

The Decade of Halloween Parties



At about age 35 I decided that Halloween was my favorite holiday.

We started having Halloween Parties and things just took off. It was almost scary.

Whichever Saturday was closest to Halloween became the night of the Halloween party. Written invitations went out a month ahead. The RSVP's came in. Usually, there were at least 60-70 people in attendance.

After dark, the guests poured in. But even before they hit the front door they were part of the experience. We went all out to decorate the yard.

One of the most popular decoration themes for the yard was a graveyard. Each person in attendance at the party had a personal gravestone. In those days, you could not buy Halloween decorations like you can now. I had to make them. So each guest had a "gravestone" made out of neon poster paper. I bent coat hangers and taped them to the back so they would stand in the grass. Imagine a front lawn with 70 gravestones that suddenly

pop up a few days before Halloween.

It got to be pretty funny. Neighbors told me they'd drive or walk by to see who was attending the party that year. They could tell just by walking by the front of the house and reading the gravestones.

One year there was a 20' high spider web spread up two stories to the top of a tree in our front yard. And of course, a giant spider. Every year the pumpkins we carved got more and more elaborate.

There was a party BEFORE the big party. That one was the one in which people volunteered to help decorate and cook so we could feed the masses. My sister was in charge of one thing, and one thing only. Spider webs. She'd spend hours finding places to stretch those stringy white webs. I think you know that can be done quickly and in sloppy fashion. That was not my sister. She was meticulous and did a fabulous job.

There was a "boy" list and a "girl" list. It was sort of sexist but any boy could do things on the girl list and vice versa. The boy projects usually involved heavy lifting or construction elements. The girl list mostly involved food prep. We had a blast even before the big party started.

I will be able to write columns for years to come from all the stories that surfaced from the 10 years of Halloween parties. For now, I'll give you just a bit of the details in case you want some hints on things you could incorporate into yours. These things worked well for me.

1. The party started at 8 PM. I knew it was going to go late into the evening (more like 3 AM) so no sense starting too early. Let people do the trick-or-treating with their kids and then come on over.

2. I served 13 courses. Usually six appetizers, 1 entrée course and then six desserts. The food always had a theme, so the year my husband dressed as Rhett and I dressed as Scarlett, we served southern food.

3. The desserts were pretty elaborate. Maybe a bloody, plastic hand would be coming vertically out of a cake. Or spider webs drawn on a tart with plastic spiders. Some desserts were pretty, but pretty or creepy, they all disappeared. No leftovers from those parties.

4. Drinks and appetizers had themes, too. Things like blue cheese stuffed olive eyeballs floating in a bowl of vodka. Those were a hit.

5. We hired a DJ every year and our entryway became the dance floor.

6. Dancing started right away with people also having drinks and observing the costumes.

7. Some years we had a costume contest. The trophy was a foot-tall rubber rat.

8. The appetizers were a self-serve buffet in the bar. The entrée service was a buffet in the dining room and when that was removed we moved on to a buffet of desserts.

9. People went all out with their costumes. Year one, maybe they came dressed conservatively, but when they saw what others did, they came back at year 2 and went all out. One woman came dressed as a table lamp. And on top of her head was a bulb that actually lit up when someone pulled her chain. The lampshade was amazing. Two sisters came as Morticia from The Adams Family and her dead sister. The fake gash in that woman's neck from the axe that killed her was enough to make you lose your appetite.

People came in crowds too. Six people dressed as aliens. When they opened their mouths they glowed green. One of them must have been a dentist. Five guys dressed as the Village People. They did an arrangement with the DJ so when they came waltzing in he played YMCA. I could go on... and on... My brother once dressed as a scarecrow. He sat slumped on our front porch as people arrived. The guests would marvel on how the scarecrow we put out on the porch looked so lifelike. Then he'd suddenly come to life and scare the daylights out of them. And I mean screams! One guy called me before the party to see how tall my ceilings were. He arrived dressed as a 15' Kachina doll.

Alas in the big move, I think the pictures might have gotten thrown out. I had probably 1000 pictures that people had taken over the years. I asked my friend Peter and he came up with these two. You get to see the graveyard and Elvis dancing with a Caveman.

I have more fond memories of Halloween than any other holiday. I'll be forever grateful to all of our friends who contributed to the merriment.

May those parties rest in peace.

Enjoy your Halloween

Cheers...

and Boo!