

Celebrating Halloween in Eugene, 1943-2001

■ Candy, costumes, cinema and classical music? Halloween has seen its share of festivities over the years in the Eugene area

By Marcus Hathcock
Oregon Daily Emerald

Halloweens at the University have seen their share of antics in the past, but holiday festivities haven't always ended in criminal activity. The University historically has had little to do with Halloween events, but students and the community have usually kept themselves busy on the haunted holiday.

Recent Halloweens have seen riots and criminal activity in the streets of Eugene. In 1996, a crowd of 200 alleged party-crashers rioted on University Street, as reported in the Emerald on Nov. 4, 1996. The disturbance began because the party's hosts attempted to lock out the uninvited guests.

The following year, the Emerald reported 300 people were part of a "party-turned-riot" on the corner of East 17th Avenue and Alder Street. The rioting began in 1997 for the same reason as in 1996 — too many party-crashers showed up at a particular residence.

A neighbor on East 17th Avenue reportedly saw several fights, vehicular vandalism and people firing gunshots into the air. Tear gas was used when the 40 police officers were assaulted with rocks and bottles.

And still, a year later, crowds gathered at the site of the 1997 riots to "get it on again," a student told the Emerald. An estimated 80 to 100 people congregated at the troubled intersection, once again uprooting street signs and causing vandalism to the area. When rioters wouldn't disperse, more tear gas was used, and the area SWAT team was deployed. Twelve arrests were made that year.

Riot gear wasn't always necessary during Halloween in Eugene. Festivities of the deeper past sometimes included vandalism but almost never ended in police involvement.

Mixing (and vandalizing) in the '40s

On Oct. 31, 1943, World War II was in full swing. The content of the Emerald newspaper on that day was mainly war-related, and there were no articles about Halloween events. There was, however, an advertisement in that day's paper for a Halloween party at the now-extinct Eugene Ice Arena on W. 6th Avenue. The party included ice skating, eating doughnuts and drinking refreshments until "the witching hour," otherwise known as midnight.

After the war was over, Halloween had a comeback. There was once a student group on campus called the Independent Student Association (ISA) that sponsored campus events. One such event was the

group's "Hallowe'en Mixer" on Saturday, Oct. 30, 1948, held in the Gerlinger Annex.

In an Emerald article the day before the mixer, ISA President Bob Davis said he promised a party that would prevent the "usual staglines" from forming (staglines being crowds of inactive partiers). The dance took place the day before Halloween from 9 p.m. to midnight. Admission was free to all members of ISA, but for those who weren't members, 25 cents bought a membership card. Door prizes included an orchid from Wayne's Florist and a bottle of cologne from Kieth Fennels.

In the same Emerald issue, an editorial quoted a form letter received from the "National Halloween Committee" in New York.

"As an alternative for breaking windows, smashing gates and getting run over," the letter encouraged eating doughnuts off a string and bobbing for apples.

However, two days after Halloween, the community learned that not everyone sat around eating doughnuts and apples.

In a Nov. 2, 1948, Emerald article titled "Halloween Takes Toll on Campus" by Gretchen Grondahl, acts of Halloween vandalism were recorded.

Grondahl reported that "gangs of prowlers" attacked several University sorority houses. Attacks included what the story referred to as the "regulation soaping of windows," with theft and property injuries.

Thefts included a nameplate from the former sorority Alpha Omicron Pi and three trophies from Delta Delta Delta.

Garbage was dumped in sororities' living rooms and front lawns. An out-house was parked on the Delta Zeta lawn, which was reportedly removed with a "wrecker and squad car."

Greek system brings children to campus

In 1955, fraternities and sororities at the University hosted 16 different parties on Halloween. According to the Emerald archives, these parties included an estimated 600 local 4th and 5th grade students as "guests of honor." That evening, the chapter houses played games of "pin the tail on the donkey," "hot potato" and "bobbing for apples" with the costumed kids. After the parties, there was an all-campus dance in the EMU Ballroom.

