

Traditions date back to Celtic festivals

Trick-or-treating originated in America and Christians started wearing costumes for the holiday, Hallow's Eve

Christine Cruz
Freelance Reporter

Say "Halloween," and many people envision glowing jack-o-lanterns, lavish costumes and children holding bags of candy corn. For many college students across the nation, it is a ritual of block parties and binge drinking. "Normally, I go around and try to find the coolest party around," junior Charles Silverman said. "I put on the silliest clothes I have so I can get into any party."

People today may celebrate Halloween by dressing up, although the holiday has a long tradition that has

evolved over centuries.

"People think Halloween is pagan or anti-Christian," said Martha Bayless, director of medieval studies at the University. She added that it is, in fact, a holiday of mixed Christian and Celtic origin that has been around for years.

She said its origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sou-ween) nearly 2,000 years ago in Ireland. The Celts celebrated the new year on Nov. 1, which marked both the end of summer and harvest and the beginning of the cold, dark winter, a time commonly associated with death.

Bayless said it was a day when Celts believed the worlds of the living and the dead united. To commemorate the day where the ghosts

returned to earth, the Celts built large bonfires to "light up the night" for spirits.

According to the History Channel when Christianity spread into Celtic lands, Nov. 1 became All Saints' Day, a day to honor saints, and Nov. 2 became All Souls' Day, a day to honor the dead. All Souls' Day was celebrated similar to Samhain with bonfires and dressing up in costumes as angels and devils.

Bayless added these costumes originated from the Christian tradition of "dressing up as ghosts to appease the spirits" so the ghosts would mistake people for fellow spirits. This is how All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day came to be called Hallow's Eve, or Hallowmas.

While some Christians still view Halloween as a celebration of the

dead, Norma Joyce, the Elder Priestess of Women in Conscious Creative Action sees it differently.

"I personally think Christianity is a religion of fear," Joyce said, "but Wiccans are joyful people because we believe in life." She said Wiccans celebrate Hallowmas or Sanhaim based on the Celtic astrological degrees of the stars and this year they will celebrate it on Nov. 6.

For Wiccans, Hallowmas is the time when the two worlds, the other side and astral plain, are closest. It is also a time to contact the dead through ritual ceremonies. At the end of their rituals, they celebrate with food.

Other Halloween traditions, such as eating candy, emerged later.

According to The History Channel, trick-or-treating originated in

America. As millions of Irish immigrants fled the potato famine of 1846, Halloween traditions spread across the country. Americans dressed up in costumes and went from house to house begging for food and money, eventually leading up to modern day trick-or-treating tradition.

By the 1800s, Halloween had become a holiday of social gatherings instead of a tradition of appeasing ghosts and spirits. In the 20th century, superstitions and religious beliefs dissipated and Halloween became the commercial holiday we know today.

"It's bound to happen in our culture, where we are not taught that it's a sacred time," Joyce said.

Christine Cruz is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

Halloween antics spark debate on holiday's purpose

There may be more to this scary holiday than tricks and treats, according to varying religious beliefs

Andrew Shipley
Freelance Reporter

Oct. 31. To most people just a date, one that conjures up fond memories of crisp fall evenings spent wandering the local neighborhoods in pursuit of candy.

Although few people would describe Halloween as anything but fun, the holiday's roots in pagan tradition leave some individuals with serious religious concerns. Harmless fun, satanic ritual and everything in between — there is some consensus in University and Eugene religious communities that more is at issue than where to find the biggest Snickers bar.

According to Father Michael Fones of the Catholic Campus Ministry, it was common in early Christian tradition for large feast days, such as All Saints Day on Nov. 1, to begin the evening prior to the actual day. What's now known as Halloween is really an extension of All Saints Day.

Fones said pumpkin carving and other American traditions stem from a mixture of the Christian All Hallow's Eve with pre-Christian

Irish culture, and was brought to America through Irish immigration.

Other religious groups trace the origins of Halloween even further back. Caddy Cole, director of religious education at the Unitarian Universalist Church, links Halloween to ancient druid rituals, or "a celebration of the harvest, honoring of the dead."

If there is contention among Christians concerning Halloween's roots, it pales in comparison to the debate on what Halloween means today.

"Halloween is a happy, healthy, joyful holiday," said Cole. "Christian fear is from the word 'pagan,' which in reality simply means 'country folk.' There is nothing to be afraid of."

Others in the community disagree. "Halloween definitely has a darker overtone that we would consider satanic," said Graham Carmichael, the assistant pastor for the Country-side Christian Fellowship.

David Sower of the Lutheran Campus Ministry agrees.

"It is a satanic holiday," he said. "A very high time for (devil worshippers)."

Some students, such as senior Ryan Rojas also have strong anti-Halloween feelings.

"Personally, I don't like to

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Danielle Hickey Emerald

Friends Cari Wristen (left) and Stacy Borke (right), dressed up for some pre-Halloween fun to decide on the perfect costume.

Costume searching begins

Students manage to find time to hunt for outfits at the last minute, most at second-hand stores

Robin Weber
Freelance Writer

Although Halloween is quite near, it doesn't necessarily mean University students have their ghoulish garb set to go. Between midterms, jobs and maintaining day-to-day lives, many have put buying costumes on the back burner. Take a look in any retail store the evening of Oct. 31, and these students may be scouring the racks in search of the perfect, or at least the remaining, costumes.

"I've got this to deal with first," said sophomore Alexandra Anderson, gesturing to a 100-plus page course packet.

Although Anderson is planning to join friends for a costume-theme party, none of her plans are concrete, because right now she said there's just no extra time.

In the past she's been a dead prom queen, a devil and a fairy. She said she usually shops at stores like Value Village, where she can also often scoop up jewelry, makeup and hair accessories to give her getup a personal flair. This year, her costume will be whatever she can find quickly, and at a reasonable price.

Exercise and movement science major Josh

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