

This coming Wednesday is Halloween. I guess children have fun on this candy-saturated evening, but somehow, I feel sorry for them. Halloween has changed way too much since my contemporaries and I were kids. And now, Trick or Treat has turned, in many areas, to “Trunk” or treat. This event is often held in church parking lots with treats in participants’ open trunks. The children don’t need to go trudging through the streets and roads to get their sugar fixes.

I suppose some people who live in the villages or town are relieved that they don’t have dozens or even hundreds of small goblins, witches, and ghosts (or other more modern manifestations of Halloween costuming) at the door. And, to be perfectly honest, at our cabin we may have no trick or treaters at all. Our neighborhood is nearly devoid of kids except for the Amish children, and they don’t observe this holiday. But, we will have candy bars if anyone comes, and if the sweets go unclaimed, they will end up in our freezer to be pulled out for sugar emergencies during the next few months.

When we were young, though, Halloween was a lot of fun. I don’t think we consumed the amount of sugar that is common today, so the candy we received was a real treat for us. But, we didn’t get all that much, either, since we only visited less than half a dozen houses on the evening of October 31st.

Now, in our area, trick or treaters are told to knock on doors and ring doorbells during the late afternoon—really, before it gets dark. We, on the other hand, waited UNTIL dark to start out.

We didn’t wear costumes, though we might sometimes have masks. And we walked. Out in the country, where we live, that meant hiking along the dirt road—sometimes with rain coming down, sometimes skirting mud puddles, and on some Halloweens, during snowstorms.

In keeping with the season, we usually succeeded in frightening ourselves on our walk around the neighborhood. There was an old schoolhouse on the corner, and we were especially cautious when we were in its vicinity. During any daytime passage across that corner, we never gave the building a second thought. My uncles kept farm machinery in it, and we had been in the wooden structure any number of times. At night, though, especially if it were foggy or rainy, it became a “possibly haunted” edifice.

We strictly avoided any automobiles we might see. On our road at that time, it would not have been a usual occurrence for a car to go by just as we were on the road. But, if we saw the lights of a vehicle, even in the distance, we hid ourselves in the ditch until it had passed.

There weren’t any tricks to pull, though, except what we called “tick tacks.” The base for this item was a wooden sewing thread spool. We notched the edges of the spool, wound a long string around the middle, and inserted a large nail or spike through the center hole. This was a “tick tack.” When the spool was held against an outside window pane and the string pulled, it made a clackaty clack sound that would startle the inhabitants of the room.

The treats in the neighborhood were good—candy bars, caramel apples, popcorn balls. Sometimes, a lady would have a plate of homemade fudge to pass around. And, it wasn’t just to go to the door, say “trick or treat,” receive

the offering, and leave. We always went in and talked for a while before we went to the next place. Since most of the neighbors were also aunts and uncles, we felt pretty much at home in every residence.

If we were back home in time, we would listen to a recording of an adaptation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* that had been made for radio years earlier. It is still played today, but I don't think the mass hysteria that occurred in some areas when it was first heard in 1938 is a problem anymore.

When Halloween was over, most of our candy had already been consumed. And, the next day, everything was back to normal. We had not even eaten enough sweets to cause an unwelcome stomachache.