

Wes Craven

keeps on sharing
his nightmares.

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WEEKEND

Thrills And Chills

Ghouls and Goblins Await You

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Good horror is subtle, Wayne Sealy says. He won't jump you in a dark hall with a "boo" or a wailing chain saw.

He'll slither in behind you and brush snakes against your ear. He'll wait slumped in a moonlit alcove with the glazed stare of a freshly murdered man.

His Mystery Manor is built to exploit your phobias, he said. The halls are narrow and black, with warped floors to pitch you to and fro between waiting ghouls and dark scenes of slaughter and depravity.

His staff of 30 spooks cloak themselves in black and move silently through a labyrinth of hidden hallways and secret doors. They can slide in behind you, jump out in front of you, drop slime in your hair from above or grab you from below like corpses crawling from the grave.

Strobe lights blind you, dissonant music disorients you and distant howls and screams serve as ghastly harbingers of haunts to come.

"We've got it down to a science," said Sealy, the director of the three-story spook house, which is in its 11th year at 716 N. 18th St. "The main thing: A good haunted house is built on good people. We've got some scary folks working here."

Omaha's nonprofit haunted houses approach horror in varying ways. While Mystery Manor feeds on claustrophobia and disorientation, Hell's Depot scares with Gothic expanse.

Housed in the basement of the Burlington Station on South 10th Street, Hell's Depot has the atmosphere of Dracula's castle — massive, dark, cold, clammy and eerie.

"You're boxed in by a Gothic beast of a building," said Scott Johnson, one of the technical directors of Hell's Depot. "At night, it feels like you're in a huge asylum."

Anne Rice's vampire novels provide the theme for Hell's Depot. One room is a chapel with a staked vampire hanging behind the altar. One room is an Egyptian tomb where Ms. Rice's earliest vampires wait for modern blood.

For comic relief, Z-92 has built a small shrine to dead rock stars and "Rock Stars Who Should Be Dead," including posters of Bon Jovi, Michael Jackson and Steve Perry.

Scream-in-the-Dark at the Bellevue Berry Farm exploits the fear of dark forests. After a walk through a traditional haunted house full of chain-saw murderers, inmates in electric chairs, vampires and amputation-happy doctors, patrons are led outside for a stroll in a tall-grass maze of frights. Freaks and lunatics bolt from grassy knolls at every corner.

"We've scared some pretty big guys out here," said Berry Farm owner Ed Schaefer.

Then it's past the gallows, through the haunted depths of the Lost Mine and back outside to the grounds of a hilltop cemetery, which is crawling with "the ungrateful dead," according to Bill Maudlin, the event's promoter.

Scream-in-the-Dark activities also include a Haunted Hay Rack Ride, a 30-minute tour through the tree-shrouded haunts of "Witchcraft Alley," "Boot Hill" and "Tree People Land."

"You get an outdoor experience here," Schaefer said.

Following is a list of these and other Halloween events in Omaha, as well as events in other cities in Nebraska and western Iowa:

Hell's Depot — A theatrical environment filled with characters and fiends inspired by Anne Rice's Vampire Lestat novels. Live bats, live rats and lots of vampires.

Address: 1009 S. 10th St., in the basement of the historic Burlington Station.

Hours: 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays until Halloween; 6 p.m. to midnight Friday and Saturdays until Halloween; 6 p.m. to midnight Oct. 30 and 31.

Admission: \$6 (\$5 with coupon).

Information: 341-3824.

Sponsors: Z-92 and The Reader, to benefit the Omaha Literacy Council.

11th Annual Mystery Manor Haunted House — Featuring a witches' grotto, bats in the belfry, a Dracula who materializes out of the dark and the 65-foot Slide of Doom.

Address: 716 N. 18th St.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays; 7 p.m. to midnight Fridays and Saturdays. Open through Oct. 31.

