



Claims Department 61

Halloween is here!

I do love the holiday, it's about candy and costumes and spooky stuff.

It's also for the kids.

Now, I can't eat candy, I don't wear costumes, and spooky stuff can easily creep me out, so it's more a theoretical love than any participatory love, but it's in my heart and I'm always glad to have it here!

This issue is centered around Halloween, and may be influenced by the sheer volume of Hunter S. Thompson material I've been reading.

OK, Let's get to the IT!!!





Bad Candy

I remember my parents going through my candy.

This was the standard, and I believe still is. The fear was that someone would put poison in the candy given out at Halloween. This fear was there'd be a razor blade in an apple, something that did happen, in 1968 in New Jersey.

But in 1974, 10 days after I was born, someone actually did kill a kid with Halloween candy, but it wasn't what you'd think.

Now, there had been a couple of incidents in the 60s, the razor blade and a woman who gave away ant poison traps and some other poison-y stuff, but it wasn't the epidemic I always

assumed it must have been. By 1974, though, there was a fear that people were trying to kill kids through Halloween candy. There are much easier ways to kill a bunch of kids (don't regulate high-powered semi-automatic rifles, for example...) but the low-simmer panic was strong even in the years of kids playing tackle football in the streets. One guy, Ronald O'Bryan was having serious debt issues. He owned more than he could handle, and it wasn't the kind of thing that you could simply make go away. While it's not totally clear what kinds of debts he had, they weren't making ends meet.

So, as a way of solving his debt crisis, he took out life insurance policies on his children.

Now, the Family Annihilator is distinct kind of killer. They're almost always men, and they kill as a way of saving the family from embarrassment. The most famous cases, Jeffrey McDonald and Chris Benoit, both likely killed one member of their family in a rage incident, then murdered others to save them from having to live in a world where their fathers had killed their mothers. There are also Annihilators who kill because they can't keep their families in the comfort to which they are accustomed.

O'Bryan was looking like he was gonna be the latter.

He took his five and eight year olds out trick-or-treating, along with two neighborhood friends. At some point, he gave the kids some Pixy Sticks, those glorious sugar-filled tubes. He had, though, doctored them, putting two inches of cyanide in the top. He had then stapled them closed, which really should have been a red flag.

The O'Bryans got home, and he allowed his kids to each have a piece of candy, a tradition that my kids go through even today. His daughter picked a piece of chocolate, but Ronald convinced his son Timothy that he should eat the Pixy Stick.

It tasted bitter and awful, so Ronald got his some Kool-Aid to get rid of the taste.

It wasn't too long before Timothy got really sick, and then he died.

Now, they called the ambulance, and the alert was out. They called the other family they had been out with, and one of the kids had chosen to eat their Pixy stick, too!

But that staple saved them; they couldn't manage to get it open, so it was sitting in the bed next to them, unopened.

The cops questioned O'Bryan, and he couldn't remember the exact house they'd gotten it, but that a hairy arm had handed them to him. It was clear very easy on that it was him, and only a little digging figured it out completely.

In 1984, Ronald O'Bryan, who had been called The Candy Man for years, was put to death by lethal injection. This was the most famous case of death by dessert since the Cordelia Bodkins case...which I cover in my book!





October 22nd, 1926, The Princess Theatre, Montreal.

The smoky, dimly lit dressing room was inhabited by an extraordinary performer: Harry Houdini, the master of escape and illusion. This was not the last time he would find himself in a dressing room, but it was the one that would be the site of his fall.

It all began with a challenge - young man by the name of Jocelyn Gordon Whitehead, possibly fueled by liquid courage, approached Houdini as he busied himself in the dressing room. Houdini was known for his legendary feats of endurance, and the young man brazenly inquired about the magician's famed stomach; could it really withstand any blow? The atmosphere in that room

was charged with an electric blend of curiosity, audacity, and arrogance.

