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Students get creative while carving

Getting creative with pumpkins is a holiday tradition on campus

By Nicole Garton
Oregon Daily Emerald

A trip to the patch can be an adventure, but picking the pumpkin is only half the fun.

Carving the shell into a Halloween masterpiece is what the tradition is all about.

The human penchant for creating pumpkin art is reflected in the myriad pumpkin-carving contests that typically accompany the holiday, as well as in the diverse jack-o'-lanterns that grin from neighborhood porches. And many students dive into the tradition with relish.

Every year, senior Leslie Nicolas carves a traditional pumpkin, with triangle eyes and nose.

"It's supposed to look normal," the history major says — except for the gore-laden knife sticking out of it.

"I mix red dye with the guts, and I hang it from the knife," she

explains. Smearing the knife with "blood" and lighting a candle inside completes the effect.

"People look at it and go, 'Oh my God, what did you do to that poor pumpkin?'" Nicolas says. "I tell them it died."

Freshman Jennifer Toney also approaches pumpkin carving with zest, but she takes a less gruesome approach.

"I'm more of a soft, friendly evil-spirited person," she says, although she did cut a pumpkin in half once — "but that was by accident."

Toney experiments with a variety of decorating techniques.

"The triangle face looks kind of boring," she says. Instead, she uses circles and jagged lines to carve her faces.

"Once I carved a design with little waves and tiny lines all over the pumpkin," she recalls. "There was just enough of the pumpkin left to hold together."

Toney likes to carve faceless designs on her jack-o'-lanterns.

"Maybe because I'm a psychology major, I want to get away from faces," she said.

Senior history major James Curtis also likes to diverge from the traditional triangular features. His pumpkins sport representations of modern characters and religious themes.

"Some are more ornate," he says, "and sometimes they're more fanciful."

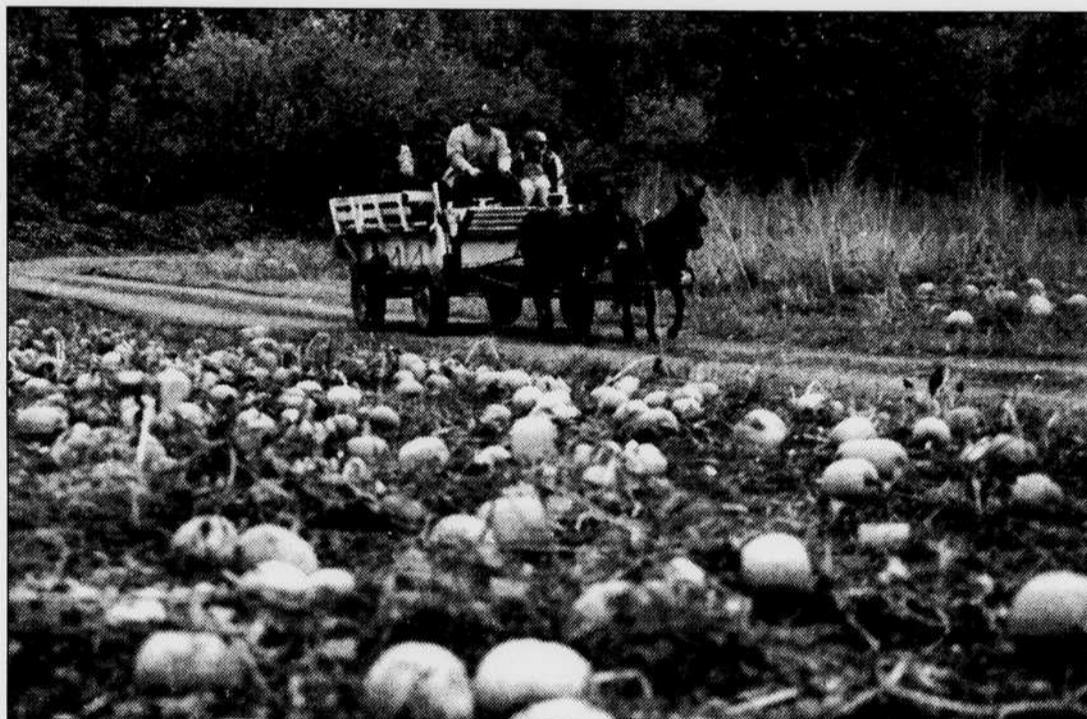
His most interesting carving featured representations of figures from Japanese folklore.

"We looked through history books, picked a picture and drew it onto the pumpkin and carved it out," he explains.

While Curtis' pumpkins typically take about an hour to carve, he and a friend spent six or seven hours on that one.

But when it comes to carving with his two kids, 2 1/2 and 3 years old, simpler faces usually do the trick, although Curtis admits his kids have more fun playing in the pumpkin seeds.

"I like to get a big pumpkin so my son fits in it," he says.



A horse-drawn buggy carries pumpkin pickers to the patch at Herrick Farms Sunday morning.

Matt Garton/Emerald

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Pumpkins

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pound giant purchased a few years ago, required three men to carry it out to her Nissan Sentra.

Too big to sit in back, the vast vegetable rode home in the front passenger seat.

"It wouldn't fit in anyone's trunk, and I wasn't going to leave my pumpkin," Brennan recalls. "We had to seat belt it in."

Brennan freely admits that when it comes to pumpkins, size does matter.

"I like great big pumpkins," she says as her 1-year-old son Chase embraces this year's pick, a pumpkin bigger than he is.

Out in the patch, a hayride away from the parking lot and scales at Herrick Farms, Springfield residents Marlon Kanafsky and his family pore over the plump selections, rejecting first one, then another. At the shout of

his daughter, Coral, Kanafsky huddles over a potential candidate.

"We'll probably get four — one for each of us," he explains. His family prefers larger pumpkins, although their taste isn't quite as extreme as Brennan's. He estimates their record load at about 40 pounds.

On the other hand, Sandi Miles of Springfield and her granddaughter, Daija Farmer, prefer the small pumpkins, and as they wait for the hay wagon to carry them back across the farm, Daija easily grips a small, round pumpkin.

While size is important, it isn't the only standard by which pumpkins are judged. Shape plays an important part in the decision, and a desirable pumpkin must present a proper face for carving.

"I like one I can carve a really

nice face on, and I like to do etching around the face," Brennan says.

The taller, more oblong pumpkins are the best for carving, Kanafsky says.

Alisha Walker, a senior business major at the University, agrees.

"I like ones with a long side so you can carve it and a flat bottom so it stands upright," she explains.

For some, like Brennan, combing the patch for just the right future jack isn't always easy.

"We're looking for the Great Pumpkin," she says.

But Springfield resident Peter Anctil's choice is simple. He points to his toddling son, who has just taken off across the field.

"We pick whatever he likes — usually the biggest ones."

Oregon Daily Emerald

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