

Halloween

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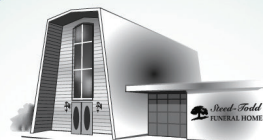
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Ghostly guests and Halloween hijinks in Clovis

Step back to Clovis in the '70s, where Halloween pranks, poison scares, and a mysterious trick-or-treater kept the town on edge.

By David Stevens
THE STAFF OF THE NEWS
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David Stevens
--
Publisher

Bill Southard must have enjoyed Halloween. At least he wrote a lot about it when he was managing editor at the Clovis News-Journal for much of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Some of his spooky reports were funny – we'll get to the naked woman in a minute – and some were real-life scary – like the time Clovis leaders asked kids to skip trick-or-treating due to concerns about poison candy.

He wrote about the "good old days" of the holiday, "when kids used a good deal of ingenuity in the tricks they performed."

There was the time a group of teens disassembled a car, carried the parts to the roof of the Curry County Courthouse, then reassembled it and left it there overnight.

He lamented the days of outhouses appearing on school roofs, at the top of flag poles and "almost any place else you could imagine. ... The advent of indoor plumbing has brought an end to that era, though."

But there was one Halloween puzzle that seemed to leave Southard a little uncomfortable. It involved

a mysterious old lady ... or maybe she was a ghost. Today's a good day to share that story because this week is the 50th anniversary of her last known appearance on the streets of Clovis.

One at a time ...

- Cities across the country in 1982 banned trick-or-treating just a few weeks after cyanide-laced Tylenol killed seven people in the Chicago area. Other tainted products were discovered about the same time, in candy and soda.

The Civic Affairs Committee of the Clovis Chamber of Commerce "discouraged" trick-or-treating locally due to the fears. For those who braved the dangers, hospitals across the country invited children to bring their candy for x-rays prior to consumption.

"Halloween is mixed up this year," Southard wrote in his page 2 column called "Memo ... from the editor."

Most other years, Southard's Halloween coverage took on a decidedly less-serious tone.

- He wrote about the



naked woman for Halloween 1976.

He declined to publicly identify the lady, except to say she was a "sister of an acquaintance." He insisted it was a true story.

Seems the woman was perturbed at her husband who refused to answer the door when trick-or-treaters arrived. "He stubbornly refused, keeping his nose in the book he was reading," Scribe Southard reported.

And so the woman gave her husband a good lecture, then left the room and told him the next doorbell was his to answer – or else.

A few minutes later, he was called to action. Opening the door he found an adult, a stocking covering the face, a full-length coat covering the body, reaching out for candy.

"You're kind of big to be trick-or-treating, aren't you?"

the man asked his visitor.

"Without a word," Southard reported, "the figure at the door threw open the long coat. It was a woman, stark nekkid. The young man sustained a rather nasty leg injury retreating from the door, we're told."

Of course the woman at the door was the fellow's wife.

"He has never since that day answered the door on Halloween night," Southard wrote.

- The Halloween story that left Southard baffled seems to have occurred three consecutive years, from 1972 to 1974.

A Mrs. Jean Hardin first brought it to public light, describing her visitor as appearing to be a little old lady.

"As a matter of fact, she was a little old lady," Hardin told Southard. "I saw a wedding

band on her hand and her face was wrinkled."

The woman wanted candy, so Hardin dropped a handful into her "already bulging sack" and she went on her way.

Southard appears to have heard about the woman again in 1973, though he didn't write about it. We know this because in 1974, he noted a "rather unusual trick-or-treater" had made the rounds of doors in northwest Clovis "for the third straight year."

"She's a woman estimated to be in her 80s, who very matter-of-factly rings doorbells and accepts goodies in her Halloween bag."

Southard joked that "in these days of sky-high food prices, we may see more like her on the trick-or-treat circuit."

He also noted, perhaps with a little trepidation, she "travels alone."