Houdini, perhaps with a hint of bored amusement, reluctantly consented. Whitehead, seizing the opportunity to make a name for himself, didn't hesitate. He unleashed a series of rapid punches, directly aimed at Houdini's gut. The room trembled with a moment of silence as the Great Houdini, the escapologist extraordinaire, doubled over in shock. His grin had vanished, replaced by an expression of undeniable pain.

What was racing through Whitehead's mind at that moment. Was it the thrill of being immortalized as the man who dared to strike the world's most celebrated escape artist? Or perhaps it was the misguided belief that a mere mortal could truly test the limits of a legend?

Now, Houdini, reputation and ego on the line, attempted to mask the pain, the growing sense of discomfort in his torso, continued with his show schedule for the next few days, the show must go on after all, but beneath the veneer of showmanship and bravado, he was concealing a secret – the blows from Whitehead had inflicted more damage than he initially let on. The great showman may have been saving one last performance for his toughest critic: himself. He had to convince himself that no matter how bad his body felt, his image, The Great Houdini, must perform, a shark who must never stop or die.

A week later, Houdini was on a train to Detroit, Michigan, a good city, a strong house for certain. The Garrick Theatre, 1400-seats, an easy sell-out. The pain in his abdomen had grown unbearable. He was doubled over in agony, sweating profusely. Appendicitis, they said, but this was no ordinary appendix.

This was a ticking time bomb, ignited by the audacity of a stranger who dared to challenge the unbeatable Houdini.

Performing stage magic demands an understanding of the complexities that lie beneath the surface, the truths that are obscured by the spectacle. Houdini's October 24th show went on, but the master was unraveling from the inside. His life was a stage, his persona a mask, and his suffering known only to a select few.

Houdini's arrival in Detroit marked the beginning of a different kind of performance. He initially refused to go to the hospital, but eventually relented - a 102 degree fever. By the time he had performed on the 24th, it was 104. He was rushed to the hospital, where the truth behind the façade unraveled like a magic trick gone awry. The diagnosis was grim - peritonitis, an infection of the abdominal lining, a direct result of the blows he had endured from Whitehead.

Perhaps.

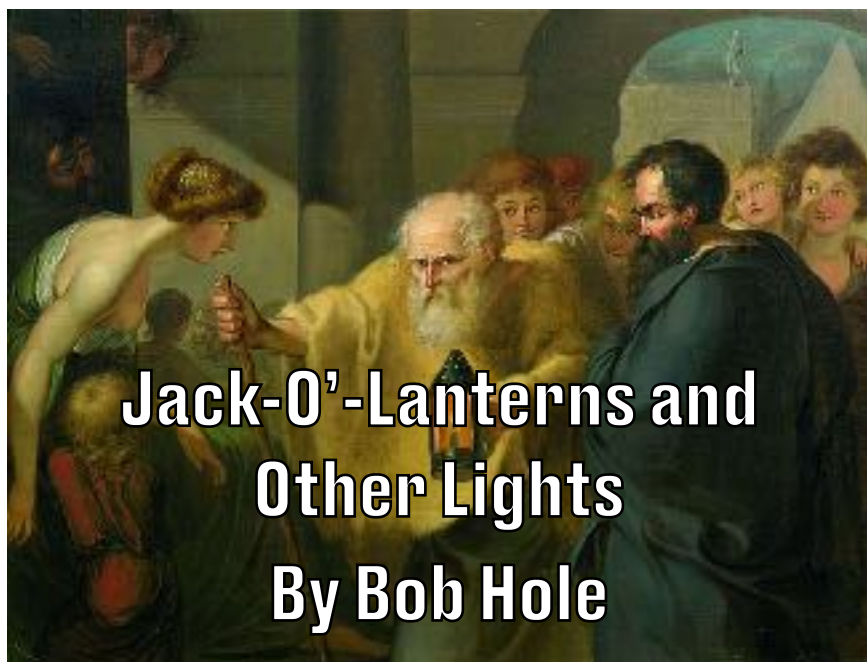
There is no proof that Whitehead's blows caused the problem, or perhaps they simply made an established problem into a fatal flaw. We do not know.

