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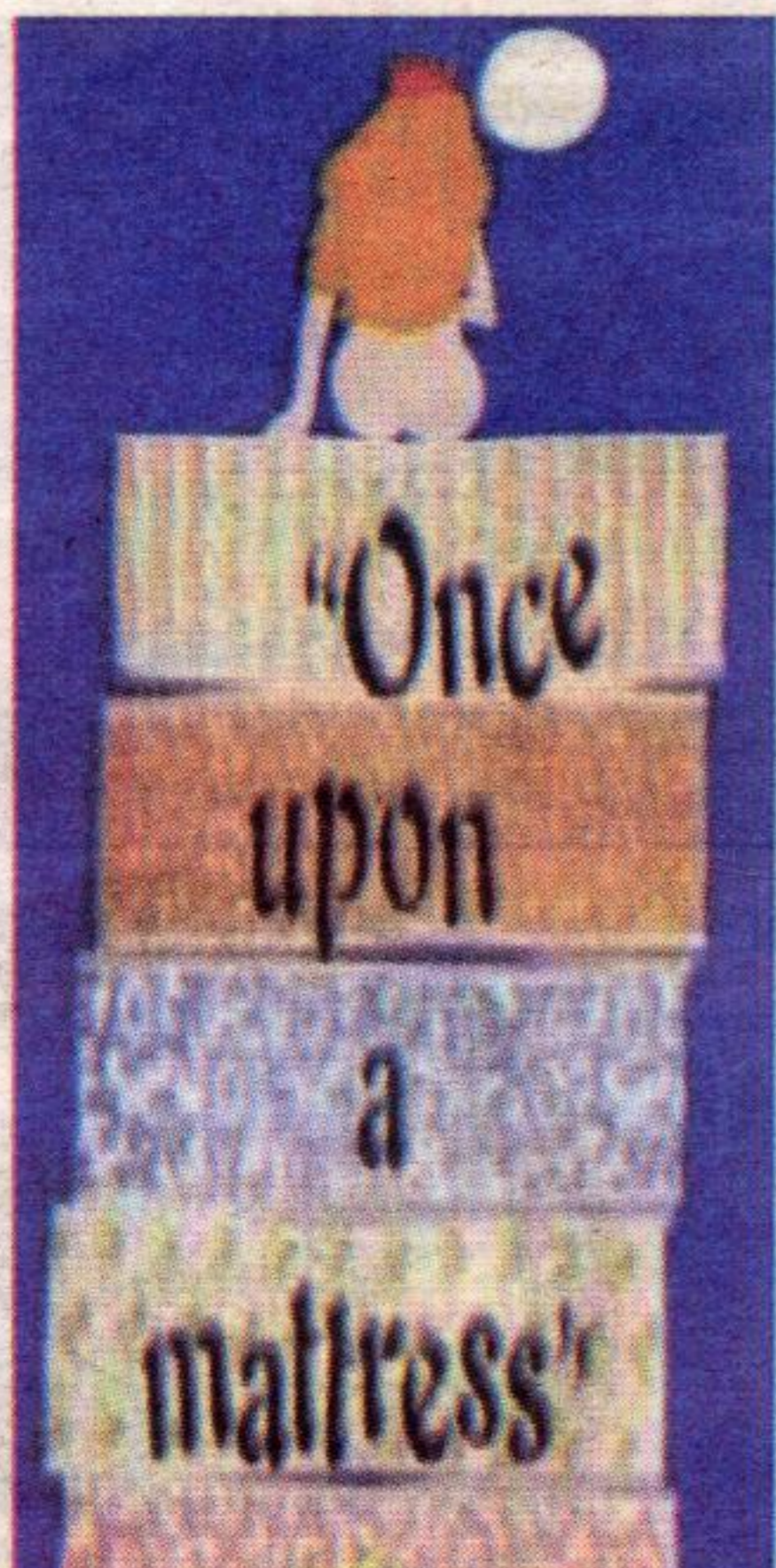


the musical

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Carve the perfect Jack-O'-Lantern

