

The Columbian
Life

Section D

Today's weather picture by **Jessie Williams, 9**, Battle Ground, Captain Strong Elementary School



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DAVE BARRY

Cold War memories just warm my heart

Back in 1954, when the Russians were evil and I was a first-grader at Wampus Elementary School in Armonk, N.Y., the school authorities regularly conducted emergency drills wherein we students practiced protecting ourselves from nuclear attack by crouching under our desks. We'd hunker down there until Mrs. Hart gave us the word that the nuclear war was over, then we'd crawl back out and resume reading about the fascinating adventures of Dick and Jane. ("Ha!" said Dick. "Ha ha!" said Jane. "Ha ha ha!" said Dick. "Ha ha ha ha" ... etc.)

I understand this drill was conducted in many schools in the '50s. Apparently the desks used in classrooms back then were made of an exceptionally missile-resistant variety of wood. During the Cold War years, I often wondered why it never occurred to our defense planners to protect the entire nation from nuclear attack by simply covering it, from sea to shining sea, with a huge Strategic Classroom Desk.

I now realize that our defense planners did not have time to be fooling around with ridiculous schemes like that. They were too busy spraying deodorant on cows. According to an Associated Press story sent in by many alert readers, the Army recently admitted that in 1963 and 1964, Army scientists went to stockyards in six American cities and "sneaked up on cows and sprayed them with deodorant." I am not making this up. The idea was to find out whether enemy agents could spray American cows with hoof-and-mouth disease germs, thereby spoiling our nation's beef supply, not to mention wreaking havoc in the ketchup industry.

Needless to say, the cow-spraying operation, like just about everything else the federal government did during the Cold War, was a secret. I'm guessing that it had a classified name, perhaps "Operation Cow Pow."

After spraying deodorant on cows, the Army scientists probably went to a bar to celebrate their successful mission by having a few drinks and — in the tradition of suave covert operatives such as James Bond — picking up women.

ARMY SCIENTIST (suave-ly): Hi. I'm a covert operative. Don't tell anybody.

WOMAN: What's that on your shoes?

Yes, it was a risky job. But somebody had to do it. Because there was a Cold War on, and for all we knew, some-

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Picking the brains of area haunted house volunteers

Talent to SCARE

On page D6 By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
Columbian staff writer

■ A list of the major haunted houses in Clark County and Portland.

There's no playbill. No curtain calls. No salary.. Only an opportunity to perform (and harmlessly cause fear). That's apparently enough temptation to entice a variety of fiends, beasts and spirits to fill the numerous haunted houses this time of year.

Organizers spend months and tens of thousands of dollars creating these elaborate holiday attractions, only to turn them over to volunteer casts. Success comes from their energy. The most ambitious create unique personas, while others are content simply to stand behind walls and pull levers.

"People are able to not just cut loose a little bit, like a break from the 9 to 5, but really cut loose," says Dave Helfrey, founder and producer of Portland's FrightTown, the three-pronged haunt in the Rose Quarter's Exhibition Hall. "In some cases, that's an exploration of their creativity. In other cases, it's catharsis."

Wondering who's behind the makeup and masks this year? Here are quick looks at a few of the Clark County residents incarnating area haunts:



Photos by **DAVE OLSON/The Columbian**

■ **Shawn Henry, 44**, homemaker, Vancouver.

Character: Madame DeCaye, a zombie, Scream at the Beach.

Distinct traits: "People come back every year looking for this hair. I use half of a can of hairspray."

What visitors usually say: "I get a lot of electricity jokes. I've heard them all."

When's the last time you were scared?

"That's a drawback (of the job). I don't get scared anymore. I'm not afraid in haunted houses. I pick them apart, knowing how they did this, how they could have done that better."

So do you have your own?

"I live in the Heights (neighborhood of Vancouver), and I have a big graveyard and a full-sized mausoleum that I build in my front yard every year. I build my own coffins and tombstones. There's a cemetery gate with a fence and archway. Kids have to walk into the mausoleum to get the candy, but that's where the monsters are."



■ **Ray Kessinger, 33**, salesman, Vancouver.

Character: Psycho in FrightTown's Black Box.

Distinct traits: "I created my own mask out of a modified air respirator. It has a cable-controlled jaw, sculpted teeth, four nostrils. ... I've been working on it since February."

Tips for visitors: Turn off cellular telephones, including the lights. Don't be intoxicated.

Why do this? "It's an adrenaline rush. People like to be scared. Just seeing the scares on some people's faces, I feel like I've done a good job. Some look like they are about to cry. Some look like they are tough, trying to show attitude. Some look like they are in complete shock."

Best response: "A high school girl, last year, was trying to act really tough. She acted like she wasn't surprised when she first saw me. When she came out (of the house), though, she didn't realize I had, too, and was standing right behind her. When she turned around, she screamed from the initial shock and looked like she was going to haul back and hit me. ... Later, she wanted to have her picture taken with me."



■ **Lynn Gill, 18**, appointment setter, Vancouver.

Character: One of Patchwork's victims in FrightTown's Black Box.

Distinct traits: Barks and growls, like a dog; tends to pop out of places that visitors wouldn't normally expect, such as from behind curtains or from dark corners.

Why do it? "I love seeing how people are going to react. The unexpectedness of it is fun."

Hazards of the job: "I've had people step on my hands. I've been hit in the face with a purse. Some people get overly freaked out. ... I pretty much get stepped on, a lot."

Best response: "Last year, there was a teenage boy who came through by himself. He had his pants hanging low. We chased him out of the exit at the end, and as he was running, his pants dropped around his ankles, and he ended up waddling away."



■ **Pam Randol, 42**, Student Life Counselor at Washington School for the Deaf, Vancouver.

Character: Mad Scientist, Washington School for the Deaf Haunted House XVI.

Distinct traits: Likes to remove body parts from her insane patients, including brains; keeps eye balls and bugs handy in jars; thick eyeglasses, plus a syringe stuck into her skull.

Why do it? To raise money for services benefitting the school's students who live in residence halls and cottages.

Do you scare deaf people differently? "When deaf people come through the house, we don't use our voices. We tend to stand really still until they approach and then jump on them."

Best response: "At the end of a tour last year, a man proposed to his girlfriend with a ring and red rose. Each character held a card that contained a word, 'Will,' 'You,' 'Marry' and 'Me?'"



■ **Leslie Rick, 39**, retired, Camas.

Character: Marie LaVeau, a priestess, Scream at the Beach.

Distinct traits: Just wants to feed her children, who happen to be zombies; based on a real voodoo worshipper who lived in New Orleans in the 19th century.

Worst response: "One of the ladies, in her late 30s, went into the dark maze and ended up curling down on the floor like a baby, shaking. She was petrified of the darkness."

Best response: "Wet pants. Earlier this month, there was a middle-aged man in, and when I open a door (in a particular part of the house), the lights go out and a rock cracks against the door. When the lights came back on, I just saw him getting back up from the ground. He was so scared that his feet crumpled out from under him, and he fell flat on his butt. He also said, 'I've [wet] my pants.'"

your Guide:



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