

editorial opinion

Have a safe Halloween

Halloween can be a fun time. Unfortunately, it also can be a scary time for residents and children. So it's important to make this observance as safe as possible.

Southfield officials are recommending that parents limit children's trick-or-treat activities on Halloween Tuesday to the hours of 6-8 p.m. In addition, officials are asking parents to monitor their children's activity on Devil's Night Monday, to keep "devilishness" to a minimum. Vandalism nationally results in repair bills of \$813 million and Halloween especially is a prime time for attacks on home and property.

The National Association of Realtors conjured up some Halloween hints for homeowners to keep their homes safe from vandals. They say to clear your yard of items that might be "borrowed" or easily vandalized, such as lawnmowers, hoses,

barbecue grills, outdoor furniture or garden equipment.

Turn on porch lights and other outdoor lights. Keep indoor house lights on, too.

Realtors also recommend that community groups, schools, churches and fraternal organizations sponsor a Halloween night party for neighborhood youth. This, incidentally, has already been done in a number of areas throughout Southfield and Lathrup Village. The Washington Heights Subdivision Association, for example, is hosting a party for neighborhood children Tuesday night at McKinley School. The party is intended to replace the traditional trick-or-treat activities.

It all adds up to attempts to make Halloween a safe and enjoyable holiday. And if Halloween is safe, that would be the best of all possible treats for the community.

The Flip Side by Craig Piechura



An exercise in exclusion

A woman who calls people up on the phone all day and asks them survey questions called me the other night.

She was doing a survey for a sports equipment company and wanted to know if I owned a racquetball warm-up outfit or a pair of specially-made racquetball shoes. What brand sportswear did I sport on the court and did I read Racquetball World?

Boy, did she get a wrong number. I participated in the survey because I often call people on the phone in this business and ask them questions they don't care to answer. I told her my racquetball attire is simple, but oh, so smart.

My sports ensemble usually consists of an old sweatband, a T-shirt promoting some bar and a pair of cut-offs shorts. The look is topped off, or bottomed off, with a dirty pair of Jack Purcell sneakers.

Next, she wanted to know whether I had a steel or an aluminum racquet, how many years ago I bought it and how much it cost. I told the survey lady it was a wooden racquet that I bought for \$8 five years ago during the brief period I was a member of the Jewish Community Center. The club used to be on Myers in Detroit but has since relocated in West Bloomfield.

WHILE THE LOCATION of the Jewish Community Center has changed, its exclusionary membership practices haven't.

Ironically, non-Jews are not permitted to join the club. While the reverse is sometimes true, at this club you're barred if you've never had a Bar-Mitzvah.

Shirley Baruch, membership director at the West Bloomfield headquarters of the Jewish Community Center, told me Friday that I would not be sent a membership application because I am "not of the Jewish faith." The best they could offer me was to visit the club a maximum of four times in one year as the guest of a Jewish member.

The same thing happened five years ago at the Detroit center. When they found out I was a non-Jew, they threw me out by the skin of my teeth. Well, not exactly my teeth. They let me keep the racquet, though, which has served me well.

If I had had the foresight of an Allen Baake I could've been at the forefront of a classic reverse discrimination suit. But I didn't make a stink about it because I couldn't keep from laughing about the absurdity of the whole affair. Jews have fought for years to gain entrance to WASP-y country clubs and here I am trying to pass myself off as a Jew and am discovered.

I GOT A CALL at work from a woman who iden-

tified herself as a member of the board of directors of the Jewish Community Center. I'd joined the club two months before with some of my friends who used to work at the Community News, an east side weekly. I was not the only non-Jew who signed up, but for some reason my name didn't look kosher on the membership roster.

She called me up at the Community News to investigate my membership.

"Mr. Piechura, this is the Jewish Community Center calling," said the no-nonsense voice on the other end of the line.

"In checking our new members, we came upon your name and we were wondering if you are Jewish. This is a private club for Jewish people. Are you aware of that?"

I tried to lie and did a bad job of it. Being a Jew, of course I knew it was an exclusive club and I swore I was telling the truth.

"Well, Piechura doesn't sound like a Jewish name," she probed.

I told her that was because my father isn't Jewish but my mother and all the children are.

"And what congregation does your mother belong to, Mr. Piechura?"

"Well, she's not what I'd call a practicing Jew," I said lamely. Fair enough, said my interrogator, then what synagogue did I regularly attend?

I told her that I wasn't actually a practicing Jew either.

"SO WHAT MAKES you Jewish, Mr. Piechura?"

I went off on an intellectual tangent about how that question has plagued people over the ages. You know, the old argument about whether Judaism is a nationality, a religion or a race or none of the above.

She wasn't buying.

I lost control at this point, and started laughing at what I was telling this lady.

"Why are you laughing Mr. Piechura?" she said. "Is it because you are not Jewish?"

The correct, said, and then regained my composure to change my tone to one of righteous indignation. I told the woman she could expect to hear from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

But the exodus is over. I'm going back to the site of the old Jewish Community Center. It's now called the Cosmopolitan Club at the Northwest Activities Center. It costs \$75 a year to join and the only requirement is to be a resident of Detroit.