Though sororities and fraternities don't host Halloween parties for children anymore, the youth aren't left out of University festivities on Halloween. Bean Residence Hall Complex Director Mark Brinkmann said this year marks the second annual "trick or treat for kids" at the Bean Complex. From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Brinkmann said kids from UO Family Housing, EMU Child Care and local elementary schools will roam the halls of the Bean Complex searching for candy.

While in a housing position at a



Two local children try to bite an apple off a string at one of the many Greek-sponsored Halloween parties in 1955. Eugene 4th- and 5th-graders were treated as "guests of honor" at the chapter celebrations.

different university, Brinkmann said he saw the trick or treat program accommodate up to 700 children. The Bean Complex program hosted a comparatively scant 50 kids last year, Brinkmann said, but he remained optimistic about this year's event.

"When trying to start any new tradition, it's going to start out slow," he said.

Brinkmann said he hopes that parents who are wary about the program will see that it's "just a lot of fun."

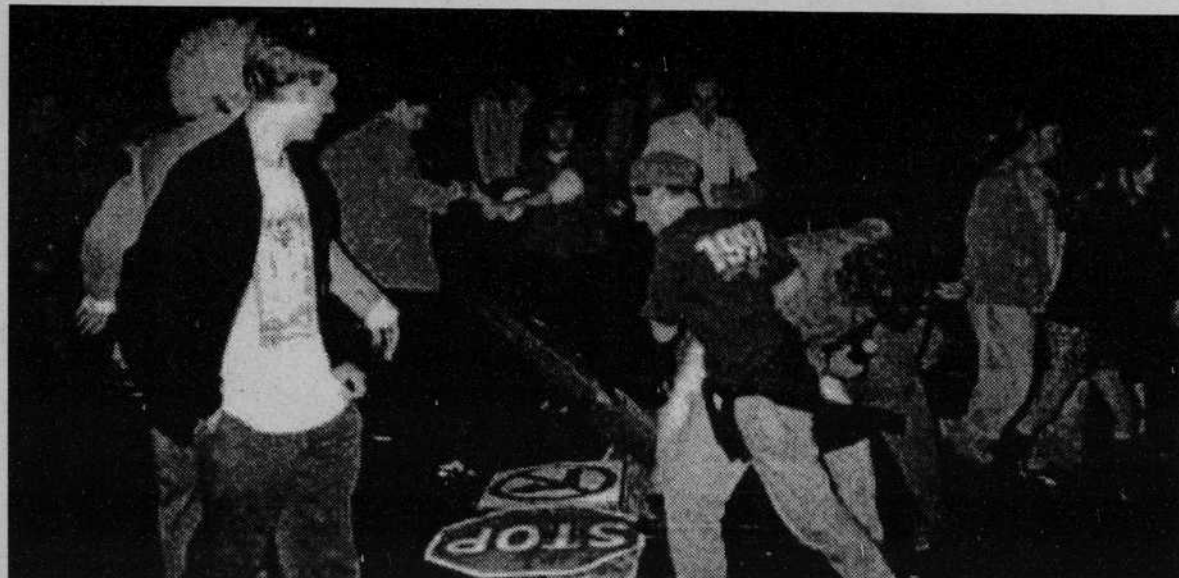
Brinkmann estimated that about 72 Bean residents will participate in handing out candy from their rooms to trick-or-treating kids. All of the festivities are free for the participating kids and their parents.

But back in 1961, families attended other free Halloween events. The "College Inn" had an afternoon Halloween party with free coffee, refreshments and doughnuts.

The University's School of Music hosted a student recital that same Halloween during peak candy-grabbing hours, at 8 p.m., in the "Music Auditorium." Organists and vocalists performed classical pieces such as Bach's Prelude in D Major and Claude Debussy's "Reflections in the Water." Such concerts don't exist on Halloween today.

In 1974, the only Halloween festivity that was mentioned was a party at a place called Duffy's, advertised in the Emerald. At this bar on 13th Avenue and Alder Street there

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A group of partiers vandalize a stop sign during a riot on Halloween in 1997. About 300 people allegedly took to the streets after a party.

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