

# INSIDE AURORA: Scary Stuff

By Scott Johnston

I loved Halloween when I was growing up.

Although, like any normal kid, the thought of getting free candy was awesome, for me the bigger draws were the decorations and costumes.

I fondly recall spending about a month before one memorable Halloween turning a punctured old blue air mattress and a couple of coat hangers into a dinosaur costume.

It elicited a number of 'honey, come and look at this?' responses from those who answered their doors that night.

I like to think that it was due to the incredible anatomical accuracy and ferocity of the outfit, although with a number of years of hindsight behind me, it may have been due more to the fact that, well... it was a dinosaur costume a little kid made from coat hangers and a blue air mattress.

Dressing up continued into my adult years. Not long after we moved onto our street, children arriving on our porch found a hooded figure slumped in our Muskoka chair. As they yelled 'trick or treat?' in sugary anticipation, it would shift towards them unexpectedly.

Yes, that was me. And don't worry; I only did this to the older kids, eliciting some great reactions. They earned their candy that year.

These days, less free time has limited my Halloween activities to focusing on one decoration; the jack o' lantern. Choosing just the right pumpkin, selecting the appropriate face or scene to depict on it, scooping out the insides, meticulously carving it, and lighting it up when it gets dark... pure bliss.

I'm apparently not alone in my affection for this season. Economically, Halloween is one of the fastest growing markets of the year, and Canadians now spend more on it per capita than Americans.

I'm not surprised, as it seems that the joy of decoration is alive and well in Aurora.

Not only alive and well, but bigger and better.

A recent trip to the hardware store showcased a virtual haunted house of giant spooky lawn figures, ranging from skeletons, to witches, to spiders, to shrouded death-like figures. There were even some dinosaurs, looking slightly more Mesozoically-appropriate than my old costume.

Some of these figures were inflatable, but some were not. It must take some genuine enthusiasm for the season, not to mention significant unused basement space, to store a seven-foot-tall glow-in-the-dark skull for 11 months of the year.

Mock cemeteries are another growing theme in front yards with increasingly elaborate coffins, skeletons and tombstones. The latter often have amusing captions written on them. A local suggestion for this year; 'Old Aurora Library - 1967-2017?.'

Yard decorations are not limited to graveyards, giant figures and related creatures. Scary lights, fog machines, spooky music and motion sensor screams are just some of the other things in residents' arsenals of terror that we can all look forward to seeing in a month or so.

Of course, it's not just residents who are getting into the season, the Town does, too. The Haunted Forest in Sheppard's Bush is one of the most popular events in our municipality's calendar, and seems to get more popular every year.

Although adults increasingly seem to be getting into the Halloween spirit, it's still really a time for kids. Dressing up, getting out with their friends after dark, enjoying some fresh air, and coming home exhausted with perhaps a bag or two of candy. What's not to like?

Getting startled by the occasional porch-bound figure slumped in a chair, that's just an added bonus.

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