As he lay in the hospital, it became a story even Houdini must have known was playing out. A story about the dynamics of power and pride, of the frequent contradiction between the performer and the person performing. Houdini, a man who appeared to challenge the laws of nature and defied death on countless occasions, was now succumbing to an internal battle provoked by an unexpected punch.

On Halloween night, 1926, as the world was celebrating tricks and treats, Harry Houdini, the master of escape, faced his greatest challenge. Surrounded by the ghosts of his own illusions, Erick Weiss, the man who made himself into Harry Houdini, slipped away into the abyss. It was a departure as enigmatic as his performances; the timing that only the Halloween spirits could appreciate.

In the end, the legend of Houdini lived on; even my kids know the name Houdini. The punches from that fateful night in Montreal became a final act in the grand narrative of a man who had spent his life escaping the inescapable. The young man who threw them? Well, he is only known today in relation to the man he may, or may not, have killed.





Jack-O'-Lanterns and Other Lights By Bob Hole

Strange lights are a common theme in folklore around the world. Some of the tales no doubt have explanations in history or science, often it is more fun to believe in the tale.

One lantern tale that may be apocryphal, but not truly folklore, is that of Diogenes of Sinope (412/404 BCE – 323 BCE). He was a renowned ancient Greek philosopher, often remembered for his unconventional and ascetic lifestyle. One of the most famous anecdotes about Diogenes involves his lamp, and it illustrates his philosophical principles.

Diogenes believed in a minimalist way of life, emphasizing self-sufficiency and the rejection of material possessions. He would wander the streets of Athens during the daytime with a lantern in hand, even though it was broad daylight. When asked about this peculiar behavior, he would reply that he was searching for an honest man but had yet to find one. This seemingly bizarre act of searching for an honest person in broad daylight was a satirical commentary on the moral and ethical values of society.

Diogenes used this act to make a point about the hypocrisy and moral corruption he observed in the people around him. He believed

that true virtue and honesty were rare qualities, and he used his actions to challenge the moral integrity of those he encountered.

In a broader sense, Diogenes' lamp serves as a symbol of his philosophy, known as Cynicism. He advocated for a simple life, free from the trappings of wealth and luxury, and his use of the lamp was a powerful metaphor for his relentless pursuit of truth and virtue in a world he saw as filled with superficiality and deceit.

Diogenes' lamp has become a lasting symbol of his philosophical principles, reminding us to seek authenticity and moral virtue in a world that often seems driven by materialism and hypocrisy.

Though most often, referencing the story is merely commenting on still looking for that honest man.

There are many folklore figures and mythological beings from various cultures around the world associated with carrying lamps or other sources of light.

Will-o'-the-Wisps are not always figures actually carrying lights, but lights themselves. They are common folklore figures, carrying various names, in various cultures in the old and new worlds.



Often depicted as mysterious, flickering lights seen over marshes, bogs, or swamps, they are said to lead travelers astray. In some cases, they are believed to be the spirits of the deceased or mischievous entities.

The Brown Lady of Raynham Hall is a very famous ghost story from England. The Brown Lady is often depicted holding a lantern or candle. She is said to haunt Raynham Hall, in Norfolk, England.

The house is about 400 years old, and is associated with an eerie spectral image.

The ghost is often depicted as a lady in a brown dress and is known for her appearance in a photograph taken in the 1930s.

She is said to be the ghost of Lady Dorothy Walpole 18 September 1686- 29 March 1726. She was the sister of Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister of Great Britain, and she married Charles Townshend, 2nd Viscount Townshend, his second wife. The Townshend family still owns the Hall. The couple had seven children, six living to adulthood.

The legend claims that she fell in love with Thomas Wharton, 1st Marquess of Wharton while her husband was away. When her husband found out about the affair, he punished her by confining her to a remote area of the house.

She apparently died of smallpox.





The most famous incident involving the Brown Lady occurred in 1936 when two photographers, Captain Hubert C. Provand and Indre Shira, were taking photographs of Raynham Hall for Country Life magazine. In one of the photographs, a ghostly figure descending a staircase was captured. This photograph is often cited as evidence of the ghost's existence and is considered one of the most famous ghost photographs in history.