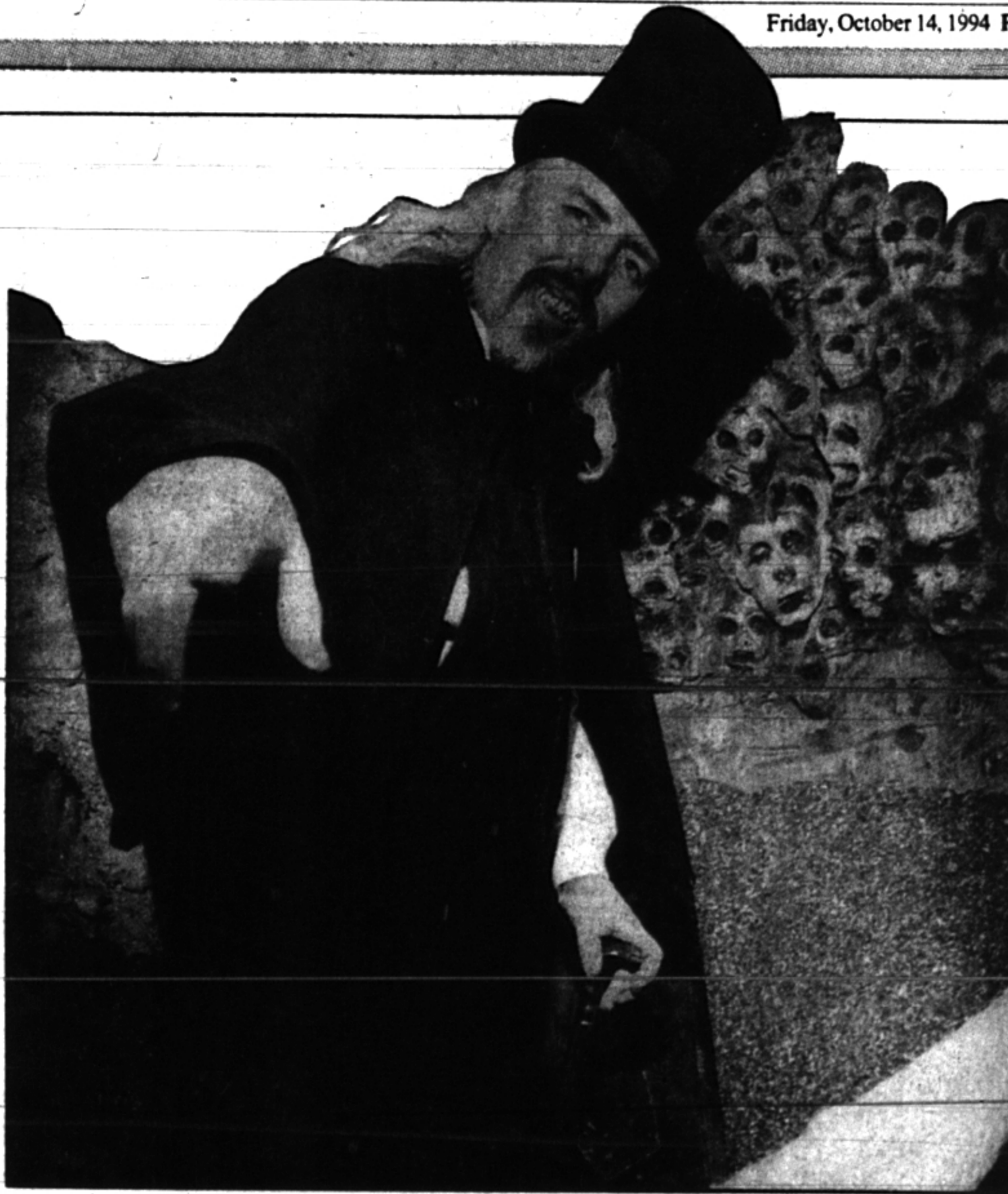
Admission: \$5; \$1-off coupons are available at area Kwik Shops.

Information: 572-3520.

Sponsor: Prevent Blindness Nebraska.

Scream-in-the-Dark — This haunted house includes the Lost Mine, Witchcraft Alley and hayrack rides.

Address: Bellevue Berry Farm, 48th Street
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Above — **VAMPIRES' HAVEN:** Wayne Sealy, owner of Mystery Manor, and his staff of 30 spooks are eagerly anticipating the unsuspecting visitors who wander into their lair. "We've got some scary folks working here," he said.

At right — **WAITING FOR HEADS:** The scary folks at Mystery Manor have a huge inventory of masks and costumes to choose from.



World-Herald Photos
By Rich Janda