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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

BECOMING VAMPIRA



Halloween must not pass without mention of the glamour ghoul with a 17-inch waist, **Vampira**, aka Astoria High School grad **Maila Nurmi** (1922-2008).

How did she become Vampira? In the early 1940s, in New York, Nurmi performed on stage in “**Spook Scandals**.” Her role? To rise out of a coffin and scream.

Director **Howard Hawks** saw her, and was so impressed, he brought her out to Hollywood to be in a movie. The movie, “**Dreadful Hollow**,” went into production, but was never made. Nurmi went back to modeling.

Her real break, she often said, was a 1953 gala Halloween ball thrown by **Hunt Stromberg Jr.**, a producer at Los Angeles’ KABC TV. She dressed as an early prototype of the Vampira persona, and won first place in the costume contest.

Stromberg wanted to beef up his late-night show featuring old horror movies, and knew Nurmi’s vampire character would fill the bill, so he hired her.

It was for the show that she perfected her creation and alter-ego, the sexy, smart, wise-cracking Vampira. Premiering April 30, 1954, “**The Vampira Show**” was an immediate hit in L.A.

The show began with her walking straight up to the camera and belting out her signature glass-shattering scream. Hear it here: bit.ly/vscream

Vampira then introduced painfully bad movies while wearing talon-length fingernails, long black hair, a skin-tight black dress and ghoulish makeup.

The show may have only lasted a year, but her legacy lives on. (bit.ly/mnvamp)

WHAT TO WEAR?



In these trying, inflationary times, the expense of a fancy **Halloween costume** may be a bit overwhelming. Never fear, LivingOnTheCheap.com has come to the rescue with a list of **102 “cheap and easy”** (OK, some are not so easy) costume ideas.

Of course, there are the usual get-ups, like vampire, zombie, ghost and skeleton, but some veer into more interesting territory.

One of those is No. 45, being **Tippi Hedren** from Hitchcock’s “**The Birds**” — an appropriate choice in gull territory — which entails making birds out of construction paper, gluing them to your shirt and putting some in your hair, and using lipstick (and nail polish) to simulate blood stains. Don’t forget to wave your hands.

Or, try No. 70, being a bag of jelly beans, which involves a lot of balloons. For the truly lazy and/or uninspired, be a werewolf: Go out in your regular clothes and explain Halloween didn’t fall on a full moon.

FRIGHT FEST



Halloween feels incomplete without watching old horror films, so toddle on over to Archive.org for a fright festival of B movies.

A dandy one is “**The Wasp Woman**.” And don’t miss “**Attack of the Giant Leeches**.”

Then there’s **George Romero**’s “**Night of the Living Dead**,” which still holds up. It’s so scary, *Reader’s Digest* even ran a diatribe against it in 1969. And *House on Haunted Hill* is still deliciously creepy.

Lastly, don’t forget “**Plan 9 from Outer Space**” on YouTube, featuring **Vampira** and **Bela Lugosi**, often touted as the worst movie ever made.

ACCORDINGLY NAMED ASTORIA



When the Ear was naught but a young earlet in New England, **Washington Irving**’s “**The Legend of Sleepy Hollow**” was always read, or talked about, around Halloween time. In a fit of nostalgia, the Ear decided to read the story again, and was delighted to find it online.

Sleepy Hollow may be the most famous of Irving’s stories, but he also wrote **John Jacob Astor**, “**Astoria; Or, Anecdotes Of An Enterprise Beyond The Rocky Mountains**,” published in 1835, also available online.

Irving doesn’t actually get around to the founding of Astoria until Chapter 9, which talks about the 16 men sent ashore on April 12, 1811, to start a settlement:

“Crossing the wide mouth of the river, the party landed, and encamped at the bottom of a small bay within **Point George** ... The weather was superb, and everything looked delightful to men just emancipated from a long confinement on shipboard.

“The **Tonquin** shortly afterwards made her way through the intricate channel, and came to anchor in the little bay, and was saluted from the encampment with three volleys of musketry and three cheers. She returned the salute with three cheers and three guns.

“All hands now set to work cutting down trees, clearing away thickets, and marking out the place for the residence, storehouse, and powder magazine, which were to be built of logs and covered with bark.

“Others landed the timbers intended for the frame of the coasting vessel, and proceeded to put them together, while others prepared a garden spot and sowed the seeds of various vegetables.

“The next thought was to give a name to the embryo metropolis: The one that naturally presented itself was that of the projector and supporter of the whole enterprise. It was accordingly named **Astoria**.”