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Local ghost hunters seek adventure

By Matt Weiner

THE STAFF OF THE NEWS
mweiner@thenews.email

On a warm October night, the trio peeled off Clovis' Seventh Street into a cemetery. After entering, their sedan wobbled over uneven gravel until parking at a beige mausoleum.

It's difficult to tell what's scarier: How quiet it was or how dark it was. Unpredictability and tombstones don't mix well. For most people, their fight or flight instincts

are screaming "Flee! Flee! Flee!" But this trio – Jeff Conner, Jason Kapera and Renae Latham – aren't most people.

They're ghost hunters.

As Halloween rapidly approaches, that age-old question – "Do ghosts exist?" – is being discussed now more than ever. Here in eastern New Mexico, however, the crew is doing more than debating – they're doing full-fledged investigations. Inside a stuffy, coffin-filled mausoleum, they're strapped with ghost-hunting equipment --

REM-Pods, portal phone apps, an Ovilus and dowsing rods.

Despite research showing ghost hunting and belief in spirits is ascending, their group – Ghostly Concerns Paranormal Investigation (and) Research – has dwindled; from about 15 members to five over the past decade. In sharing their experience, they hope more sleuths can join the adventure.

"We know there's a child in here somewhere," Conner said, eyes-widening behind his round, wire frames, as they crept through the mausoleum.

But if anyone wants to join, they have to be committed to the craft. Kapera and Conner said the drop-off mainly stems from financial difficulties and people not wanting to do the legwork required to be a true ghost hunter.



Staff photo by Matt Weiner

Jason Kapera, left, and Jeff Conner track ghosts inside Clovis' Mission Garden of Memories.

"A lot of people like the fun of doing investigations and everything," Conner said. "But to give you an idea, like we record EVPs (electronic voice phenomenon), Jason and I would spend hours and hours, because if you hear something goes click, you have to go back and slow that click down, see what it's saying, reverse it some time to do different things to it. So one little click can take you over an hour just listening to it to figure out what it says."

The plunge is a disappointment because they see how much fun it is. The fright of being in eerie places, while on the verge of discovery provides exhilaration.

"That just went off," a wide-eyed Kapera said. He was referring to a golf ball-like gizmo bursting with blue and red lights down the hall. It can pick up when there's electricity

nearby, meaning a ghost is in their presence, he said.

"She's playing with it again," Latham said.

At one point, Conner pulled out two dowsing rods and held them at his sternum. If he asks a question about a ghost and they move, it indicates that one is there, he said.

"Is there a little girl here?" he called out. The rods swayed.

"And we're not moving," he said convincingly.

A self-proclaimed "hillbilly" from West Virginia, Conner grew up thinking paranormal activity was all hullabaloo.

But there he was, 24 years old, when a blanket covering him levitated, and he saw a woman in a "white gown" with "fire eyes" staring back at him.

Since then, he's known that paranormal activity is real. Just keep your eyes open and you'll

notice it everywhere, he said.

For the last 30-plus years, when he's not working as a nurse, he's tried to find paranormal activity. He was a member of groups when he lived in the South and Midwest. Then he started his own group when he moved to Clovis roughly a decade ago to seek new adventures and reunite with family members.

In Clovis, alongside Kapera, the pair have done investigations all throughout the Southwest. While recounting them, they sound like 40-somethings recalling high school shenanigans. Point is, if you want to join the crew, just be ready for something – anything – to happen.

"We've been to Buddy Holly's Grave," Conner said. "We heard guitar music coming through, right? And said, 'Can you tell us the name of the girl you sang to?' Swear to God, it said 'Peggy

Sue."

But it takes guts, too. Just take their Floydada, Texas, Hospital investigation where members developed all sorts of health problems.

"I developed afib," Conner began. "Melanie (a member) developed afib. Her daughter, Maddie, who, when she was 10, started developing SVT, Supraventricular Tachycardia, had to be treated. One of the other girls had to have bowel surgery. One had her hip go out.

"Everybody who went to the hospital had a medical condition because of it."

