

Trick-or-Treater's Revenge

by Frederick Wickert

As a high school lad, my companions and I enjoyed Halloween night. It was a time for the fun of door-to-door begging, and for the playing of a few pranks. The younger children and the girls usually resorted to soaping windows. We boys had other more sophisticated things to do. Our top priority was to tip over every outhouse we could find.

We were not really bad kids. Living in a sparsely populated and close knit community, we always knew who was down on their luck, who was having a hard time, who had illness in the family or who was grieving. We took great care to avoid disturbing those people. We were never destructive in our pranks. We were not out to harm anyone at all.

Second to tipping over outhouses our second most enjoyable prank was trying to find farms where no one seemed to be at home. Being teen-agers, one or two of the older boys always managed to have a pickup truck available. In the truck were carried some rope, a ladder and some tools.

When such a farm was located, we looked for the wagon. The wagon was disassembled, pulled up on the house or barn roof, then reassembled astraddle of the peak of the roof. In the morning the farmer found his wagon astraddle of the roof. It was fodder for much good-natured ribbing and amusement around the town. Usually, the boys involved, without admitting any guilt, came around after school the next day and offered assistance in getting the wagon safely back on the ground.

One Halloween night, the weather was unusually mild. We were playing trick or treat in the hamlet of West Conesville. (See A HALLOWEEN PRANK, Ourecho story ID#3097)

Facing the main road, but at the corner of Bull Hill Road was a very large yellow house. A local farmer lived there and there were some apartments in the building. The building sat very close to the road.

We ascended the steps to the wide porch. We approached the door on the right. The porch was well lighted and the door on the right side of the porch had light inside of it. The door had two vertical panes of glass in it and there was a wood framed screen door on the outside, which swung outwards, as the inside door swung to the inside.

Inside the well-lighted room we could see a group of men sitting around a table playing cards. Smoke rose from ashtrays and partially emptied beer bottles were seen on the table.

We knocked on the door. Again, we knocked on the door. After getting no response, and thinking the men were making too much noise to hear us, we pounded hard on the door. A very large man rose from the table and came toward the door. Two other men stood and followed him.

The large man opened the door and we yelled "Trick or Treat." The man told us in a loud voice that if we kids didn't get the hell out of there, he was going to give us more than a damned treat. He then slammed the door shut, turned off the porch light and the men returned to the table and card game.

We were offended. We saw no justification in treating us so callously. We discussed for a moment what might be a proper revenge. One of us had a plan. One of the boys was dispatched to the other end of the hamlet to Gallagher's store to purchase a can of lighter fluid. We came up with sufficient change amongst us to pay for the purchase.

While the one boy was getting the can of lighter fluid, the rest of us went looking for big rocks. There was a creek across the road from the house and rocks were plentiful on the banks of the creek. A number of dry specimens, weighing from thirty to fifty pounds each were carried to the front of the porch. The rocks were stealthily placed against the bottom of the wooden screen door and stacked two feet high.

When the can of lighter fluid arrived, the rocks were drenched with the lighter fluid. When all was ready, the door was pounded upon, we all yelled, "Fire! Fire!" The fluid was ignited and we ran to hide in the shadows and watch.

The flames shot up in full view of the glass windowpanes. The men abruptly left their card game and rushed to the door. The first to reach the door opened it. When they tried to open the screen door, they couldn't because of the pile of rocks against the bottom of it. Due to the combination of excitement and too much to drink, the men in the back pushed the ones at the door, trying to get outside. The extra pushing from the rear resulted in the wood frame of the screen door breaking and they all fell headlong out the door and onto the pile of rocks.

The men soon got on their feet, unharmed. They began flinging rocks into the yard from the porch and soon the flames flickered out. There was much loud profanity and staggering back and forth, fists shaking at the darkness. For us, keeping quiet in the shadows and not revealing our presence was a very difficult thing to do.

From the school bus the following morning, we could observe the rocks laying in the yard, and a very sad looking screen door remains hanging from the side of the door frame. In a few days the broken remains of the screen door were gone and the following spring a new screen door appeared on the building.

Life in the hamlet of West Conesville returned to normal.