There have been various reported sightings of the Brown Lady throughout the years by residents, guests, and staff at Raynham Hall. Witnesses have described a ghostly figure in a brown dress and even claimed to have seen her carrying a lantern.

Raynham Hall has been investigated by paranormal researchers and ghost hunters. Some have reported unusual phenomena and experiences within the house, further fueling the belief in the haunting.

While the legend of the Brown Lady persists, skeptics argue that the famous photograph could have been a result of a double exposure or other photographic anomalies. Some believe that the haunting is more legend than reality.

The story, though, remains a subject of fascination and debate, and the photograph continues to be a source of interest and intrigue in the world of paranormal phenomena. Whether one believes in the haunting or not, it has left an indelible mark on British ghost lore.

In Japanese folklore, a Chōchin'obake, also known as the "paper lantern ghost" or "lantern ghost," is a paper lantern that comes to life as a youkai, a type of supernatural creature. It has one eye, a long, lolling tongue, and is known for causing mischief.

The Chōchin'obake is believed to have originated in the Edo period (17th-19th century) in Japan. It is a product of anthropomorphism, where ordinary objects, in this case, paper lanterns, were given human-like qualities in the realm of folklore.

A Chōchin'obake typically appears as a tattered or worn-out paper lantern with one eye, a long, lolling tongue, and occasionally one or more spindly, claw-like limbs. Despite its somewhat comical appearance, it is considered a malevolent and mischievous youkai.

The transformation of a Chōchin'obake occurs when a lantern reaches a certain age or remains unused for a long time. It is said to come to life during the night, often surprising or scaring those who encounter it.

Chōchin'obake are more known for their mischievous activities than evil. They may roll around, float, or hop unpredictably, creating eerie



movements. Some might also produce ghostly sounds to add to their mystique.

While not typically causing harm, Chōchin'obake enjoy startling or frightening humans. They may appear unexpectedly, creating a spooky and unsettling atmosphere.

The Chōchin'obake serves as a cultural and artistic symbol in Japan and has appeared in various forms of media, including literature, art, and theater. It is an aspect the playful and imaginative aspect of Japanese folklore.

La Llorona (The Weeping Woman), in Latin American folklore, is a ghostly woman often depicted carrying a candle or lantern as she searches for her lost children. Her story is a cautionary tale.

In a small village or town, there lived a beautiful woman named Maria. She was known for her grace and charm, and her beauty captured the attention of a wealthy nobleman. They fell in love and eventually got married, having two children together.

As time passed, Maria's husband grew distant and began to lose interest in her. He started spending more time away from home, often leaving her alone with their children. Filled with jealousy and desperation, Maria's love turned into resentment. One evening, in a fit of rage and despair, she took her two young children to a nearby river and drowned them. Realizing the enormity of her actions, she was overcome with guilt and grief, and she began to weep uncontrollably.

After the terrible act, Maria's grief was so profound that she couldn't find peace in the afterlife. She was condemned to roam the earth as a ghostly figure, endlessly searching for her lost children.

People claim to have heard her wailing in the night, crying out for "mis hijos" (her children). Her cries are said to be eerie and chilling, causing fear among those who hear them.

La Llorona's story serves as a cautionary tale, warning children to obey their parents and avoid wandering near bodies of water at night, lest they encounter the weeping ghost who is still searching for her children. Her story also emphasizes the consequences of jealousy and the terrible acts that it can drive people to commit.

There are variations of the La Llorona legend in different Latin American countries, but the central theme of a sorrowful, vengeful ghost who drowned her children remains consistent.

La Llorona is a deeply ingrained part of Latin American folklore, and her story continues to be told and passed down through generations, often as a spooky and cautionary tale for children.

In British folklore, the Hinkypunk is a small, one-legged creature carrying a lantern. Possibly related to the Will-o-the-Whisp, it is known for luring travelers off paths and into bogs.

