Commentary...

A very Celtic holiday

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Ghosts flit through the shadows; witches double down on stirring up toil and trouble. Zombies lurch down the streets and superheroes stand ready to deploy their powers to save the world. It's Halloween — for many folks the most delightful holiday of the year.

Dressing up and transgressing the everyday rules — all in good fun — goes back a long, long ways, back into the mists of Celtic Ireland.

Ancient pagan Celts in Ireland marked Samhain (pronounced sow-un) as the divide between the light of summer and the darkness of winter. In their belief, the veil between the material and the spirit world was thinnest at Samhain, and one might encounter… things… out there in the dark night.

Samhain was, for all intents and purposes, the Celtic New Year's celebration, as well as a harvest festival. Many of our Halloween traditions can be traced to the rituals and folk practices of Samhain.

The website for the ancient Celtic religious site of Newgrange notes that, "The family's ancestors were honoured and invited home whilst harmful spirits were warded off. People wore costumes and masks to disguise themselves as harmful spirits and thus avoid harm. Bonfires and food played a large part in the festivities. The bones of slaughtered livestock were cast into a communal fire, household fires were extinguished and started again from the bonfire. Food was prepared for the living and the dead, food for the ancestors who were in no position it eat it, was ritually shared with the less well-off."

Other regions of the Celtic fringe of Europe also celebrated Samhain. The Scots, as is their wont, were quite concerned with the activities of faery. As Lewis Spence notes in "The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain," "In the Western Isles of Scotland the Sluagh, or faerie host, was regarded as composed of the souls of the dead flying through the air, and the feast of the dead at Hallowe'en was likewise the festival of the faeries."

Early Christianity was adept at adapting and absorbing local folk tradition into Christian forms, and thus Halloween became associated with the eve of All Hallows Day and All Saints Day.

In America, Halloween traditions melded with the iconography of the harvest — pumpkins, ears of Indian corn and the like. Americans adapted an old Irish practice into the Halloween tradition of carving a pumpkin into a jack-o-lantern.

The original jack-o-lantern was a carved turnip lighted from within by an ember. And you might expect, there's a story there….

So the story goes, there was once a ne'er-do-well fellow known far and wide as Stingy Jack — a drunkard, a manipulator and a cheat. Satan came to investigate this man of evil reputation and to claim his soul. But Stingy Jack tricked the Devil into buying him drinks by turning himself into a silver coin. Stingy Jack stuck the coin in his pocket next to a crucifix, so the Devil couldn't escape. Stingy Jack made a pact with the Devil that the Devil wouldn't claim his soul for 10 years, and Jack let Old Beelzebub go free.

A decade later, Jack tricked the Devil again, leaving him stuck in a tree surrounded by crucifixes. In order to get out of his predicament, Old Scratch agreed to leave Stingy Jack his sorry soul on a permanent basis.

Old Stingy Jack's dissolute lifestyle eventually caught up with him and he died unmourned. Satan honored his deal, so Jack didn't go to Hell, but Heaven wouldn't have him either.

So Jack was left to wander the countryside, his way illuminated by an ember burning in a carved turnip. The spirit of Stingy Jack came to be known as Jack O' The Lantern.

When we carve the pumpkin and put the jack-o-lantern in the window; when we take the kids out trick-or-treating; when we extend the revels into the night with drink and music, we are touching a tradition at least two millennia old. And when we hear the banshee screaming, well… it's probably just the wind. Right?

VOLLEYBALL: Outlaws moved up to No. 2 rank in in state

Continued from page 1

The Huskies were able to score the next point and Sisters dropped the set 26-28.

Sisters came out with a vengeance at the start of the second set. Great serves from Ellie Rush, Sydney Myhre, and Sophie Silva quickly pushed the Outlaws to an 11-3 advantage. The momentum was with the Outlaws and along with great serves, players executed smart hits and timely blocks, which led to a 25-15 Outlaw win.

The third set was a nail-biter, and teams scratched and clawed for every point. Neither team managed to get more than a one-point lead early in the set, and the score was tied 10 times before it reached 12-12.

