

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Historical notes from Big Butte Historical Society
Recollections of Charleen Brown



HALLOWEEN PRANKS OF DAYS GONE BY

Halloween has come and gone for 2007 but this year's "ghosts and goblins" reminded me of Halloweens of the past. "Trick or Treat" was always a favorite activity of the younger set but, the older kids had several traditional pranks that they pulled around town every year. Two of them stand out in my memory.

First, in the late 40's and early 50's, it was great sport for the older kids to scout around and find an unlocked, unattended vehicle. Then they would push it out into the middle of the unfenced high school football field. The next morning there would be several cars in the field and the owners would be out there retrieving their vehicles.

My family had just moved into Butte Falls in 1949 and my dad (Charlie Ferguson) had an old truck that he knew the kids would target. It wouldn't lock and it was parked in a shed that was open to the alley. So on Halloween night, as soon as it got dark, Dad went out and stood quietly in the shadows of the shed and waited. Of course, he didn't have to wait long before the gang came along. One of the guys got in the old truck, shifted it into neutral and steered while all the other kids gathered around and started pushing. When they were totally engrossed in their work, Dad stepped out of the shadows and joined in the pushing. No one paid any attention to him and he helped them push the truck right out into the middle of the field. As soon as they all stopped pushing, Dad stepped forward and said, "O.K., we had a great time pushing my truck out here, but now, let's all have fun pushing it back where we got it." So he made them all push it back into the shed. Then Dad said, "I know who you 'kids' are and I work with your dads so I know my truck will stay here for the rest of the night." And it did.

The second prank involved the outside facilities utilized by most of the homes in Butte Falls. Even in the late forties, early fifties, indoor bathrooms were rare. Most of the houses had facilities out back called "privies" or "outhouses." It was tradition for the pranksters to go from house to house and tip over these outhouses. There were many stories about missteps and pictures being taken of the culprits but my favorite story is as follows;

There was a man who was determined to keep the kids away from his outhouse. So, on Halloween night, he built a huge bonfire in his yard and sat up on the roof of his porch with a shotgun. He kept the fire going and stayed there until late into the night. He finally let the fire die when things quieted down and the kids had all gone home. That shotgun had been enough to deter the bravest would be prankster and the next morning his outhouse was about the only one in town still standing. Yes, he had won or had he? For the following week, his outhouse was tipped over every single night. He had won the battle but he had lost the war. In the end, he probably wished he had not been so vigilant on Halloween night.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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