Through it all – even the time he said he became possessed by Satan himself – Conner, 61, kept at it.

Following the death of his wife, Crystal, in 2022, ghost hunting has provided a community and a passion to cope with unresolved grief.

"I cry about Crystal twice a week," Conner said.

According to Conner, what keeps him from having a "nervous breakdown" is his friendship with Kapera. The pair frequent Amarillo, watch paranormal shows together, hang out at the movies, grab meals and, of course, travel hundreds of miles for investigations.

The joy of finding that next inkling of paranormal activity is what motivated him to start. But the people – the fleshy, alive ones – is what's kept him coming back.

Now, he's just hoping other people can join him. In the pursuit of spirits, they may be astonished at what they'll find. Maybe it's Peggy Sue. Or someone they can call a friend when life gets scarier than any ghost, ghoul or goblin.

"He's like my brother that I've never had," Conner said of Kapera. "I depend on him more than he'll know."

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Get ready for Día de los Muertos!



Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, is just around the corner, offering a special chance to reconnect with loved ones who have passed away. Here's a fun and informative guide to this sacred holiday and how you can join in the celebrations.

When is Día de los Muertos?

This year, Día de los Muertos falls on Friday, November 1, and Saturday, November 2. While festivities can kick off as early as Halloween night, the main celebrations typically happen on November 1 and 2. November 1 is usually dedicated to children, while November 2 honors adults.

The Story of Día de los Muertos

Once upon a time, in the heart of ancient Mesoamerica, the Aztecs and other Nahuatl people saw the universe as a grand cycle, where life and death were intertwined. For over 3,000 years, they honored their deceased with rituals that have evolved into what we now celebrate as Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead.

The Journey to Mictlán

In those ancient times, it was believed

that when someone passed away, their soul embarked on a challenging journey to Chicunamictlán, the Land of the Dead. This journey through nine arduous levels took several years, and only the bravest souls reached Mictlán, the final resting place. To help their loved ones on this difficult path, families would offer food, water, and tools during rituals held in August. This tradition inspired today's practice of leaving offerings, or ofrendas, on graves or home altars.

Celebrating the Day of the Dead

Contrary to popular belief, Día de los Muertos is not the Mexican version of Halloween, though both holidays share some festive elements like costumes and parades. On this special day, the boundary between the spirit world and our world fades away. The souls of the departed

return to enjoy a grand celebration with their living relatives, who treat them as honored guests. Families prepare their favorite foods and set up beautifully decorated ofrendas with candles, marigolds (cempasuchil), and red cock's combs, along with stacks of tortillas and fruit.

Symbols and Traditions

The most iconic symbols of Día de los Muertos are calacas (skeletons) and calaveras (skulls). In the early 20th century, artist José Guadalupe Posada created La Calavera Catrina, a stylish female skeleton that became a symbol of the holiday. This elegant figure, dressed in fancy clothes, was originally a satire on Mexicans adopting European fashions over their own heritage.

Today, people celebrate by wearing

skull masks, eating sugar skulls, and enjoying pan de muerto, a sweet bread. Traditional drinks like spicy dark chocolate and atole, a corn-based beverage, are also popular. To wish someone a happy Day of the Dead, you can say, "Feliz día de los Muertos!"

Día de los Muertos in Modern Times

Originally celebrated in rural, indigenous areas of Mexico, Día de los Muertos began spreading to cities in the 1980s. In 2008, UNESCO recognized the holiday as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Its popularity has grown, especially in the United States, where millions of people of Mexican descent celebrate it.

Inspired by the 2015 James Bond movie Spectre, which featured a grand Day of the Dead parade, Mexico City held its first official parade in 2016. Since then, major U.S. cities like Chicago and Los Angeles have also embraced the festivities. In 2017, Disney and Pixar released the animated hit Coco, a \$175 million homage to the Mexican tradition, where a young boy is transported to the Land of the Dead and meets his long-lost ancestors.

