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Wednesday, October 31, 2012 • Page 1C

Banshees, haints and cowpeas



BY JOYCE PINSON

Along about this time of year we in Appalachia spin tales of banshees and haints. There is an eerie mist that clings in the hollers, rising ever so slowly, wreathing our mountains in a veil of smoky mystery. Up on the hill near the University of Pikeville, it is said that the statue of Octavia Smith Hatcher pulls that mist towards her concealing stealthy movements as she levitates her figure, turning her back on Pikeville ... the folks who put her in the ground too soon.

Let me tell you something. After 121 years Octavia is plumb tired of being buried alive. If she is squirming around it is not to turn her back on the city, but rather to get a better view of what Cathy Rehmeyer and her fair-haired daughters are up to. I think Octavia is curious.

The first time I saw Cathy's garden I was gobs-macked; flat out gobs-macked. In an area no more than 40 by 60 feet the plot was planted with a lush assortment of heirloom vegetables; vegetable varieties Octavia might have thought had vanished from our modern urban gardens. There was Ruby Queen Corn, Provider Beans, and an amazing selection of melons, tomatoes, and squash. But the thing that captured my attention were the rows of cowpeas, several different varieties including Red Bisbee and Pinkeye Purple Hull, planted along the neat terraces recently featured on KET's "Kentucky Life."

Cowpeas saved the

South. Historians report that when Sherman began his infamous March to the Sea, he did not burn the acres of cowpeas believing they were only used as cattle feed. Silly Yankee, nothing could be further from the truth! Cowpeas are 25 percent protein and they really are not peas at all — they are beans!

Cowpeas are delicious fresh in salads or dried and used in soups, dips and spreads. Acclaimed Southern Chef John Currence of City Grocery in Oxford Miss., serves up pork loin on a bed of Cowpea Caviar. At the Southern Foodways Alliance Symposium Chef Ashley Christensen of Poole's Downtown Diner in Raleigh, N.C., presented marinated White Acre Cowpeas passed family-style in a simple mason jar. Both dishes were the thing culinary dreams are made of!

Cowpeas, also known as black-eyed peas or Southern peas, are not just a Southern thing. In a seed bank at Frankfort's Kentucky State University, Myrtle's Cowpeas are among their prized possessions, a strain said to have originated on the Right Fork of Beaver Creek in Knott County, eventually finding its way to Floyd County, less than 20 miles from the old Hatcher home place. I wonder if Octavia ever ate Myrtle's Cowpeas?

If you plan to grow cowpeas next year plant twice as many as you think you want — they are just that good! Two of my favorite seed sources are Southern Exposure Seed Exchange in Virginia, and Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds out of Missouri. Of course, you can always trade for seeds with other collectors.

If Octavia was looking Cathy's way a few weeks back she saw the University Of Pikeville School Of Osteopathic Medicine professor slip out the door of her home in the wee hours of the morning with her sights set on Berea. One of



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

Cowpeas are about done for this growing season and Cathy Rehmeyer finds herself a little sad. She and her girls, Caroline and Vivian, spent many happy hours picking cowpeas, and removing the dried seed from the multi-colored hulls for storage.

the largest heirloom seed swaps in the country is held there, hosted by the legendary Bill Best. More than 100 enthusiasts attended the day-long event.

Cathy went in search of cowpeas — more cowpeas! As luck would have it, Rodger Winn was one of the swappers set up in the old barn. Recently featured in "Southern Living" magazine for his work with the Heritage Harvest Festival at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Winn is a wealth of information and wit.

When Cathy spied the variety "Lady Peas" amongst Winn's selections for trade I heard her

See COWPEAS, Page 2C



Cowpeas are delicious fresh in salads or dried and used in soups, dips and spreads. Also known as black-eyed peas or Southern peas, Cowpeas are not just a Southern thing, and they are not peas, at all ... they're beans!

Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson



ON THE COUCH
Michelle Goff

Today is Halloween, one of my least favorite holidays.

My animosity for the day has nothing to do with the oodles of young'uns who roam the world in search of tricks

The only thing we have to fear...

or treats. I wish them nothing but sugar rushes and candy-covered mouths.

Nor do I judge adults who dress as superheroes, service workers or inanimate objects one night a year. That's between them and their analysts.

But when it comes to Halloween, I always go back to the same question: What's in it for me? I mean, I don't even like scary movies.

And it's not because scary movies leave me sucking my thumb and clutching a teddy bear whilst hiding in a closet.

In fact, a good psychological thriller can give me the chills and keep my little mind guessing until the end. Yet, I'm lucky if the so-called scary movies they show on the TV during October elicit so much as a yawn.

Take zombie flicks.

See GOFF, Page 2C

Trick or Treat



Submitted photo

Members of Mullins Brownie Troop #461 celebrated Halloween on Oct. 22. The festivities included decorating treat bags and making a ghost craft. After enjoying ice cream sundaes, the girls wrapped up their celebration with Trunk or Treating.

Halloween: An astronomical holiday

CONTRIBUTING WRITER
 STEVE RUSSO

PRESTONSBURG — Believe it or not, Halloween is an astronomical holiday — sort of!

Halloween marks the halfway point between the two seasons of fall and winter. Astronomically, it is known as a cross-quarter

day. Once past that point, we are closer to the start of winter, than the beginning of fall. Technically, Halloween is known as All Hallows' Eve, Hallowmass, and Samhain Eve, and the folklore of the day is numerous.