FORT STEVENS’ SPOOKS



Just for fun, the Ear checked out spooky places on the North Coast at HauntedPlaces.org

Comments were allowed, and the haunted place that had the most, and the most detailed, was **Fort Stevens State Park** in Hammond, built in 1863.

No one mentioned the haunted bike path, or the man with the knife, but people did report seeing the ghost soldier with the flashlight.

There were also reports of a figure floating across the hall at **Battery Clark**, hearing voices at **Battery Russell**, smelling gunfire, and more than one mentioned hearing a giggling girl.

“I went here once when I was 18, and pregnant with my first son, and his dad,” **C. Roberts** recalled. “We left right around dusk on that June day, and we heard someone yell ‘fire,’ and we actually heard the cannon boom, and the ground shook, too.

“We ran to our car, and then we saw the guy with the lantern follow us almost to the parking lot.”

People also saw shadowy figures, and had feelings of being watched, or of unease, among other creepy phenomena. Several others turned and fled, as well, like **Missy**.

“... We were walking the path after hours to get a spook, and got more than we bargained for,” she posted.

“Of course, our men — holding the flashlights at the pitch-black hour and location — took off, leaving us girls behind, after all four of us saw a white figure stand just as a human (and) walk across the path.

“Couldn’t make out clothing or distinct features, we were busy running for our lives.”

NO TRACE NOR TIDINGS



The **Oct. 31, 1888**, edition of *The Daily Morning Astorian* mentioned the lost barkentine **Makah**, loaded with lumber and bound for Australia. One of the owners was Astoria businessman **Martin Foard**. A letter had been received from **J. J. Stokes**, who wrote that on Oct. 26, the ship was “bottom up in the breakers half mile north of Tillamook Bay entrance.”

It was presumed she had capsized in a heavy squall. The masts had broken off and washed away, the sails and rigging were gone and the small lifeboats were missing, but had not come ashore. “There is still no word of the crew,” Stokes added.

The Oregonian noted that several boats were out and about picking up pieces of wreckage. On the shore, where some of the ship’s stores came in, one man found the ship’s patent log. There was no doubt where the wreckage came from when a wooden board marked “**Makah**” washed up, the letters devised using copper nails.

Capt. Gallup, who was loading his ship with lumber at St. Helens, reported on Nov. 1 that on Oct. 21, “I passed for nearly the day through a large amount of lumber, laths, doors and windows etc. I suppose it was the deck load of a schooner.”

By Nov. 3, the shore was strewn with lumber, and the **Makah** was fast breaking up. “So far there is no trace nor tidings of her hapless crew,” the paper noted. And there never was; all were lost.

TRAPPING BIGFOOT



Did you know there is a **Bigfoot trap** in Oregon? Seriously, there is.

It’s near **Jacksonville**, which is about 5 miles west of Medford. Specifically, it’s in the **Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest**, on the **Collings Mountain Trail No. 943**. The 10-by-10-foot square was built of wood, with metal bands, and is secured to the ground with telephone poles.

Originally built in 1974 by the **North American Wildlife Research Team** (now disbanded), the trap was inspired by **Perry Lovell**, a local miner, who said he saw 18-inch footprints in his garden.

The team diligently baited the trap with animal carcasses for six years, but all they ever caught was a befuddled hunter — which is probably why the trap was locked open in 1980 as a safety measure.

The specific spot was chosen because it was in a remote area, and they hoped it was along the path of a Bigfoot migration — even though no one knows if there is such a path, or if the critters migrate, or if there actually are such critters. Regardless, the trap is not remote any more, since a road went in nearby.

In 2006, the U.S. Forest Service repaired the bedraggled wooden contrivance, and it still stands. As far as anyone knows, it’s the only Bigfoot trap in the U.S. (bit.ly/quatchtrap, bit.ly/squatchtrap2).

TUNNELING FOR GHOSTS



Fun rerun: Many Astoria houses and buildings are believed to be rife with the restless spirits of the dead, so Portlander and former Seaside resident **Roger Clooten** went searching for **Astoria’s ghosts** in the tunnels under the city.

“I do this because I want people to know the paranormal is real,” Roger asserted. “It’s not a joke.”

Roger’s first reaction to Astoria’s underground, not surprisingly, was “it’s disgusting down there.” He took a camera, and went in from the basement at **Godfather’s Books** and headed south, to 11th and Exchange streets.

And yes, he believes it’s haunted. He stuck up and down each tunnel, and something caught his eye. It looked like a woman standing there, “a shadow person,” he said. He saw other apparitions, too. One of his photos of shadow figures is shown.

Are there really ghosts in the tunnels? Since it’s commonly believed that several houses and buildings around town are haunted, why not? (*In One Ear*, 5/11/2012)