

She Must Be a Saint to Organize a Haunted House

"Did you know that it take several miracles to be canonized a saint?" Colleen asked the other day as I was doing some penance at the kitchen sink.

"Yes, I've heard that," I answered, adding, "After the past weekend I feel assured I've reached my quota and I'm a sure pick for canonization."

"I doubt making a haunted house in the garage qualifies as performing a miracle," Colleen replied.

"Want to bet?"

"Well, the miracle has to be documented."

"That's why I'm writing about it."

After I've gone to that big costume party in the sky, the canonization team can dig this column out, nod their heads in agreement, and then immediately hustle me right up next to the Archangel.

He Pouted

John celebrated his 8th birthday last weekend with a haunted house party. It was a big success because it was such a nightmare.

It wasn't even his fault.

As his birthday approached he began discussing party ideas. Most of them I vetoed because I thought there would be too much commotion. I thought he should have his party at home. It would be more fun, more memorable, and — as it turned



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out — more expensive and more of a mess.

I remembered Patrick's birthday, which was a lot of fun, and I thought it would be nice if John had a similar party eight years later. What I failed to remember was that we had to have Patrick's party outside because we had just moved into our house, and all the floors were being refinished and we couldn't walk on them.

John said he would have his party at home if he could have a haunted house party. I agreed to this.

He wanted to have it in the basement. I vetoed that idea and said the garage would be the site. He pouted, I was firm. I won on this point. It turned out to be the only point I did win.

Once we settled on the location, date and time, we went to a party goods store with a whole entourage of young celebrants all very eager to purchase party wares. Everything in the store was appealing, from the black bat hanging on a string to the tube of slime.

However, there were no invitations that John felt were appropriate.

"Everyone will think these are stupid," he said. This meant we had to go on another invitation-buying outing the next day. Once again I was well-accompanied. No one wanted to miss another fun time. Still we couldn't find invitations John liked.

Next, I put my big kids plus all their friends on notice that I expected their help with a capital "H." I needed ideas for the haunted house, I needed manpower to put it all together, and I needed bodies to run it during the party. Their response lacked the enthusiasm necessary to carry this off: "Mom, why do you always get such dumb ideas?"

Fake Blood

After invitations were finally bought and delivered, John, Machaela and Maureen began to fight about how things should be done. Skirmishes erupted every half hour right up to and through the party.

One especially inflammatory moment occurred when Machaela discovered that John had to put fake blood on her Cabbage Patch doll, Mort Timmy, who has resided on the bottom of the cabinet, never seeing the light of day for at least two years.

She was quite upset and when she said she was going to kill John I feared the next blood I'd see would not be fake.

However, that incident passed, as did John's fits about the haunted house not being scary enough and no one letting him help, that he wasn't coming to the party and that everything looked dumb.

The night before the party, when nobody had done anything to get the haunted house assembled except fight, I realized I had to intervene. I started giving orders and rummaging through closets for props.

As things got messier and messier and I became more unglued, I realized the haunted house was a disaster.

So I turned out the lights, ducked when the glow-in-the-dark skeleton flew in front of me, slid down the slide through a curtain made from a grass skirt into a gravel graveyard assembled on a tablecloth, crawled through a cardboard box somebody was shaking and rattling, and then threw myself on the couch brought up from the basement and started screaming.

Suddenly, I thought: This is a miracle. It's a success. Happy Halloween!