



Chapter Five- Halloween

Once a year that wonderful feast of evil came. Once again, mothers were busy making costumes. I vividly remember with pride one year when I went dressed as an Ironworker, which gave me the aura of Pittsburgh toughness.

All the men checked my muscles and I proudly showed my arms with decent little biceps, developed by working out on my brother's face and wielding a bat all day every day from April thru October.

I had borrowed my uncle's hardhat and work shirt. I wanted an acetylene torch but saner minds knew what I wanted to do with it and a resounding "NO" was the answer.

We would dress in a hurry so that we would be sure to get to Mrs. Farrell's house early. She would make candied apples for the 5th Street denizens, and someone else made popcorn balls.

I loved lurking in the alley near the corner. It was pitch black and served as a perfect place to scare the bejeezus out of the littlest ones.

We were allowed to roam far and untethered - little Crocketts, Indian princesses, tinkerbells, baseball stars, ghouls and goblins - as long as we got back at a certain time. Were we afraid?? Hell, no! Remember, there were plenty of guys around in T-shirts, just home from the mills. Anyone who would have done anything to the kids would be lucky if the cops got them first.

The subliminal message which I'm sure I got but never put into words until now was thus: We lived in a very small, simple community. But it was OURS and we were safe and taken care of within its borders. Our mothers made stuff for us. Our fathers protected us. We could run with abandon within this little community as long as we obeyed its rules.

There was no shortage of mischief. There was a lot of teasing of girls, some fisticuffs and shoving between the boys. I relished every brush with mayhem, every opportunity for mischief, and all re attendant excitement.

And for weeks we ate Snickers, Malo Cups, Milky Ways, and, of course, Baby Ruths. And all of them were full-size bars, not little teases.