Though the particular customs and scale of Day of the Dead celebrations continue to evolve, the heart of the holiday has remained the same over thousands of years. It's an occasion for remembering and celebrating those who have passed on from this world, while at the same time portraying death in a more positive light, as a natural part of the human experience.

And so, the story of Día de los Muertos continues to evolve, bringing people together to honor and celebrate the lives of those who have passed.



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

**Saturday, November 2, 2024
10:00 A.M.**

**LOCATION:
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Unwrapping History: The world's most famous mummies

It's hard not to get all wrapped up in Halloween fun facts and activities.

OK, that was a cheap shot. But these famous mummies are no joke.

King Tutankhamun

Egypt's boy king died 3,000 years ago at the age of 19. His mummified body was discovered in 1922 and quickly became an international sensation. His previously unopened and unpillaged tomb set off a wave of Egyptomania around the world. His mummy showed the pharaoh had malaria and a rare bone disorder of the foot. DNA tests helped identify a mummy thought to be his father, Akhenaten, and his mother, whose name is unknown.

Otzi The Iceman

Otzi's Copper Age remains were discovered in the Alps in 1991. He died between 3350 and 3105 B.C. at the border between Austria and Italy. He is a natural mummy, meaning that conditions on the mountain led to his mummification rather than any intentional process. Researchers found an arrowhead in his left shoulder and other injuries, leading them to believe he was murdered. Tooth and other analyses showed that he grew up near the village of Feldthums, north of Bolzano, but later went to live in valleys further to the north. His last meal was found to be ibex and wheat grain, along with some wild goat bacon.

Xin Zhui, "Lady Dai"

Xin Zhui died in 168 B.C. and was buried with lacquered dinnerware sets, musical instruments, painted silks, and other grave goods befitting her status as the wife of Li Cang, marquis of Dai. Her coffin was filled with embalming fluid and when she was exhumed in 1971, she had a full head of hair, her skin was soft, and her limbs were flexible. Scientists conducted a full autopsy on the well-preserved body, showing she died around age 50 of a heart attack.

Vladimir Lenin

The first Soviet ruler's body is preserved in Moscow's Red Square using acetic acid and vodka. Lenin died in 1924 and his body has been on almost continuous display since 1930. After the fall of the Soviet Union until 2016, the mausoleum was kept afloat by private donations. Since 2018, various Russian politicians have argued for removing Lenin's body, but for now, it's still on display.



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1 12345
VAMPIRE

2 GROUND


3


4 EVENING


5


6 WOLF?

ANSWERS

1 - Count Dracula, 2 - six feet underground, 3 - headstone, 4 - nightmares, 5 - haunted house, 6 - werewolf



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| ___ MARS | H. FLOTATION DEVICE |
| ___ MILK DUDS | I. A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY |
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| ___ CRUNCH | P. POOH'S FAVORITE |
| ___ LIFESAVERS | Q. HAPPY COWBOY |
| ___ BIT O' HONEY | R. A MASS OF STARS |