You don't need a special warm-up outfit or a pair of specially-made racquetball shoes.

Shirlee's sallies



by Shirlee Iden

Remembering a brother

"See, that's Hawaii. Someday I'm going there because my brother's there," buried in the PUNCHBOWL Cemetery."

He was a tall, lanky and 17 years old when he said that to me, pointing to Hawaii on a rickety globe we kept in our living room. We were new friends then, nearly 32 years ago, and for close to 30 years, we've been husband and wife, and yes, best friends too.

Jack's quiet statement about his brother hid a lot of pain. Captain Ruben Iden, a Marine dive bomber pilot, had been killed in the battle for the Solomon Islands, the retaking of Guadalcanal.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, he had already been in Hawaii nearly two years and he fought in the early battles of the Pacific war.

It was on a reconnaissance mission that his plane encountered enemy aircraft and was so badly damaged that he never made it back to base. Natives on tiny Rerel Island, 125 miles Guadalcanal, found the body, and reverently built a grove of stones for it. Much later when the war came to that tiny island, the body was identified from his dog tags.

The family gave it deep thought and decided their son and brother should be buried in the national cemetery in Hawaii.

Ruben was the oldest of the four Iden brothers and Jack was the youngest, only about nine when Ruben went away to train as a pilot despite the objections of his parents.

OTHER BOYS MAY have had to look to baseball stars or movie idols for their heroes, but Jack had Ruben. He had been an outstanding football player at Northern High School and the Detroit Institute of Technology and a Golden Gloves boxer of note.

When the war in the Pacific began, Ruben was in the thick of it, and the youth already knew about Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field from his

brother's letters. The two other brothers, Sam and Isadore, also entered service and the sense of danger and fear grew for Jack and for his parents.

When the "We regret to inform you" telegram came, the shock was intensified by the fact that 24-year-old Ruben Iden was the first Jewish boy from the Detroit area to die in the war.

Jack's parents were quite active in the Gold Star Parents Organization when they were alive, and after we married we also became active in the Jewish War Veterans.

Over the years, we've always done what we could so that people would remember what all the young people did for the country and for each of us in this nation's wars. It was our way of remembering a special hero, a lost brother.

But the dream of visiting his grave was always there—and always seemed out of reach. There was never the money or the time and in recent years, long trips have always meant a flight to Israel to be with our daughter and family.

When Elaine, Alex and the baby visited us this summer, it seemed as though now we could take the time to finally see Hawaii.

NOT ONE OF Ruben's immediate family had ever been to the PUNCHBOWL Cemetery when we came there at the end of our visit to the islands. His parents never lived to make the trip and only one other brother is alive and has yet to make that visit. When Bruce, our son, visited in July, the accident that brought him home with his arm in a cast occurred the day before he was to visit the PUNCHBOWL.

There's a great sense of peace in that national cemetery, all the grave markers are level, none larger or more prominent than the others. They are simple, bearing the name and rank, the birth date and date of death. Grassy slopes with rows of grave

markers, occasional stately trees and a magnificent memorial and history of the Pacific war and the Korean Conflict, and people—that's the PUNCHBOWL.

In its utter simplicity is great beauty and deep reverence for the heroes, mostly World War II veterans who lie buried there though they came from every state in the union.

There wasn't time to buy flowers before we went there since we were on tour and nothing is sold at the cemetery, but I laid the lovely lei of coral carnations Jack had bought me on the grave.

SOME PAIN does not diminish with the years, and even though 36 years had passed since his brother was killed, the emotions that overwhelmed Jack were apparent.

After we left the cemetery, for the rest of our vacation, he talked about Ruben and his parents more than I remember for many years. Our visit had been brief and we talked about going back there, but I deeply felt Jack must make that decision.

Then, on our last morning in Hawaii, he said "Let's go back" and I was sure this was a good decision. We brought a lovely arrangement of orchids, bright red and interspersed with greenery which we were told lasted up to three weeks.

Again, we walked over to grave No. 26 in section F which lies on a slight slope, just under a large tree. And we took a long time reliving the Pacific war, tracing the action through the magnificent mosaic murals and texts of the memorial.

Although Jack was only nine years old when his brother left, to return only once on leave in that impressive Marine uniform, it has always been clear that his brother was one of the great influences of his life.

Our poignant visit took a long time to happen, but for some things, it's never too late.

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Grab a shroud; join the fun

One of the small mysteries of being a human is trying to understand why people would delight at scaring the living daylight hours out of themselves.

Remember reading in high school about Nathaniel Hawthorne's ghostly bridegroom? Hawthorne served up a moral with his chills but he manages to inject a righteous jolt into his readers.

Then came Edgar Allan Poe who didn't care about giving a moral lesson with a bad case of the frights. He just wanted us to hear heartbeats thumping under the floor boards and dream of swinging pendulums that never saw a clock but were designed to cut your time on earth in half.

