

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 41 2012-10-26

Halloween Blues

Light in the darkness

These Old Bones

Strong skeletons

Joy of Raï

That's life!

Plus:

*From Where I Sit
Click of the Wrist
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



I'M ANNOYED BY HALLOWEEN

E.L. Farris



The local Target is jam-packed with outsized spiders, witches, scary masks, and gobs of gobstoppers and other inedible bits and bites. I keep buying Hershey's chocolates that I have no business eating. And on the days I get all self-righteous about nutrition and the oversized marketing of junk food, I glare at the bits and bites and hypocritically grumble about the ongoing American obesity epidemic. If it weren't for Halloween, I wouldn't eat so much junk food. Junk food is evil; then again, isn't evil the whole point of Halloween?

Seriously. What's the point of celebrating vampires and zombies and ghosts and the dead, not to mention the undead? Yeah, I know what I sound like. But the funny thing is that I'm anything but a religious zealot or even a right wing conservative, for that matter. Nor am I a grammar Nazi. Or maybe I am, but that's another issue.

The origins of Halloween are murky. Some say that it started as a pagan celebration of the harvest. Others claim it began as the ancient Celtic festival of "Samhain," when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off roaming ghosts.

In the Middle Ages, Halloween was taken over, sort of, by the Catholic church; Pope Gregory III designated the first of November as a time to honour all saints and martyrs. The holiday, All Saints' Day, incorporated some of the traditions of Samhain. The evening before it was known as "All Hallows' Eve," and later, Halloween.

On "All Hallows' Eve," it was said, dead people wandered the earth looking to settle scores with the living before they passed to the next and hopefully final frontier. Frightened people would dress in costumes and masks, hoping to fool these angry dead spirits. In other words, the worst of human superstition and religious fear-mongering intersected to produce Halloween. Into that salad, toss a bit of pepper and a whole lot of crass commercialization, and what you get is a modern, very secularized version of the holiday. In fact, Halloween has lost almost all of its religious flavour. And what is left, then, but the evil?

That's right. Evil. After all, isn't that what Halloween is really all about?

Oh no, you say; Halloween is candy and cute costumes. Well, even that bothers me. Don't get me wrong: I love candy (in spite of myself). And I have nothing against playing dress-up, specifically. But think about what kids do once they get dressed up: They gather in a disorganized mob, dress up as frightening creatures, and knock on doors demanding treats. The very concept of "trick or treating" incorporates the threat of inflicting injury, even if "harmless," on a neighbour's person or property. A child threatens to

commit a trick and in turn, the homeowner gives this child a treat. What the heck? How does this make sense? How does it help our children to become good citizens? Sigh. I know. Lighten up, El.

I can't lighten up. That's the problem. Words matter. What we do for fun—it matters. And just because everyone else does it (whatever it is) does not make the behaviour less harmful on a macro or micro level. What's being celebrated here?

“Perhaps this is why Halloween upsets me so much. It reminds me of what evil deeds humans are capable of committing . . .”

Because make no mistake: evil really exists. I've seen it, and so have all of us. Whether it's a mass murder at a movie theatre or an act of terrorism in a crowded market, evil is out there. Perhaps this is why Halloween upsets me so much. It reminds me of what evil deeds humans are capable of committing, and it seems to celebrate the dark instead of the light.

I try to bargain and negotiate my way through the detritus of the black and orange-themed holiday every year by creating a few guidelines. I don't decorate the house with webs or gravestones or anything scary. When my kids select costumes, I steer them toward cheerful superheroes, famous historical figures, and cute animals and away from blood, gore, and evil.

And every year, I wonder: When you strip away the chocolate bars, the black and orange colours, and the shimmering lights of the jack-o'-lantern, what really is the point of it all?

Writer E.L. Farris blogs at [Running from Hell with El](#).

DID YOU KNOW?



Most of us have at some time—even if only briefly—entertained the dream of running our own businesses. Maybe we already have a great idea, one that we're sure would be at least a moderate success. But making the jump between idea and reality is such a drastic step that we get stuck at stage one; overwhelmed, we back away too soon and our plans go by the wayside.

