and, for a couple of hours, be Luke

never thrilled with the idea, but then looking back, I suppose having an eight-year-old me wired on sugar for three weeks wouldn't have been that thrilling.

Even now, as an alleged grown-up, I enjoy going to costume parties as something other than me. Not only is this an opportunity to acquire candy (I don't think I'd pass as a trick-or-treater), but it's a socially-acceptable chance to act out a fantasy. One of my apartment roomies, whose name has been changed to



avoid litigation, recently had this conversation which proves this point:

Me: Going to any costume parties this week?

Bob: You bet. I just can't decide what to go as. You think I could pass for Loni Anderson?

Me: Umm...

Bob: Or maybe Madonna. Think I should shave my legs?

Me: Nah. Shave your head.

The Missing Pieces

Bob: Sinad O'Conner! Great idea!

Me: I'm outta here.

Some people would probably call me immature for wanting to dress up and go trick-or-treating. Some would call me odd for rooming with a guy who wants to cross-dress for success. And, if I lived in a Houston, Texas suburb, I'd be called a satan worshiper. No kidding.

Last week the Associated Press wired a story from Houston. It seems the Aldine School District has banned Halloween costumes this year, claiming they promote satanic worship in children.

This has caused quite a stir in homes across the country. For years small children have been dressing up as knights and princesses. Now all of the sudden, they're Children of Satan. Why?

"Subconsciously, the costumes plant bad seeds in the children," said Sonny Donaldson, school superintendent.

But perhaps I'm being too hasty here. One of the Aldine School District officials sent me an analysis of a favorite Halloween chant used by

scores of children every year. Judge for yourself:

Trick or Treat: The traditional holiday salutation.

Smell my feet: Some scholars believe this is a reference to sulfur and brimstone, two elements commonly believed to be found in the bowels of Hell.

Give us something good to eat: Obviously a reference to human sacrifice.

Personally, I think the Aldine School District is being a little paranoid. My generation, and most of the ones before us, have always dressed up and gone trick-or-treating. While I'm sad to say the trick-or-treating part had become dangerous over the past few years, I find it very, very hard to believe small children, dressing up as their favorite cartoon and TV characters, will have the uncontrollable urge to sacrifice the family pet when they get home tonight.

As for Sonny Donaldson, some have said he's been standing in the Houston sun too long. Me -- I think he's just worried people will see him dressing up as Cher.

Team nicknames teem with trouble

by Mike Royko

"I can see you got the shakes real bad," Slat Grobnik said. "And red eyes and the sweats. The whole works. You're a real wreck."

Yes, I've had better days.

"Goin' through controversy withdrawal again, huh?"

That's it.

"Yeah, I figured. All those weeks of Judge Thomas and Professor Hill and the goofy senators and the blacks being mad and the women being mad and everybody in the country on one side or the other. Now, bam, it's all over. Now you're coming down. Controversy withdrawal. And you got to go cold turkey."

If only I could control the twitching.

"You know what you need to calm the nerves? A hair of the dog that bit ya. A stiff belt of controversy."

Sure, the party's over. There's nothing left but the dregs, some dull pontification about heightened sensitivity.

"Yeah, but there's other stuff. It ain't got the same 86-proof jolt, but it would help you come down off your high."

Such as?

"Well, what about the Indians? They might not send you on a controversy bender, but you ought to be able to get a

decent buzz on."

The Indians? I haven't been paying attention. Are they irate about something?

"Oh, yeah. Lots of them are mad because the Atlanta Braves fans have been doing 'the chop.' They swing little toy tommyhawks and make noise like they're on the warpath. And some of them wear those hairpieces with feathers. The real Indians say this is an insult and a stereotype. And they say that the only time real Indians wear those hairpieces with feathers is on a few solemn occasions. And a ball game in Atlanta, with Jane Fonda in the front row swinging a tommyhawk, ain't one of those solemn occasions."

I can see their point. They have long objected to Native Americans being used as the symbols of sports teams such as the Cleveland Indians, the Washington Redskins and the Atlanta Braves.

"Right. And when you think about it, that don't make sense. There can't be many Indians living in Cleveland. If they were, they'd bust out of Cleveland and fight their way to a reservation. And the only guy I see in Washington with red skin is Ted Kennedy after he had a bad night. Or a good one."

That's true. And it must be painful to the Native Americans

when, year after year, they hear fans say that the Indians stink. Or that the Braves were pathetic.

"You got it. I mean, why should teams be named after Indians anyhow? If we want to be fair about it, teams should be



named after the biggest ethnic groups in the cities they represent."

Such as?

"Like New York. They got a big Jewish population, and Italian and Irish, right? So instead of the New York Mets, they could be called the New York Rabbis. And maybe the Yankees could be the New York Paizanos."

I don't know about that. Some people might be offended if they saw a headline that said: "Cubs Crush Rabbis."

"Sure, but they wouldn't be the Cubs. What's the biggest ethnic group in the Chicago area?"

We have the largest Polish population outside of Warsaw.

"Right. So the Cubs become the Chicago Poles. Think about that. When the fans got pumped up, they could all start dancing the polka. That's better than a wave. And they could sing it too. Maybe that one I like, the 'I Got a Girlfriend, Her Name is Mable Polka.' See, Mable rhymes with table, so you can put in dirty lyrics. Or instead of Mable, 'I Got a Girlfriend, Her Name is Nelly,' and Nelly rhymes with belly, so that one could get wild, too."

No, I think those songs have a potential for trouble. And I would be apprehensive about a headline that says: "Poles Stomp Rabbis."

"Yeah, you might be right. OK, then instead of the Rabbis, they could be called the New York Bagels. Then the headline could say: 'Poles Chew Up Bagels.'"

That could be acceptable, I suppose, but it still doesn't resolve the grievances of the Native Americans.

"Sure it does. Atlanta has a big African-American population, right? So they'd become the Atlanta Africans."

Yes, but then you could have

headlines saying: "Africans Bite Bagels." That would be bizarre.

"Not if the Bagels won. Then it would be 'Bagels Conk Africans.'"

That would be even more bizarre. I think your ideas might be too controversial. What if we wound up with a season in which Atlanta and Chicago were in the final game of the playoffs. You know what the headlines would say?

"Yeah. 'Showdown between the Africans and Poles.' Sounds exciting to me."

I think this has the potential for creating ill feelings.

"So? How do you think those Native Americans feel when they see a story that says: 'Yankees Crush Indians?' No wonder they're mad."

You have a point.

"Sure. So we can rename all the teams that way. Figure out what the biggest group is in a city."

OK, which city is next?

"How about San Francisco?"

I think I've had my controversy fix, thank you.

Mike Royko is a Chicago-based, nationally syndicated columnist. His column appears weekly in The Collegian.