Does Anyone Remember?

Halloween was fast approaching, and all we kids could talk about was what we would wear as a costume.

We had no money for any costumes, not even for material to make costumes. It was 1935, and we were living with my Uncle Frank and Aunt Stella in Flint, Michigan until Dad found a new job.

October was rainy and miserable that year, and with six kids and four adults in a two-bedroom house, there was rarely a minute of silence. My aunt was a saint to put up with all of us.

We decided that my 6-year-old brother, Mike, and two of my cousins, 9-year-old Gene and 5-year-old Ken, would be hoboes. My cousin Rita, 7, my sister, Ann, 3, and I would dress as gypsies.

The boys each wore a beat-up hat. Being the oldest, at age 10, I salvaged an old stub of eyebrow pencil to color in mustaches and whiskers stubble on the boys.

Rita and I tied old scarves around our heads and borrowed rings off the bathroom shower curtains for hoop earrings. We just knew that we looked like authentic gypsies.

A Night to Remember

Halloween night was unseasonably cold, with a fine mist in the air. With teeth chattering but our sights set on fun, we went trick-or-treating with three of Gene's friends of high-school age (I'm sure our parents had asked them to keep an eye on us). Nearby

neighbors gave us suckers, Mary Janes and taffy wrapped in waxed paper. We groaned when we got apples, a staple of our school lunch bags every day.

One house was set back from the road and seemed kind of eerie. Not a single light was showing. We rambled up to the door anyway and knocked, hollering, “Trick or treat!”

Lo and behold, the door opened and an elderly man framed the doorway. He told us to wait while he got us some treats. The wait seemed like an eternity, but we just giggled and had a good time, hoping for a candy bar.

When the man finally came to the door, he brought with him a pail. Before we knew what had hit us, we were drenched as the man emptied the pail of cold water on us and slammed the door.

Ann was crying and all of us were shivering as we trudged back home, despondent and disheartened that anyone could be so mean. Rita and I didn’t know of the boys’ plans.

Gene and his buddies returned to the man’s house and sneaked into the backyard. The three of them lifted the old man’s outhouse and carried it to the middle of the road in front of his house.

I can imagine the look on the old man’s face and the cussing he did the next morning when he answered nature’s call.

After Gene told me what he and his pals had done, I wasn’t too

worried. I knew we wouldn’t be recognized as the perpetrators of this dastardly deed. Remember, we were dressed up as hoboes and gypsies and not recognizable to anyone!

—Wanda Y., Flushing, Michigan