[MyOwnBusiness](#), a free online resource for entrepreneurs, seeks to change this by “helping people start and succeed in business.” The site offers free courses which guide students through the often complicated process of creating and building small businesses. Courses cover topics like business plans, insurance, negotiating, growth, and even exit strategies, and textbook versions of the online course contents are also available.

If you've already taken the class, you can apply to become an instructor; in addition to being accessible online, the courses are also suitable for in-person instruction at community colleges, non-profit organizations, or even private tutoring sessions.

Minding My Own Business



Skeletons

As October 31 approaches, there's an abundance of Halloween images—including, of course, creepy skeletons. But when I see these skeletons, skulls, and other bony appendages, I think of our own bones, something we often take for granted. How healthy is your skeleton? That's a question that should be asked not just at Halloween, but throughout the year.

The Bony Secret

Our bones aren't just static structures; they're actually exciting "factories," living cells that destroy and rebuild bone, absorb and store nutrients, and—in general—they are bursting with life! Because of their cellular activity, bones, like other organs in our bodies, need adequate nutrition. Let's talk about these nutrients below.

Calcium

When we think of bone health, calcium is often the first thing that comes to mind. But although calcium is important, it is not solely responsible for the health of our bones, in the same way that one single vitamin or mineral isn't the key to our body's overall well-being. The main structure of our bone is made from a calcium crystalline complex; adequate calcium levels (aim for 1,000 mg per day minimum) help keep this structure strong, reducing the rate at which bone is lost. Food sources of calcium include milk, collards, spinach, kale, soy, and almonds.

Magnesium

Numerous studies have shown that if you don't have enough magnesium, your bones will suffer. After all, approximately two thirds of your body's magnesium content is stored in the bones. Insufficient magnesium has been tied to brittle bones and, consequently, increased risk of osteoporosis (which is also associated with low serum magnesium levels). Some food sources of magnesium include pumpkin and squash seeds, spinach, black beans, and oysters.

Vitamin K

Although we don't hear much about this vitamin, it's a key one where bone health is concerned. The menatetrenone variant of vitamin K, often referred to as vitamin K4, helps reduce bone fractures and maintain overall bone strength. Foods high in vitamin K include leafy green vegetables, and kale, spinach, and turnip greens contain the highest vitamin K levels among all the leafy greens.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D3 has so many functions in the body, but one is maintaining overall bone health. Although our bodies can manufacture this vitamin from direct sunlight, most of us are still deficient (especially in the fall and winter months). Plant sources of vitamin D are poorly absorbed; you can either supplement with D3 or consume cod liver oil (which contains naturally occurring vitamin D).

“How healthy is your skeleton? That’s a question that should be asked not just at Halloween, but throughout the year.”

Boron & Others

Our bones are constantly being broken down and rebuilt. However, during the breakdown process we can lose calcium and magnesium through our urine, meaning that our bones have fewer minerals with which to rebuild. Boron is the answer; adequate boron content in our diet (or via supplementation) equals reduced urinary mineral loss, ensuring that our bones have enough substrate to stay strong and healthy.

There are many other vitamins and minerals that are important in bone health; two of these are zinc and copper. These play a role in maintaining bone strength, reducing the risk of fracture and osteoporosis.

This October, when you see a skeleton leering around the corner, take note of your own skeleton and what you’re doing to keep it strong and healthy. Disregarding our body’s internal structure—now that’s something truly scary.

Katie D’Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.

GREEN LIGHT



Jack-o’-Lantern

Creating jack-o’-lanterns this weekend? Make the fun last beyond the season! On November 1, don’t plastic-bag the pumpkins and put them out on the curb. If they’re in decent condition—and if your weather’s been cool they should be—you can roast them for cold-weather salads or steam, strain, and freeze the pumpkin “meat” for future recipes.

Alternatively, since pumpkins are plant material, they can be composted. Or check with your local waste service; you may be able to put them out with the yard waste, where they’ll be turned into mulch.

