After the candy, the saints come marchin' in!

By Chaplain Mike Anderson

Very few continuously-celebrated observances evoke fond childhood memories like Halloween. Even the most seasoned among us can recall trick-or-treating with our buddies in a costume everyone loved, one that was a total disaster, or when mom cut eyeholes in an old bed sheet and said "You're the scariest ghost in the neighborhood!" I still goof on my mom about that one.

While Halloween has morphed into a fun and guiltless way to dress up and get massive amounts of sweets, its origins are as creepy as an M. Night Shymalan movie.

According to History.com, prior to the 19th century, Halloween was "a mix of ancient Celtic practices, Catholic and Roman religious rituals and European folk traditions that blended together over time to create the holiday we know today. Straddling the line between fall and winter, plenty and paucity and life and death, Halloween is a time of celebration and superstition. Halloween has long been thought of as a day when the dead can return to the earth, and ancient Celts would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off these roaming ghosts."

While vampires have made a pop culture comeback and I've seen some scary-looking characters in the subway lately, it's pretty safe to say that no Force Protection Condition Echo, for roaming bands of ghosts and zombies, is necessary in Yokosuka.

However, what those of the Christian faith tradition can do to encounter those who have passed away is observe All Saints' Day Nov. 1 and All Souls' Day Nov. 2.

On All Saints' Day, celebrants honor saints – those who have done or will do extraordinary things in God's name. Both canonized (officially recognized as worthy of imitation and prayer) and unknown saints are paid homage. Certain Christian denominations observe a communion of saints, which honors faithful believers, both living and passed on, as God's active people. All Souls' Day also gives us an opportunity to remember and offer prayers for all who have departed.

Wishing you a happy Halloween, and after having some candy, I hope you take some time to honor those who have gone before us.

The editor asks:

"Did you know, the practice of carving jack o' lanterns actually originated in Ireland hundreds of years ago? They were not the carved pumpkins commonly used today; the original jack o' lanterns were carved from large turnips or potatoes.

"When Irish immigrants arrived in America they brought the jack o' lantern tradition with them, but soon discovered that the American pumpkin was larger and easier to carve, and a new Halloween tradition was born.

"In the United States, pumpkins go hand in hand with the fall holidays of Thanksgiving, and, of course, Halloween. The pumpkin is a nutritious and versatile plant; the flowers, seeds and flesh are all edible and rich in vitamins. The flesh of the pumpkin is used to make soups, pies and breads, and many Americans include pumpkin pie in their Thanksgiving meals."

Got a "Did You Know" you want to share in "The editor asks" column? Send your submissions to seahawk-umitaka@fe.navy.mil. A legitimate fact source must be provided with the submission before it will be considered for publication. Contact the Seahawk-Umitaka editor at the e-mail address mentioned above for more information.

Anti-drug campaign Red Ribbon Week is Oct. 24-31

By U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Public Affairs

Red Ribbon Week is the nation's oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation reaching millions of Americans during the last week of October every year.

By wearing red ribbons and participating in community anti-drug events, young people pledge to live a drug-free life and pay tribute to Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent Enriqué "Kiki" Camarena.

Camarena was an 11-year veteran of the DEA assigned to the Guadalajara, Mexico, office where he was on the trail of the country's biggest marijuana and cocaine traffickers. In 1985, he was extremely close to unlocking a multi-billion dollar drug pipeline.

On Feb. 7, 1985, he was kidnapped, brutally tortured, and murdered by Mexican drug traffickers. His tragic death opened the eyes of many Americans to the dangers of drugs and the international scope of the drug trade.

Shortly after the death of Camerena, Congressman Duncan Hunter and Camerena's high school friend Henry Lozano launched "Camarena Clubs" in Camerena's hometown of Calexico, Calif. Hundreds of club members pledged to lead drug-free lives to honor the sacrifice made by Camarena.

These pledges were delivered to then First Lady Nancy Reagan at a national conference of parents combating youth drug use. Several state parent organizations then called on community groups to wear red ribbons during the last week of October as a symbol of their drug-free commitment.

The first official Red Ribbon Week celebrations were held in La Mirada and Norwalk, Calif.

In 1988, the National Family Partnership (NFP) coordinated the first National Red Ribbon Week with President and Mrs. Reagan serving as honorary chairpersons.

The NFP estimates that more than 80 million people participate in Red Ribbon events each year.

The campaign is a unified way for communities to take a stand against drugs and show intolerance for illicit drug use and the consequences to all Americans.

Schools, businesses, the faith community, media, families, and community coalitions join together to celebrate Red Ribbon Week in many ways, such as: sponsoring essay and poster contests; organizing drug-free races; decorating buildings in red; handing out red ribbons to customers; holding parades or community events; and by publicizing the value of a drug-free, healthy lifestyle.

The DEA joins with community coalitions and prevention groups to plan and carry out Red Ribbon activities, ranging from classroom events to stadium-sized rallies.

Enrique "Kiki" S. Camarena was born on July 26, 1947 in Mexicali, Mexico. He graduated from Calexico High School in Calexico, Calif., in 1966.

In 1968 he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. After serving in the Marine Corps for two years, he joined the Calexico Police Department as a criminal investigator in 1970.

In May of 1973, Kiki started working as a narcotics investigator with the El Centro Police Department. He stayed with the El Centro Police Department until June 28, 1974 when he joined the DEA.

For more information about Red Ribbon Week and, or drug prevention, visit the website www.justice.gov/dea/.