This holiday was a "fire festival" to the Celtic people, early inhabitants of Great Britain. In pre-calen-

dar times, these festivals were determined by the rising of a group of stars known as the Pleiades, or the Seven Sisters. When the Pleiades would rise in the East, (as they currently do at around 8 p.m.), it was time for the festival of Samhain, a transition from autumn to winter, and a time to bring the cattle in from the pasture.

In Scotland and Ireland, children would beg peat for the fire, and food for the household, and the poor, wearing disguises to avoid embarrassment, would go "door to door" begging for food; hence the origin of the "trick or treat" ritual.

The origin of the Halloween pumpkin is also traced back to celestial occurrences. Due to the

geometry of the Earth and moon in space, the full moons of September and October, usually appear orange or red in color as they rise. This is due to the atmospheric haze. This gave the moon an appearance of a huge pumpkin with a face. Images of this face were then carved into the pumpkin throughout history.

The name Jack-O-Lantern comes from the word Jack, meaning night watchman in England, Scotland and North America. In the 12th century, Jack-O-Lantern referred to the mysterious lights that appeared over swampy ground, caused by the combustion of marsh gas.

See HOLIDAY, Page 2C

COWPEAS

Continued From Page 1C



News-Express photo by Elizabeth Thompson

This statue of Octavia Smith Hatcher stands high on the hill overlooking the city of Pikeville. If she ever thought about it, Octavia might have thought heirloom vegetables would not be a part of a modern urban garden. She should see Cathy and John Rehmeier's selection!

exclaim in triumph. I must confess I did too. We exploded in giggles. From a chef's perspective Lady Peas are the Holy Grail of Cowpeas, producing a rich creamy side dish coveted across the South. Next year, they will be clamored for at the Rehmeiers' Sunday suppers!

The cowpeas are about done for this growing season, and Cathy finds herself a little sad. Her girls, Caroline and Vivian, spent many happy hours picking cowpeas, and removing the dried seed from the multi-colored hulls for storage.

But just because autumn is upon us, does not mean Cathy's gardening has ended. Cathy has hearty greens planted under low tunnels to protect them from the frost. She, husband John, and the girls will be harvesting greens for Thanksgiving dinner. Across the street, Octavia shakes her head in wonderment and smiles.

Joyce Pinson is a Master Gardener, home cook, and a local insurance agent. She maintains a food and garden blog at www.friends-driftinn.com.

HOLIDAY

Continued From Page 1C

Unfortunately, we don't have a full moon on Halloween. It will be a waning gibbous moon rising in the ENE sky about 1.5 hours after sunset, near the

Seven Sisters. So while you are outside taking part in the Halloween rituals of today, take a look at the sky, and thank astronomy for the evening.

"Look to the Skies!!!!"

Steve Russo is director of the East Kentucky Science Center, Prestonsburg.

A fun field trip



Submitted photo

Mrs. Bowling and Mrs. Ginger's kindergarten class from Mullins School went to the Sesame Street Live! show at the Eastern Kentucky Exposition Center on Oct. 12.

GOFF

Continued From Page 1C

Actually, take zombies. The only ones that entertain me danced with Michael Jackson in the "Thriller" video and I fail to understand the masses' fascination with such unkempt undead and their taste for human flesh. Somebody needs to explain mad cow disease to these

zombies, and we'll see if they're still so hungry for brains.

It's not just zombies, though. Vampires bore

me. Paranormal activity confuses me. Masked madmen who stalk half-dead, fully-stupid characters amuse me.

I can only watch so many characters insist on going back into the darkened house, ignore the foreboding noises or traipse unattended into the woods before I start cheering for the bad guys.

Then again, maybe these types of movies don't appeal to me because I know real life offers more frightening phenomenon than does any fictional demon with a chip on his shoulder. As a

devotee of the Investigation Discovery (ID) channel, I've watched countless episodes depicting the horror humans inflict upon one another, and that's just on "The Will: Family Secrets Revealed."

If you leave the channel on ID long enough, you'll eventually see the episode of "Deadly Women" about a crazy-eyed mother who slaughters her children in their beds. You know, because she's mad at their dad. Or watch the crazy-eyed man on "Sins and Secrets" who hacks four people and four dogs to

death. You know, because he wants to know what it's like to take a life. Or catch the crazy-eyed killer on "Dateline" who kidnaps a 14-year-old girl and dumps her body in the desert. You know, because he's having a bad day.

After that, haunts as houseguests or zombies with specific dietary needs seem like inconveniences and not something to fear.

Michelle Goff writes a column for the News-Express and can be reached at gmgoff@setel.com.

Pumpkin Patch kids



Submitted photo

Students in Ms. Ramey's kindergarten class at Elkhorn City Elementary recently enjoyed a visit to Holliday Farms Pumpkin Patch as part of their autumn activities. At the farm students learned about the life cycle of the pumpkin and the process of how food gets from the farm to the table. Students are pictured as they eagerly await their hayride. They are, from left: Jimmy Key, Caleb Smith, Rush Ratliff, T J Adkins, Dylan Slone, Brady Cure, Ashlyn Hurley, Tayten Bingham (background), Hanna Steffey, Kaitlyn Pinion, Alayna Martin, Caleb Thacker, and Ben Taylor.

POET'S CORNER

Lost Love

Oh, lost lover
Where can you be
I'm looking for you
Are you looking for me
Since we've been apart
I've kissed your picture
on the shelf
And cried and cried
Since we've been apart
I don't control my heart
I look at the green grass
And the morning dew
What I'd give to have you
I try to forget your love
But I know it's just no use
These old memories, lost lover
Just won't turn me loose.

Lou Bailey



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