MAGHREB VOICES

Wanda Waterman

**Album: Khaled, *C'est la vie***

"Make prayers, Mother—your poor son is suffering. Pray hard. I know one day the moon will sleep, so pray until the day comes. God doesn't break His promises! At the door of Paradise I will dance with my mother, at the door of Paradise I will dance with my mother, at the door of Paradise I will dance with my mother . . ."

"Baba el Jana" ("The Door of Paradise") by Sam Debbie, sung by Khaled

"I know how men in exile feed on dreams."

Aeschylus

That's Rai: Joyful Anthems of Defiance in the Face of Loss and Exile

There's something about Khaled's smile. It sums up the message and the feeling of his music, almost as if saying, *I will accept with joy the gifts my God has given me, and no one can stop me!*

Khaled's history presents a survey of the dilemma facing both youth and artists in the Maghreb, particularly in his native Algeria. As much as the West fears Islamist terrorists, fundamentalists pose a much greater threat to other Muslims than they do to the Western world.

Every once in a while the West draws the fire of volatile extremists with tasteless videos and cartoons, and this might give Muslims in the Middle East a bit of a reprieve. But for the most part, moderate Muslims in Arab countries live under the constant threat of punishment from overzealous fellow citizens, people who feel that it is their religious obligation to attack women who don't wear the *hijab*, those who don't show proper respect for a volume of the *Quran*, or, worst of all, vocal artists who sing danceable love songs in public.

One of the casualties of this ongoing crisis is the exile of Khaled, whose joyful hymning of love and joy won him death threats and eventually drove him from his native Algeria to live and work in Europe (much to the benefit of the French recording industry). The work he continued to produce in exile was partly responsible for developing the sense of rebellion and autonomy that led to the current climate of defiance among youth in the Maghreb.

In fact, in most of this album's songs, defiance carries a celebratory tone. Social disapproval for a couple's love just makes it more insistent. The verses of the title track, "C'est la vie" ("That's Life") are Algerian Arabic, but the chorus is in French:

"I'm not sad about the past. Even though you're far away from me, the others speak of us—they don't like our relationship, but you've got to suffer for happiness. And the night is very long. A Bachar [a bringer of good news] comes and tells me that I'm Niya [a naïve person who knows no sin] and that she's Nasraniya [the opposite of Niya]. We're going to dance, we're going to love—that's life!"

Raï was originally a women's genre—sung by women and only to each other at weddings, with songs extolling romantic love—and slightly bawdy. Much as Elvis and other white Americans took black musical genres and broadened their commercial appeal, so Khaled brought attention to this little-known "women's" genre and made it a popular music phenomenon.

"Khaled is a phenomenally good pop singer, a strong and passionate voice at ease with his own genre but also with rock, reggae, and blues."

Life, in raï terms, revolves around waiting for love to arrive or return:

"Elle est partie": "My heart is wounded. I weep; my only hope is to see her again. She's gone from me. Yesterday at this time she was still with me. We were both in love. I need you to stay with me. I was so happy, but her departure has made me ill. I'm poor and there's nothing I can do. Friends, forgive me, but I have no one else to whom to express my misery."

"Dima Labess" ("Always Well") is performed with Mazagan, a Moroccan rap group. It expresses a wish to return to the homeland and live in peace there:

Mazagan: "Come, Khaled, let's construct a big house for our dear friends who come to visit from all the towns, a house where nobody closes the door."

Khaled: "I'm not a foreigner—it's my country, no matter what they say. Here I will be happy and proud with dear friends, and always well."

Mazagan: "I believe in destiny, and in dying in the country of heroes. We're going to lift the curtain."

Khaled: "Just like in the beginning . . ."

Fans of Pit Bull will laud his appearance on the track "Hiya Hiya," but it's a bit of a stain on Khaled's more human aesthetic—superimposing a shallow macho grunt on top of a hard-won sensibility that honours love and tenderness.