The Hinkypunk appears particularly in English and Cornish traditions. It's known for its mischievous and somewhat eerie behavior.



The Hinkypunk is typically described as a small, one-legged creature that carries a lantern. Its most distinctive feature is its single, spindly leg.

They are known for a penchant for leading travelers astray at night by using a lantern. It often hovers near treacherous terrain, like bogs, marshes, or swamps, and tempt people to follow its light.

When a traveler approaches the Hinkypunk's lantern, it suddenly moves to a different location, leading the person deeper into the dangerous area. This behavior often results in travelers becoming lost or stuck in the swampy terrain.

The Hinkypunk's name likely comes from the word "hink," which means "limping" or "hobbling." The "punk" part is often associated with small creatures or spirits in folklore.

The Hinkypunk shares similarities with other folklore figures from different cultures, like the Will-o'-the-Wisp in English and European folklore, as well as the Japanese Chōchin'obake. All of these creatures are known for leading people astray with their mysterious lights.

The Hinkypunk, like many folklore creatures, blends a touch of the supernatural with practical advice for daily life, urging people to exercise caution in unfamiliar or potentially hazardous environments.

Though similar to some of the above apparitions, there are some lights and lantern-carriers that are seen as benevolent, rather than malevolent or mischievous.

The Míkmaq Light is one such. The Míkmaq people of eastern Canada have a legend of a mysterious light known as the "Mikmaq Light." This glowing and flickering light is believed to be a supernatural occurrence that takes place in the night skies over the waters and forests of Mi'kmaq territory.

The lights are known to move erratically and sometimes appear to play with each other, much like fireflies, but on a grander scale.

While interpretations of the Míkmaq Light may vary, it is often seen as a spiritual phenomenon. It's believed that these lights are the spirits of ancestors, guiding and protecting the Mi'kmaq people. They are also associated with the presence of supernatural beings or the Great Spirit.

The Míkmaq Light is not something to be feared but rather revered. It has cultural and spiritual significance for the Mi'kmaq people, and its appearance is often regarded as a comforting and reassuring presence, symbolizing the connection between the living and the spiritual world.

This legend of the Míkmaq Light is just one example of how Native American folklore incorporates the symbolism of lights in the natural world, often tied to spiritual beliefs and the relationship between the physical and spiritual realms. It reflects the deep reverence and connection Native American cultures have with nature and the supernatural.

The Domovoi is a household spirit in Slavic folklore, particularly in Russian traditions. It is believed to be a protective entity that dwells within a home. The Domovoi is often described as a small, bearded man who may take on the appearance of a deceased family member.

In some tales, the Domovoi is depicted carrying a small lantern or candle, which it uses to illuminate the home it inhabits during the night. The light is thought to symbolize the presence of the spirit and its protective role.

The Domovoi is both a guardian and a trickster figure in Russian folklore. While it is protective of the household and its inhabitants, it can also play pranks if it feels neglected or disrespected. The presence of the Domovoi and its lantern is meant to bring a sense of security to the household.

In some Russian folklore, the Domovoi is associated with the spirits of deceased ancestors, and the lantern may symbolize a connection to the spirit world.

While the Domovoi and its lantern may not be a primary focus of Russian folklore, this character and its association with a light source within the household is a notable element in Slavic and Russian cultural beliefs, emphasizing the importance of the domestic space and the spirits that inhabit it.

The history of the jack-o'-lantern is more folkloric, with roots in both Irish folklore and American traditions. The name "jack-o'-lantern" is believed to have originated from an Irish myth about a character named Stingy Jack. There are several versions of the myth, some very different than others. This seems to be the most commonly accepted version.

Stingy Jack was a cunning and miserly man who, according to the legend, played a trick on the Devil. He invited the Devil for a drink but didn't want to pay for it. After what turned out to be several rounds, Jack somehow managed to convince the Devil to transform into a coin to pay for the drinks.

Instead of using the coin to pay, Jack decided to keep it alongside a silver cross in his pocket, preventing the Devil from returning to his true form.

