

The Barn Door

Seeing the world through midwestern eyes.

Thursday, October 16, 2014

Boo! or Boo Hoo? by Suzanne M. Brazil

Each year, Halloween ushers in the beginning of the holiday season. About a decade ago, it signaled the end of my family's holiday status quo. Friends with adult kids told us to [prepare for future holidays](#) when we'd have to take turns or share our kids with in laws. They mentioned the college years when shorter breaks and final exams would make it impossible for kids to travel home for Easter or Mother's Day. But no one said anything about Halloween.



Once a casual day of homemade costumes and harmless pranks, Halloween has become big business. This year, according to the [National Retail Federation](#), Americans are expected to spend over 7.4 billion dollars on costumes, treats, decorations and greeting cards. Halloween is second in popularity only to Christmas and is still growing.



When our kids were younger, Halloween was more than big business; it was THE big day. As room mom for each of their classes, I'd paint my face green, black out a front tooth, pin on my pointy hat and slip on my striped stockings. I'd load up the van with snacks, games and decorations and arrive early to set up for the school parties.

One year, a giant pumpkin with googly eyes, clown nose and lollipop hair served double duty as both a snack and a decoration. Dry ice under a punch bowl oozed atmosphere and olives with spaghetti and Vaseline made a creepy touch-feel box. Weeks of planning went into these parties and even more into costumes for both my daughter and son.



Julius Caesar, Zorro and [Wednesday Addams](#) were some of our favorites. Cinderella's ball gown was made from my old bridesmaid dress. [Chewbacca](#) was a hit *and* a miss. Accustomed to chilly, Midwestern Halloweens, many were excited by an unexpected heat wave that year. My son, however, was less than thrilled wearing a fur-covered sweat suit in 80 degree temperatures.

After the school parties and class parades, we'd rush home to gather pillowcases for [trick-or-treating](#). We'd fill the black cauldron with candy and station it by the front door. We'd sync the [scary music](#), shove fresh batteries into the spooky, gong doorbell and order up the pizza.

My husband and I would take turns handing out [candy](#) and chaperoning the kids. We pushed strollers, a horse on wheels, or other props down the sidewalk chasing stragglers. As the kids got older, they'd invite friends to our house and we'd order extra pizzas. We kept the glue gun and safety pins ready to repair any costume mishaps and supplied face paint for touch-ups. We'd remind them of the [safety rules](#) and they'd roll their eyes. Then, the multicolored clump of kids would head out for another round of candy collecting.



Whatever the weather or costume theme, Halloween was always an exhausting whirlwind requiring a full day, or even two, of recovery. And then one year, it all ended without notice or fanfare.

It was either 2004 or 2005 when our youngest was in middle school and had finally scored a cell phone. The usual suspects were old enough to go out on their own. I don't know why I didn't see it coming. I do know that I wasn't the only parent missing the old [traditions](#).

My husband and I ordered a smaller pizza, filled up the [candy](#) cauldron and turned on the scary music. Then we looked at each other as if to say, "Wow, this is it." Our daughter and son were almost four years apart and I guess we thought one of them would always be around to dress up in a costume or dress down for eating too much candy.



It took some getting used to. Maybe because Halloween is a casual holiday, I wasn't prepared for missing all the hoopla as much as I did. Sometimes, I still miss it but at least after that first year, I knew to prepare my nostalgic self.

Plenty of you have gone through the same [transition](#) and have your own favorite costumes and [traditions](#). I'm anticipating a lot of [Frozen](#) princesses and [Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles](#) this Halloween. Over the years, my husband and I have established new routines. We may go to a party or meet up with friends. But sometimes, we still put on the scary music, light the [jack-o-lanterns](#), and order pizza. I hand out the candy, we both admire all the characters at the door and I still wear my witch hat. Soon enough, we will have to get used to Thanksgiving and Christmas changes, too. I know I'll survive and luckily, I still love Halloween!

What was your favorite costume growing up as a kid? Do you have a favorite candy? What are your children's favorite costumes? Chime in and share how you're preparing for the upcoming holidays.

Linkwithin

Posted by Suzanne Brazil  

[Email This](#)[Blog This](#)[Share to Twitter](#)[Share to Facebook](#)[Share to Pinterest](#)

Labels: [candy](#), [cold midwest weather](#), [costumes](#), [empty nest](#), [family traditions](#), [Halloween](#), [holiday memories](#), [jack-o-lantern](#), [National Retail Federation](#), [parenting](#), [pizza](#), [pumpkins](#), [trick-or-treating](#)