Khaled is a phenomenally good pop singer, a strong and passionate voice at ease with his own genre but also with rock, reggae, and blues. He's also managed to attract some of the best European artists and recording producers, all of whom really seem to get his aesthetic and his message. The tracks on this album present a cross-section of genres favoured by youth in the Maghreb, but they also have a broad appeal that have made them extremely popular in Europe, especially France.

Khaled's music strikes a sympathetic chord with artists in general because there's a sense that we're all in exile. So let's all get together, dance, love, and keep on creating. *C'est la vie*.

This article would not have been possible without the kind assistance of Driss Akjij of Meknes, Morocco.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Playing Dress-Up

Come Halloween night, the streets will be filled with kids disguised as princesses, superheroes, witches, and zombies. But dress-up isn't just for October 31! Click through this week's links for some innovative approaches to costuming.

Night Owl

Wanted: someone to dress up as an owl and help me sleep. That was the gist of an odd ad that appeared in Australia. It was a joke, of course, but the responses were hilarious. The prankster has collected the best of the lot [here](#).

Cosplay

Comic conventions are famous--and sometimes notorious--for their costume-wearing fans. Click through a few of the slideshows for the good, the bad, and the he-really-shouldn't-be-wearing-that.

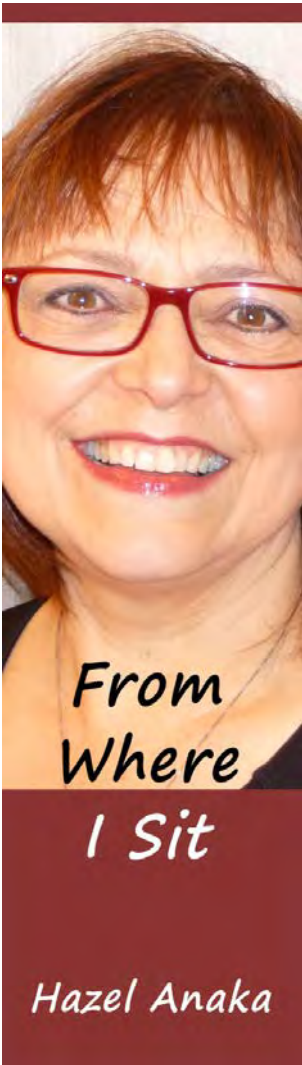
Wave at the Bus

How to embarrass your high school-aged son? Dress up in a different costume every day and wave to his bus as it passes your house. As the year progressed, the teens were entertained by 170 different costumes--and the family became a bit of an Internet sensation. The link takes you to a slideshow of the first year's costumes. Be sure to take a peek at what's going on this year!

Best in Class

School uniforms? So not for eight-year-old Stella Ehrhart, who created a unique project: to dress like a different historical character or famous person every day of second grade. Read the article to find out how Stella's passion created learning opportunities for her classmates. There are more photos [here](#).





It's Gotta Be Done

After a self-inflicted estrangement of about 30 years, Roy's aunt called us. With no explanation for the distancing, she was gently reinserting herself into our lives.

And I suppose it was understandable. She is now 95 years old and alone. She never had children, and her marriage ended decades ago--a matter she has never spoken of. She told me she was sick and scared and wanted to see us.

I relayed the message to Roy and we discussed what to do. She had been cranky and critical when we last had contact, and we wondered what was up. We decided to proceed cautiously but to go and visit her. We were shocked by both how much she'd changed and by how much she had remained the same. She was still feisty and opinionated. She seemed lucid and pretty darn sharp for her advanced years. However, she was frail.

Subsequent visits have shown us that she really shouldn't be living alone. She has good days and not so good days as far as mental clarity goes. She is vulnerable. A stiff wind could knock her over, never mind a mugger. She has come to rely on strangers for friendship and help getting groceries and doing her banking. An unscrupulous person could trick and manipulate her. It happens all the time.

We offer advice carefully because she has the right to make her own decisions. She says she can't live alone, but blocks every attempt to find her seniors' housing with more supports. I played telephone tag with various governmental voicemails to find the current procedures for accessing seniors' housing. With her permission

I called service providers like Telus and Shaw to set up automatic withdrawals to handle the bill paying. Getting to the bank to pay in person was an imposition on her friends and getting harder all the time.

