

By Jim Langham:

I WILL SURVIVE

I admit it. I love reality shows, well some of them. In fact I have been watching some of them since they made their debut on TV. I am such a big fan of some of them, that if I am going out for some reason, I make it a point to get home by the time, “my show” is on.

My favorite all time reality show is “Survivor.” In the show, contestants are taken to an obscure desolate place with just the clothes on their backs and they have to learn how to survive. They compete for rewards and immunity and see who can outwit, outplay and outlast each other.

They literally have to provide their own food, eating very sparsely. The food is limited and consists of things such as coconuts, perhaps a sand crab, or maybe someone will get lucky and catch a fish.

Then there are the challenges the participants have to compete in. Winning a challenge could mean the difference between a reward such as food or an opportunity to stay in the game longer.

Naturally, a lot of people want to be on “Survivor” and compete for the \$1 million prize. If selected to take part, you must know how to play the game either by being a strategic player or one that just stays in the background. If you are a physically fit contestant, you could win challenges easier than a weaker person.

Of course, I will never forget the Halloween that my mother and grandmother made an extra special effort to dress me out for the annual visit to our small town neighborhood. I was adorned completely in Grandma’s attire, including one of her old dresses, socks, shoes and head scarf

tied tightly around my neck. My mask was that of an old wrinkled style.

The final piece of dress represented the culture of our little village. Many of us still didn't have inside bathrooms, so "chambers" were still part of our utilities to help us through the night or when the weather was too wicked to go to the outhouse.

On that particular Halloween, however, it served another purpose. Mom and grandma tied black and orange ribbons on the handle and sent it with me to use as the receptacle for the treats that I would receive. (Scalded and cleaned, of course!)

Unlike today when many of those "Halloweening" don't even know who they are trying to trick or receive treats from, in our little town, this tradition was much more than just "getting." It genuinely involved being invited inside and "guessed" before the treats were given out. Sometimes, it involved sitting down at an old wooden table and being given hot chocolate and cookies, especially if it was cold outside.

Our town was made up of a lot of elderly people and they especially enjoyed visiting with the young people; Trick-or-Treating was no exception. Quite often we answered questions about how our family was doing, what we liked about school, who our teacher was and, in my case especially, how my grandmother was doing.

It was much more than simply going to as many homes as possible in the hours allotted by times set by a town council. It was a social time with a friendly routine that remained the same from year to year. I would start with Stella Kraner, then Bob and Karen Herman, Fred and Ethel Brough, George and Edna Adams, True Foreman and his wife, Gene and Dorothy Amstutz, Frances Nevil, Arlie and Elvie Ellenberger, the Sprungers, the Derricksons, Uncle Clyde and Aunt Orpha Cook, the Ralstons, Halls, and finally, Bill and Merial Bailey.

Sometimes we would go as a group, but at that time, it wasn't even conceived that there could be any threat to going alone. No one worried that treats would be laced with drugs or that anyone would think of turning away that cute kid dressed like a grandma carrying a "potty" around.

For many, treats were a creative event often conceived days ahead of time in the kitchens of the givers. In homes where there were children, whole families often made and decorated Halloween cookies, made homemade candy, or carefully put together small sacks of candy and tied them with colored bows.

Some would go to town and purchase Clark, Hershey, Milk Way or Bun candy bars, which were, by the way, priced at a nickel apiece and were twice the size of what is sold today. Others passed out fruit, especially apples. Some worked hard and made caramel apples, dipped them in nuts and wrapped wax paper around them in order to pass out as treats.

Then there were those who opted to pass out change, usually nickels, dimes or quarters. Even then, they were prepared to accept and visit the neighborhood gang. Change would be counted out, separated by the number of children in our community, and lined up in an orderly fashion on the old dining room table inside the front entrance to the home.

When I arrived home, my father had flash bulbs and camera attachment ready to photograph "the Halloween of 1957." "Emptying the pot" on to the table was a family event, as well. I would be allowed one treat before bedtime and the remainder was placed in a glass bowl purchased at the local old-fashioned store. However, it was not to be taken at random, but only after asking permission.

Things are a lot different today. I have to wonder whether today's children will remember their special Halloweens in such fashion that they can write detailed columns about them 55 years later. These days, I realize that the real treat was not the candy that was given, but the love and support of a small community that still remains in my heart over six decades later, the treasure of a community that loved its youth, cared for them and gave them the gift of caring and giving from the bottom of their hearts. I do not have the physical ability to play "Survivor," but if I could, this is how it would probably all go down.

First of all, I cannot take any clothes with me, so I will be wearing the same garments for the length of the competition. The weather is hot, muggy and rainy and I have no deodorant, so I will start to stink by the end of day one.

The next obstacle to overcome is me being afraid of anything that moves. The first thing I

would see of course, would be a snake or a mouse! Yikes. I want to go home and am discovering very quickly I am not a survivor.

My stomach is starting to growl as the group has had no food to eat yet. Ha! They want me to go catch a fish! There is just no way I could do that, because I am scared of fish and also of water.

Now if someone would get lucky and catch a fish, I could not even stand to see it get cooked and be on the supper table. I would have to pass.

Coconuts are usually plentiful, so that will become my staple for quite as long as I am in the game. Now I have to figure out how to get that coconut open.

At bedtime there are no warm blankets or comfortable pillows and we try huddling together as the nights do get a little cool. We all are starting to smell bad and our bellies are empty. Rain begins to fall on our a makeshift shelter we have managed to crawl under.

I begin thinking about this desolate place and what I want to do. I want to get on Facebook. I bet there have been over 100 posts since I left home. I sure miss it and a lot of other things.

I miss my TV, my computer, my food, my cell phone, my family, dogs, and even my co-workers. I want to take a shower, wash my hair, look in a mirror and I would really like to go shopping.

I cannot do it. I cannot be sole survivor. I am spoiled, too old, not physically fit, scared of fish, hungry, dirty and ... someone else can compete for that \$1 million.

As for me, I would just rather sit back in my warm cozy house in my easy chair with a bag of chips and watch others as they contend. I am just not the type to outwit, outplay and outlast anyone.

Oh, change the channel and pass the chips, my show is on.

Do you like the world of reality shows? Have you ever watched “Survivor” or “Big Brother?” Let me know and I’ll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.