Especially around Halloween, we prove to be a culture that loves being scared to death. We never grow up in same ways. Most of us can still identify with a group of junior high kids half-watching, half-covering from a matinee showing of "Hill House."

Since the Exorcist first unleashed its arsenal of fog machines and green pea soup, it's almost cheery to be eerie in modern America.

PERSONALLY I THINK part of the fascination with terror is the ever-present knowledge that you really can't get hurt from a story or a book and it's fun to wake up the next day feeling a little foolish over scaring yourself.

Now, if you really want to be scared, do something heavy duty—take a look at the economy.

But short term scares are an art. I'm told that my mother's father, who died long before I was born, could scare friends and neighbors with his tall tales.

A friend of his who believed in old country superstitions once ran three miles to home one night after a long story-telling session. The area was frosty farms 50 years ago and the friend was sure there was a man-like creature following him across the fields.

The next day, rather sheepishly, he discovered the monster which haunted him all the home, making him run by his entrance until he was sure his lungs would burst.

It was a neighbor's scarecrow. There are a few stories I've heard in Farmington that make the ghoulish grade.

In 1936, Lermuel and Lucy Bolsford moved to Farmington and built a farm beyond a ravine, north of the village. Although records fail to tell of any children who died in the house the family built, neighbors swore they saw a child playing in front of the home.

BUT IN RECENT years, the house was purchased by a lawyer and a psychiatrist who swear they've seen nothing unusual in the house. But then, if you saw a ghostly child playing in front of your neighbor's house, would you tell a lawyer and a shrink?

Some ghost stories are tons of fun to repeat but haven't the slightest shred of possibility in them. When Hilltop Castle was in disrepair in the 1950's Farmington children were sure that it was haunted.

Sure it was haunted—by gamblers with a liking for expensive and exclusive gamesmanship. They were exorcised by the government but the stories hung on.

When Dr. Sylvan Broadman lived in the house, his family occasionally told tales of their own home.

Son Alfred was once at a party when an acquaintance began to regale him with tales about a house where a person could throw an egg against the kitchen floor and instead of cracking, the egg would bounce.

Little did the storyteller know that his new acquaintance lived in the very same haunted castle. But maybe it was better that way because Alfred learned long ago that eggs cracked when they hit his kitchen floor.

THEN THERE'S THE TALE of the young father who drove to a church in Farmington to pick up his wife. Wanting to bring the car right up to the church door, the man circled around the church. At the back of the building he saw a woman standing there. She reminded him so much of his own mother, who died two years before, that he stopped and stared. The

woman continued standing in front of his car. It was night and a swirl in the glow of the head lights she was his mother. Opening the door, he walked to the front of the car. Before he reached it, the woman had disappeared. But looking down the young man saw the driveway ended over the edge of a ravine through which a river ran. If he had circled the church as he intended, he would have driven into the river.

When I was a girl, the kids on the block were certain that one of the elderly neighbors was a witch. She lived in a small tumbled down house next to a gas station. Her lawn was kept up with the meticulous care that younger neighbors lavished on their grass. The place looked a little wild, in fact.

Her entertainment consisted of watching the neighborhood walk past her door as she sat on the porch. That's where we usually saw her—alone except for her pet cat.

She even looked a bit like a witch. A black kerchief protected her head from the elements.

TWO DARK EYES and a gnarled nose peeked out from the large kerchief at all who passed.

When she walked, she walked with a stoop and brandished a cane.

We were sure she was a witch. But one day my mother told me a story about the woman whom the kids shunned. She once had a family and friends. She lived in the neighborhood for longer than all our birthdays combined. But now the little house was all that was left. That and her cat.

Her husband had died and her children had moved away or died, too. She was a lonely old lady trying to fill in her time during an age? when a senior citizen's activity was usually one of two things—going to church to say a novena or playing a mean game of bingo.

So, tomorrow on Halloween, get scared real good. It can't really hurt you. It will go away with the dawn's first light. It's a luxury. Enjoy.

from our readers

Soccer team offers thanks

Editor:

Thank you for your exposure of the Farmington High School Soccer team in the Oct. 19 Farmington Observer. It is nice to know that soccer is beginning to be recognized as a major sport for both boys and girls in the Farmington area. Although it was an excellent article, one important fact was left out. The Farmington Soccer Club, which has been in existence since 1973 and has provided the opportunity for

the youth of Farmington and Farmington Hills to develop their interest, appreciation and skills in soccer, was not mentioned.

The Farmington Hills Recreation Department does offer soccer programs but you investigated further you would find that the majority of boys and girls playing soccer in the three Farmington high schools received their playing experience with the Farmington Soccer Club. At the present time, we have 32 teams play-

ing in the Western Suburban Soccer League and one team playing in the Michigan Youth Soccer League. With this many Farmington area youth, ranging in age from 8 to 18, participating in soccer this fall, we thank you for continuing to publish the Western Suburban Soccer League standings and look forward to your continued support.

NANCY POTTER,
Treasurer, Farmington Soccer Club
Farmington

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