

Lifestyles WATERLOO COURIER WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2000 PAGE C8

Chameleons

weekly

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Lore of 'Dead Man's Tree' still has some teens spooked

By LESLIE FECHT
Allison Brehm High School

WANTED

What was once an eerie legend has diminished to a mere tree stump.

The tree known to most Waverly area teens as "Dead Man's Tree" was mysteriously cut down several weeks ago, declining the widespread theory that the "cursed" tree could simply not be destroyed.

Most teens throughout the Waverly area have heard the tale that goes along with Dead Man's Tree. The story developed through word of mouth after the body of Marie Luu Peak, 20, a Waverly student, was found in 1976 near an old twisted tree on Dakota Avenue, approximately one mile north of the Barnes Home in Waverly. Peak had been murdered and sexually assaulted. Her male body was discovered lying on a gravel road near the tree.

"There was an old grunted tree near the location Marie Peak's body was found," says Waverly Public Library assistant librarian Mary Chevillie.

"There was a large interest in the murder, especially among teens. The interest was so great that we eventually just compiled the news articles concerning the murders into a collection. The story of Dead Man's Tree is one of those urban legends, the facts were unexplained, and the story has changed over time."

The story has been passed along through word of mouth since Peak's body was found in 1976, and the facts have changed outrageously. The tale of present day is that two girls were raped and murdered near the tree, the bodies were never found, and the murderer was never caught. The second murder mentioned in the story could possibly be that of 15-year-old Julia Jennings, a girl who was raped and murdered just one year before Peak. Her body was found in rural Shell Rock, however, nowhere near Dead Man's Tree. However, the tree has been associated very closely with the murders, when authorities say it had nothing to do with the case and was never associated with the investigation.

"There was an old tree where we found Marie Luu Peak's body," says Bremer County Sheriff Bill Westendorf, "but it held no significance in the case."

Since the discovery of Peak's body in 1976, there have been several alleged attempts to cut down the tree, and even an attempt to burn it down. Yet after these so-called attempts of destruction, the tree remained standing, which prompted the rumor of the tree being "cursed." Yet several weeks ago, the tree was mysteriously chopped down. Mr. and Mrs. John Anhalt of Waverly are the owners of the land Dead Man's Tree is situated on. Mrs. Anhalt said she is not aware of who cut down the tree, and that no one has yet admitted to the deed.

The legend of the "cursed" tree hasn't been completely laid to rest, however. The story has traveled as far as Marshalltown, Marshalltown High School senior Steven Klam and Adam Dingman traveled to Waverly soon after the tree's final fall to collect some of its wood.

"The story should live on, so we wanted some of the wood," said Dan.

The mysterious logging of Dead Man's Tree has provided a definite answer as to whether or not the tree was truly cursed.



Photo by STEVE RICHTER

Dead Man's Tree lies in a ditch, along Dakota Ave., where it once stood. The tree was mysteriously chopped down with no one stepping forward to claim responsibility for cutting the tree down.

Fall Festival offers Halloween alternative

By TAMMY P. SACKETT
Waukegan Ridge Baptist Academy

WATERLOO

Looking for something to do Halloween weekend? Grace Brethren Church on the corner of Minnesota and William streets is offering a Fall Festival as a Halloween alternative. The public is invited, and people are encouraged to come dressed in their costumes. The festival will be held at the church on Saturday from 3-7 p.m.

For supper, attendees can enjoy tacos and other free food. A portion of the street will be blocked off for square dancing, and an inflatable jumping dome will also be on site. Biblical theme rooms can be found throughout the buildings that include games, treats, live animals, puppets and other decorations.

Challenge yourself in "The Maze" upstairs in the Garage, also known as the youth room. There will also be face painting and nail painting. A professional photographer will also be on site to take pictures of those in costume. Bring your own bag and friends. Hope to see you there!

Tips for hosting a hauntingly successful Halloween party

By GENESA UNCLAR
Burger Middle School

If you want to get into the spirit this season, try haunting your own home! Although it may sound a little corny, there's nothing like being scared stiff. People love to be surprised (even if they don't always admit it). Ever see the long lines of crowds waiting to get in area haunted houses? We rest our case.

Using common household materials and a little imagination, you can harvest your own fun! Here are some great ideas!

Decorating can be fun! Try the following:

- "Spotted Ghosts"**
What's needed: Old white sheets, black and red markers, old newspapers rolled into balls and string.
What to do: Cut a sheet into four pieces. Put one flat-sized newspaper ball in the middle of the sheet. Then take about a six-inch string, bring the sheet up around the ball and tie it.
- "Creepy Crawlers"**
What's needed: Four pipe cleaners in a ball. Then roll the whole pipe cleaner into a spiral. Next, tie three of the half-pipe cleaners on each side of the spiral. Last, tie a long string to the spiral and hang.
- "ooky Lighter"**
What's needed: Old white ornamental holiday lights, black and/or orange tissue paper and Scotch tape.
What to do: Tape small pieces of tissue paper over the lights. Then tape the lights wherever desired.
- "Lively Webs"**
What's needed: Cotton balls (preferably the larger and softer ones)
What to do: Spread the cotton balls until they are very thin. Then tape on walls, windows and mirrors.
- Trick making the following ideas to create your own tricks and treats!**
- "Carny Hangers"**
What's needed: Baby carrots and a bowl of cold water.
What to do: Put the baby carrots in the bowl.
- "Grape Eyeballs"**
What's needed: Grapes, a potato peeler and a bowl.
What to do: Peel all grapes and place in bowl.
- "Bony Cakes"**
What's needed: Celery stalks, cut in half and a bowl of water.
What to do: Place celery in bowl.
- "What's That Red Stuff?"**
What's needed: Red food coloring and ranch dressing.
What to do: Put one teaspoon of food coloring into one cup dressing. Blend.
Bring on the movie: No haunted house is complete without spooky sounds. Try to get the hair on the back of your neck standing on end.
What's needed: Chairs, violin (optional), blank cassette tape, scanning unit can be replaced a sibling or try it yourself.
What to do: Record all of the sounds, clanking chairs, screeching violins and of course, the screams. Have fun!
Now that we've given you that idea, here are some tricks to go with them: Gather the carefully prepared "carnot fingers," "grape eyeballs," "bony celery" and "what's that red stuff!"
Invite your friends into a room and turn out the lights. Make up a really spooky story about someone whose eyes, fingers and bits of bones you have been entrusted to keep. One by one, have your guests go into the next room where you have your items waiting, listen to the story and then feed the treat. It should have a frightening effect!

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