Eventually, Jack struck a deal with the Devil, promising to release him in exchange for another ten years of life. The Devil agreed, but when Jack passed away, he as a bad man, he was refused entrance into Heaven, and the Devil was still pissed at him so refused him entrance to Hell.

As a result, Jack was left to roam the earth with only a burning coal to light his way. Jack put it inside a hollowed turnip, so it didn't burn his hand.

This eerie image became associated with Stingy Jack and evolved into the concept of a "Jack-o'-lantern" (Jack of the lantern).

Turnips became the traditional vegetable to use for Jack-o'-lanterns throughout the British Isles. These were originally meant to ward off evil spirits, like Jack.

The tradition of carving faces into pumpkins, rather than turnips, began in America. Irish immigrants brought the concept of the jack-o'-lantern with them, and they found that pumpkins, which were native to North America, were larger and easier to carve. Over time, this practice became a symbol of Halloween, when many traditions say the spirits are most likely to wander.

Today, the Jack-o'-lantern is a central symbol of Halloween. Families and individuals carve pumpkins, often with elaborate and creative designs, and place candles or battery-powered lights inside them. These glowing lanterns are used to decorate homes and create a spooky, festive atmosphere for Halloween.

The tradition of carving Jack-o'-lanterns has evolved into a creative and artistic expression, with pumpkin carving contests and competitions held in many places. Jack-o'-lanterns continue to be a beloved part of Halloween celebrations, reminding us of the legend of Stingy Jack and other lights and lantern characters of the night.

Myriad Halloween Memories of a Costumer

By Jean Martin

I grew up in the Philippines before Halloween became more popular there. I've only seen Halloween celebrated in movies, the most memorable of which was *E.T.* We celebrated All Saints Day on November 1st instead, which was when we pretty much camped out the entire day at the cemetery to visit our grandparents' graves. It was crowded and chaotic but also solemn with lots of praying. We also had lots of food and various types of entertainment (one year my uncle brought a video game table). The only Halloween party I attended in the Philippines was when I was a senior in high school at the house of one of our classmates. I made a simple ancient Roman dress and it was fun to see people in costume for the first time.

So while I know that Halloween in the U.S. in modern times is mostly about children dressing up in costume and going trick or treating, since I didn't experience this as a child, to me Halloween is about costume parties. I did finally go trick or treating when I moved to the U.S. when I was 20. We went to the house of a family friend in Sea Cliff (one of San Francisco's fanciest neighborhoods) to accompany their kids and it was a lot of fun. I wasn't in costume, though, so I didn't get the full experience.

In my 20s, the only Halloween costume party I attended was at a heavy metal club in Oakland. That was a lot of fun. I wore a French maid outfit and my friend Kristin wore an *I Dream of Jeannie* costume. I've always wanted to wear a Jeannie costume, but I've never done so. Maybe someday.

In my 30s, when I lived in Foster City (a suburb in the San Francisco Bay Area), I accompanied my sister and her son to the Foster City "Safe Streets" for Halloween (which they sadly don't do anymore) and I was amazed at all the houses decorated for Halloween and there was even a pirate ship in the middle of the street. Again, I wasn't in costume for this. I finally wore a costume one Halloween to hand out candy to kids in my neighborhood who dropped by. This was during the height of my *Lord of the Rings* movies obsession (my *Lord of the Rings* book obsession started decades earlier), so I wore an Arwen dress. It was nice to participate in this Halloween tradition.

Lord of the Rings brought me into the bigger world of fandom and costuming/cosplaying. I started going to costume balls, conventions and events. And Halloween parties! A costuming couple held these legendary Halloween parties at their home in San Jose where everyone was invited. Each room was beautifully and elaborately decorated. It was great to see friends wearing fabulous costumes as characters from TV shows, movies, books, graphic novels, etc. I also went to a friend's Halloween party in a Victorian House in San Francisco and everyone looked amazing. I did go to a Halloween party as Boomer from *Battlestar Galactica* with my boyfriend at the time, and because most of the people there weren't fandom folks, no one knew what costume I was wearing.