The issues surrounding this situation are many and complex. There is a fine line to walk between allowing the elderly personal autonomy and the right to make their own decisions, and the need to safeguard them from those who would take advantage. And some days even from their own diminishing capacity.

Because I've been asked to be the executor on several people's wills, I feel a responsibility to educate myself. The Wills and Estates Act changed significantly in Alberta in February. This is not a responsibility to accept lightly. There is significant personal risk if you screw up, and presenters love to tell horror stories about executors being sued and found liable.

Roy and I need to redo our wills and this time include the all-important Enduring Power of Attorney and Personal Directive pieces. It takes wisdom to make these tough decisions. Yet when done, it should provide peace of mind for us and for our survivors. Young or old, alone or with survivors--it's gotta be done, from where I sit

Hazel Anaka's first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

THE TACKY CHEESE AWARDS

WHY WE LOVE "B" GRADE SCI-FI FLICKS

NOMINEES IN THE DEATHLESS DIALOGUE DEPARTMENT . . .



STARCRASH FOR: "I ONLY HAVE LOGIC AND EMOTION CIRCUITS. NO ROOM FOR CRAZINESS!"



INFRA-MAN FOR: "IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO FIGHT PRINCESS DRAGON MOM WITH MILITARY POWER; THAT WOULD LEAD TO DEFEAT. THEREFORE, ANOTHER WAY MUST BE FOUND, AND IT'S UP TO US TO FIND THAT WAY. "



VOYAGE TO THE PLANET OF PREHISTORIC WOMEN FOR: "VENUS... VENUS... THE PLANET NAMED AFTER THE GODDESS OF LOVE. THIS IS... WHERE I LEFT HER... 26 MILLION MILES AWAY. BECAUSE I KNOW SHE EXISTS. I KNOW SHE DOES!"



DOC SAVAGE FOR: "BEFORE WE GO... LET US REMEMBER OUR CODE. LET US STRIVE EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES TO MAKE OURSELVES BETTER AND BETTER TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITIES SO THAT ALL MAY PROFIT BY IT!"

BY WANDA WATERMAN WITH CREATIVE INPUT FROM BEN WATERMAN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Big Toys

A Port Hope, Ontario boy truly owns an “iron giant.”

As the *Toronto Sun* [reports](#), 11-year-old Maximus Dacey’s giant Transformer replica stands seven metres high and was “made from transmissions and auto parts - with the odd door knob thrown in.”

Currently the toy is sitting “in the driveway of his parents’ store, Primitive Designs.” The Transformer was built to celebrate the store’s 10th anniversary on location, but the idea came from Maximus himself.

During a trip to Asia, he saw “a bunch of small (Transformers) about three feet tall,” Maximus told reporters, adding that he “thought, ‘Why don’t we get a bigger one made.’”

His dad was keen on the idea and the giant toy gradually took shape.

While the Transformer is currently sitting outdoors, it will be moved to a storage building in anticipation of harsher weather; the creation will barely fit, with just three inches to spare.

Around the World: Rising Dead

Huck Finn attended his own funeral; but nowadays, walking in on your wake is pretty hard to pull off. But recently, a Brazilian man did just that--with no prank intended.

As the BBC [reports](#), 41-year-old Gilberto Araujo “gave his relatives the shock of their lives when he turned up at his own wake at his mother’s home.”

Araujo, a car washer, had not been seen by his brother in four months. When the brother “heard news that a car washer had been killed, and when he saw a body in the mortuary which looked very much like his brother, he assumed it was Gilberto.”

Gilberto was approached in the street by an acquaintance, who told him he was supposed to be dead. He tried to call his mother’s home, where the wake was being held, but the friend who answered the phone “thought it was a hoax and hung up.”

When Gilberto appeared at the house, he “[caused] some people to faint and others to flee in fear.”

But his mother was “overjoyed when her son showed up alive.”

AUSU UPDATE



AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

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This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

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