
Halloweens Past

by

Lillian Smith Sherrer

Every year as Halloween approaches, my mind is flooded by memories of Halloweens past, when Halloween was mainly for adults. At least that is the way it seemed.

My Dad and his pals planned for weeks what they would do as pranks on Halloween. On Halloween night they waited until all was dark outside and then they would leave with flashlights or lanterns to do their rowdy deeds. Usually, it was our farm neighbour Henry who took the brunt of their shenanigans. They knew that Henry, as did most farmers, arose early when it was pitch-dark to do the morning chores. They also knew that he always went out of the house by the side door closest to the barn. So the gang of pranksters removed the doorsteps. The next morning Henry, with his lantern in hand, stepped out into nothing but thin air. Naturally he went head over heels, as the lantern sailed through the air, and landed on the ground with a great kaplunk. Luckily he wasn't hurt.

One year Dad's followers included the oldest son of our farm neighbours who lived up on the hill. We called the parents Ma and Pa. She was always at his side whether doing farm chores or in the woods cutting logs. They traded cars often and travelled the roads continually. This particular year they had recently traded for a newer car and were especially proud of their deal. Halloween night the gang, which included their son, entered the garage attached to the house and noiselessly jacked up the rear end of the car and placed blocks of wood under the axles. The next day Ma and Pa got into the car and started it up. When he stepped on the gas it

wouldn't move. Pa looked at Ma and said, "*Gee Ma, I guess this time we got a lemon*".

He thought the transmission was stripped. Of course their son was there to hear this and reported it to Dad and the others, much to their delight.

There were many harried outhouse tales. Each year as the gang traversed the neighbourhood to engage in their pranks, one or more neighbour got the outhouse treatment. Quite often the outhouses were tipped over or moved to a different location. One poor sole hurried to the outhouse in the wee hours of the morning, only to find the outhouse do or nailed shut.

Often just to annoy or scare people, especially one old maid who lived alone, they would sneak up to a window and stick a fish hook which was attached to a length of fish line, into the window frame. They then held the line taut as they rubbed resin back and forth on the line. A haunting squeaking noise resounded into the house. If a person approached the window to investigate the noise, the pranksters quickly disappeared into the shadows.

One morning after Halloween, farm machinery could be seen on lawns and in the middle of empty fields. To our great surprise a hay rake was on a roof of a low barn. I am sure that Dad and his gang knew exactly how it got there.

My brothers, as they got old enough, were allowed to tag along and participate in the doings, but I being just a girl, only got to hear about what they did on Halloween, time after time as they repeated the tall tales of Halloweens past.

Source: *Short Stories and Assorted Poems*, by Lillian Smith Sherrer. Private Edition. 1987. 74 pages, pages 49-50.