Fast forward to my 40s when geek culture and cosplaying have become more mainstream, I went to a Halloween party at the USS Hornet in Alameda (where they have nuclear "wessels") and I was blown away by the creativity of the costumers. The costume contest was quite competitive. Some of the entries were on par with what you'd see at masquerade competitions at San Diego Comic Con, Worldcon, etc. San Diego Comic Con is actually where I started competing in masquerades myself and I was honored to have been a masquerade judge at the Chicago Worldcon in 2022. But I digress.



One memorable and unique Halloween experience I had was when my husband Christopher and I portrayed Victorian characters in a haunted house at the Rengstorff House in Mountain View, CA. Each room of the Victorian mansion had a different theme and the room he and I were in was the séance room where guests came in and we entertained them with a Ouija board. And another year, we went to a more Burning Man-type costuming event at the San Francisco docks called Ghost Ship Halloween. There was a ferris wheel, a Spanish galleon, Thunderdome and multiple dance floors.



I've also enjoyed Halloween when I've gone to the Fall Disneyland Dapper Day. It usually occurs right after Halloween so Disneyland is still decked with Halloween décor, especially the Haunted Mansion. It's actually a great time to go to Disneyland because lots of people come in dapper clothing and/or Disneybounding outfits. There are also some Christmas decorations already up so you get to enjoy both holiday themes at the same time.

But as a costumer, I costume almost every weekend so that when Halloween rolls around, I'm usually exhausted and just want to stay home. Especially when Halloween is during the work week. There's always the weekend before Halloween, of course, but my friends usually don't do Halloween parties and I don't enjoy public parties as much as they're too big and anonymous. I try to go to the annual PEERS Vampire Ball that's on the first Saturday of November. And last year I got to perform as Columbia during one of the intermissions when our group sang the "Time Warp" from *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Serendipitously, a few weeks later I was at a Galaxycon in Columbus, OH, and Barry Bostwick (Brad from the movie) had an autograph table, and he was super nice, so I showed him a video clip of me singing. I'm slated to sing Columbia's parts again at this year's Vampire Ball.





Looking back, 2022 was a big Halloween year for me as Christopher and I were invited by friends to join them at the San Francisco Giants Halloween staff party at Oracle Park and then we went to the nearby Chase Center for their Thrilloween event. I came dressed as La'an Noonien Singh from *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*. With these same friends we also went to the Harry Potter House in San Jose (which benefits charity and not She Who Shall Not Be Named) as Hogwarts students the next day. Then there was a Halloween party at my work (the first I'd ever heard of in the 20+ years I've worked there) with a costume contest. I fretted about what to wear because as a costumer, I don't really do Halloween-type costumes. But then as a regular costumer, I didn't want to make a poor showing. So I crowdsourced for ideas and Facebook friends gave me the best advice about Halloween costumes. They have to be clever and/or scary. So I came up with the



idea of being a zombie Marie Antoinette. I didn't know what to expect and I was pleasantly surprised at all the creativity and fun costumes. There were three categories and I won 1st place in the scariest costume category! I really wanted to be first place in the best costume category, not just for the honor but also because the prize was two VIP tickets to a 49ers game. But the \$50 Starbucks coupon I got was great too. The woman who won the 49ers tickets was

Mona Lisa with a frame around her upper body and it was a clever idea.

This year, I'm back to not doing much for Halloween. Christopher and I went to a Halloween party at Ashkenaz, an international and Americana music venue and dance hall in Berkeley. They had a *Lord of the Rings*-themed square dance called by Gandalf the Grey and Gandalf the White with music by Molly Ringwraith and the Second Breakfast Club. I dressed as Square Dance Arwen, while Christopher was Gandalf the Red. The dances were all inspired by *Lord of the Rings* and one dance even included groupings of us attendees doing interpretative dances based on scenes from the movies. It was so much fun!

Halloween will continue to be about costuming for me and I look forward to making more Halloween memories in the future.