Powerful and timely kills from Greta Davis and Sophie Silva, and a perfect block from Sophie and Natalie Sitz kept the Outlaws in the game. Girls flattened out on the floor to get the dig, others leaped in the air and drilled it to the floor for the kill that the Huskies had no chance to return, and still others made perfect reads to get the block. The score was tied up 18 times before Sweet Home finally got the two-point spread and won 30-28.

The fourth set was a must-win situation for the Outlaws and they rose to the occasion. Ellie Rush started at the service line and got Sisters a quick 3-1 lead before another mishap occurred. A Sweet Home player took a ball to the face, got a bloody nose, and the match was delayed while the floor was cleaned. When play resumed, Sisters kept the momentum. At a critical and pivotal point, Sydney Myhre had an incredible and athletic dig. She hit the floor with so much force, momentum slid her halfway across the court. Amazingly enough, she got the ball up and the Outlaws scored the point. Sisters got great blocks from Davis and Addy Myhre and perfectly timed kills from Davis and Sophie Silva. Sisters took the set with a score of 25-21.

The fifth and final set was a barn-burner, with the score tied nine times. The Outlaws took the lead and were only able to hold onto a one-point lead until the score was even at 10-10. At that point the crowd was on their feet shouting, stomping, and cheering for the home team. Rush went back to the service line and took the Outlaws to a 14-10 advantage, but then the Huskies got the side-out and scored a point. Sweet Home served the ball and Sophie Silva put the icing on the cake with a well-placed kill and the Outlaws won 15-11.

The home crowd erupted as the Lady Outlaws hollered and shouted in celebration. The win was especially sweet, as Sisters had lost 3-0 to the Huskies in the first round of league play. Both teams will share the honor as co-champs of the Oregon West League.

Seniors Sam Silva and Addy Myhre were excited to comment on the victory.

"It was unbelievable!" said Silva. "After our loss to Sweet Home earlier in the season we were a little defeated, and we'd lost twice to them last year. It was awesome to come back and be co-champions. Tonight we just breathed, stayed calm, and played to win."

Myhre said, "The only way we did it was because of our chemistry. When we believe in each other, we start to believe in ourselves, and things start flowing and we start to click. And we did that tonight."

Davis finished the match with 25 kills and five blocks, and Rush was quick to comment on her stellar performance.

"Greta has amazing power and the ability to put the ball down with force, but she's also been working on playing smart," said Rush. "After two amazing kills where the defense was back and ready to dig, she came out with a nice short roll shot to the middle, which took them by surprise. She showed her growth tonight as a hitter and made some very smart plays."

Rush told *The Nugget* that the Outlaws did much better on the block against the Huskies, and stated that the girls settled down, watched and were patient. Exceptional blocks came at key moments in the match and shut down the Huskies' hitters, especially at the end of the fifth set.

Sophie Silva led the team with eight blocks, Davis recorded five and Addy Myhre and Sam Silva each added four.

Rush spoke highly of each blocker.

"Sophie has a knack for reading the ball and when she blocks, normally the ball goes straight down," said Rush. "Greta is so explosive with her block. She's so athletic and gets so high they can't hit around her. Addy is smart and patient, and reads the hitters well. Sam has great court awareness and timing when it comes to blocking. Playing at outside hitter, she doesn't get a lot of opportunities to block, but when she does, we can count on her to put up a great block."

Sophie Silva had 19 kills in the match, Sam Silva tallied 11, and Addy Myhre added nine. Rush dished out 70 assists and had eight aces in the match.

Rush told *The Nugget* she was thrilled with the win.

"I'm super-excited," said Rush. "I thought tonight was a complete team effort. We've definitely had ups and downs throughout the season, and tonight we played with nothing to lose. Tonight was about preparing us for state — about learning and getting better as a team. And, it feels really good to be co-champs with Sweet Home."

After the win was recorded in the books, Sisters moved up in the rankings to No. 2 in state, and Sweet Home dropped to No. 3. The Outlaws will host a play-in game on Saturday, November 2. Their opponent is yet to be decided.