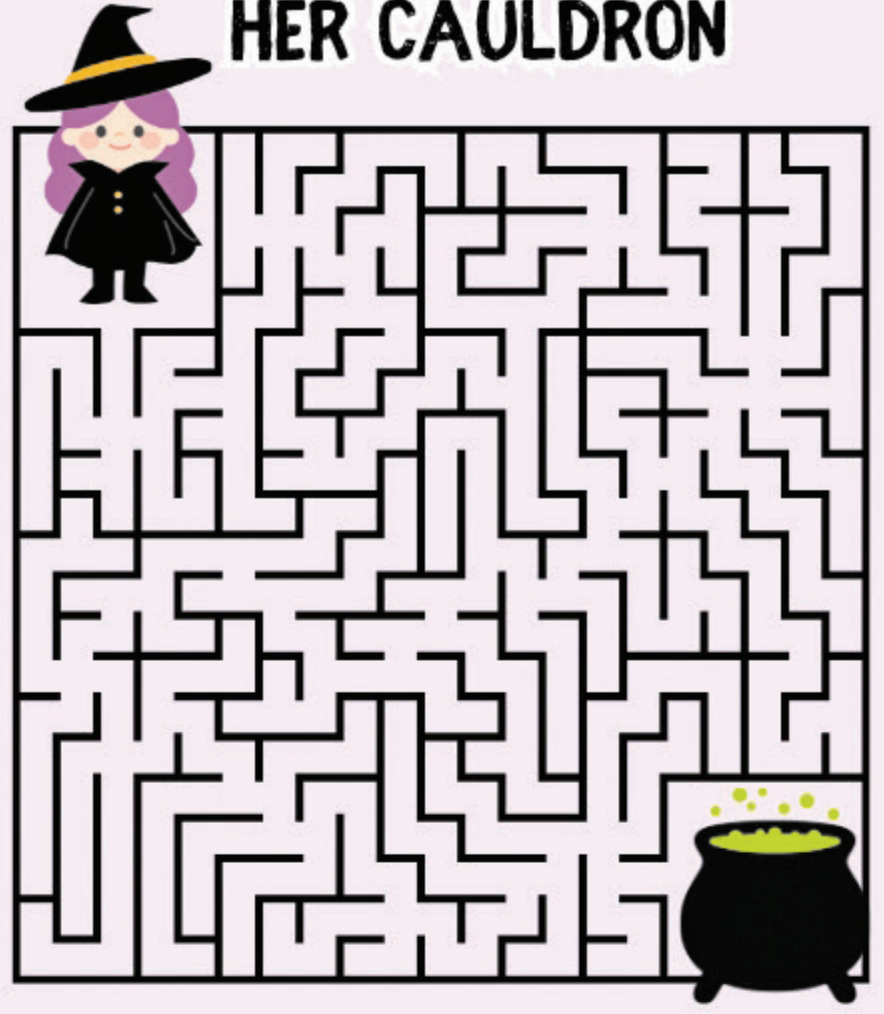
ANSWER KEY: I, G, R, M, J, D, A, O, C,
N, L, F, B, E, Q, K, H, P

Unscramble the words and match them with the pictures

	knefi	
	dlcrnauo	
	ngertaosve	
	lbarclaslyt	
	ffinoc	
	rrcowsace	
	muosroh	
	odoldoolv	
	thnseuuahood	
	hctawith	
	ppniukm	
	ylaeleb	
	muonfoll	
	cenadl	
	ptooiin	
	nbira	
	onesb	
	ksam	

ANSWER KEY: knife, cauldron, gravestone, crystal ball, coffin, scarecrow, mushroom, voodoo doll, haunted house, witch hat, pumpkin, eyeball, full moon, candle, potion, brains, bones, and mask

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 G K R N C S H N Z M O C
 O I A I A H L I K N N A
 B N T V R A I G X R S R
 L D E A E D G H Q I X V
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 H X X W O S I J W O Q G
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| DECORATE | SHADOWS | HOWL | CARVING |
| CARNIVAL | GOBLIN | SCARECROW | MIDNIGHT |

HALLOWEEN CROSSWORD



- Across**
- [3] Orange gourd we carve
 - [4] _____ is made of bones
 - [6] Something a ghost says
 - [7] _____ or Treat
 - [8] They like to howl at the moon
 - [10] The itsy bitsy _____
 - [11] ____ O'Lantern
- Down**
- [1] He drinks blood
 - [2] A kind of spooky house
 - [5] Halloween Month
 - [6] Night Flying Mammals
 - [9] _____ rides on a broom

Across:
 [3] pumpkin
 [4] skeleton
 [6] boo
 [7] trick
 [8] bats
 [9] witch
 [10] jack
 [11] spider
 Down:
 [1] vampire
 [2] haunted
 [5] October
 [6] boos
 [9] wolfes

