

Halloween!

As most of you know by now, Halloween is my favorite holiday. I started thinking about this year's fun right after the Oakland Raider home opener last month (also known as the "Nightmare on ESPN"). I studied the freak catalogues and hung out at Spirit stores during lunch so I could find replacement items and get a new idea or two. I start getting our home ready for visitors on October 1st and enjoy every minute of the effort. Sandy let's me do my thing all October, but on November 1st all the spooky stuff goes away to make room for her cute Thanksgiving and holiday decorations.

A couple of years ago I thought I would spice up my morning commute by driving to work with a knife through my head and a banshee hanging from the passenger side window. It turned out, the morning commute is enough of a nightmare that not a single person noticed or reacted in any way shape or form.

I work at Altera, which is a wonderful company especially at Halloween when they go full-tilt for the costume contest. To win, you have to not only look good, but have a theme complete with music and choreography! My all time favorite was the Jackson Five – five guys dressed up as different phases of Michael Jackson, each one with a different song and dance to match the time period.

On Friday the 31st, I'll rush home to start turning on my toys. It can easily take an hour to check that all my toys work and my sound effects are ready to go, and I love kids who put as much effort into the event as I do. Like the kid who came dressed as a milk carton with his face as the missing kid ad on the side, or the one in the huge sumo wrestler costume with a sign that said, "I beat anorexia, ask me how," and the do-it-yourself handyman with a piece of wood that looked like it went into his head just above his left eye and came out by the right side of his jaw.

My favorite toy (so far) is an air cannon that shoots a ball of air about the size of a bowling ball about 20 feet. It cracks me up every time I use it. For example, a teenage girl last year said, "Nice stuff, but it doesn't scare me." When she turned around I shot her in the head with an air cannon, and you could hear her scream clear down the street.

One mom introduced me to her kids and told me they were in Sandy's third-grade class. I gave them candy, they all thanked me and as they turned to walk away I shot the mom in the back of the head with my air cannon and made her scream. What a hoot. That air cannon is a great toy! Sandy doesn't really share the enjoyment I get from scaring people (kids and parents alike). Last year she stayed away from the house until 9 PM, this year, now that she is retired, I think she is planning on being out of the state.

With ghouls, goblins and gags, our house is definitely "sick" as one little girl noted. But that's why every year we get well over 300 visitors beginning just as it gets dark, around 5:30 and usually ending at about 9:30. This year I have a whole new landscaped front yard in which to work my magic. I can hardly wait. So, if you feel a blast of cold air on the back of your head at the on-ramp, guess who's behind you!

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