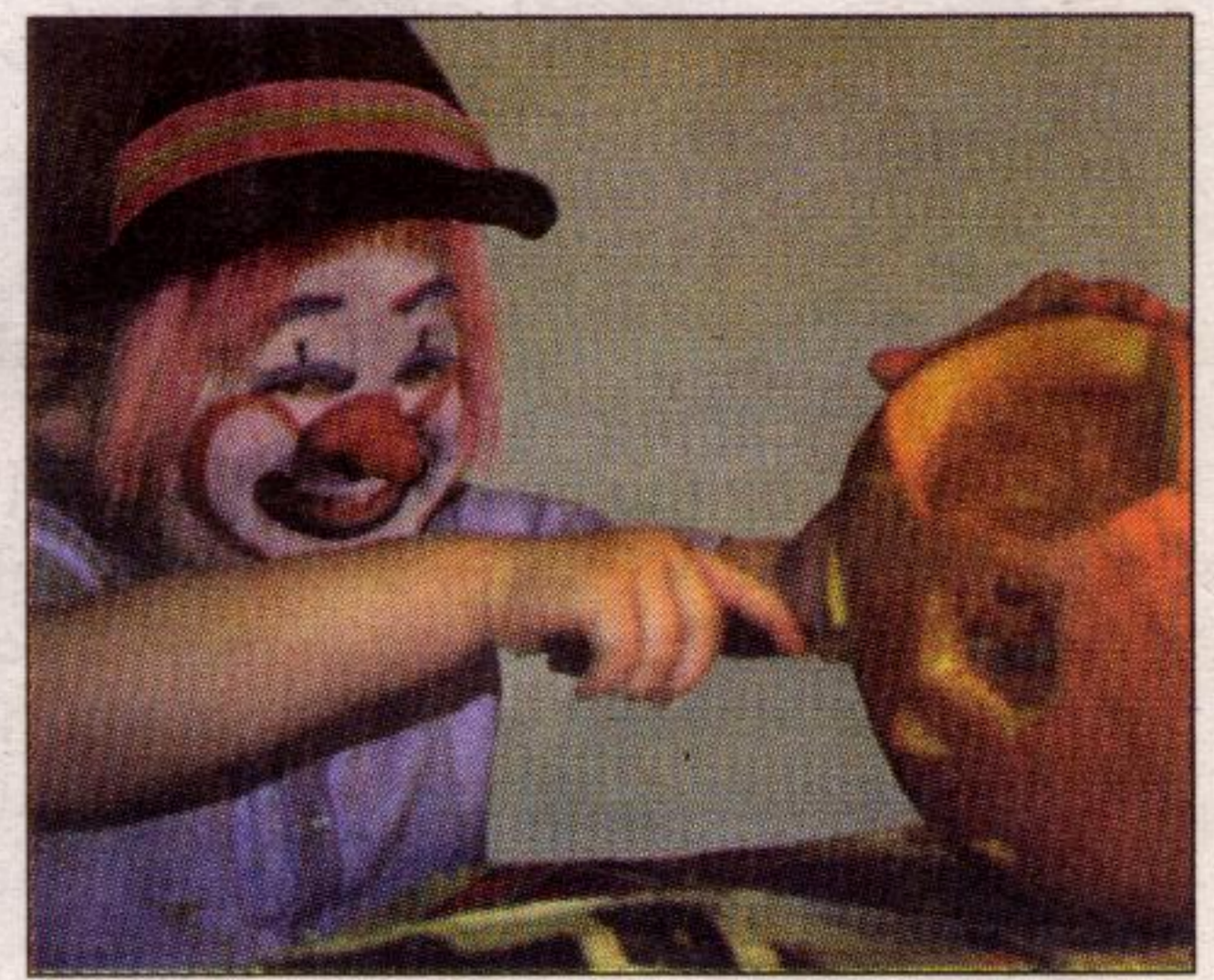
Halloween is a great time to get the family together and carve a Jack-O'-Lantern. But before you even buy a pumpkin, the first thing you need to do is decide what you are going to carve on it. That way, you have a picture in your head of the shape and size you need.

If you are not using a stencil to carve the pumpkin, decide if it should be tall and narrow or more rounded, based on your ideas. If you are using a stencil, select a pumpkin that is large enough and as close to the same shape as the pattern you are going to carve. All the pumpkins should be ripe and as smooth as possible with no scratches or dents.

Never carry a pumpkin by its stem; it may break. If the stem does break, use toothpicks when opening the top. If you find the perfect pumpkin, but the stem is broken, you can still carve it. Just carve out the bottom, the same as you would the top. Then place the light source on the bottom piece and sit the pumpkin over it.

You now have the perfect pumpkin on which to put your perfect idea. What tools do you need?

- A boning knife for cutting the top hole and any large pieces out of the face.
- A modified paring knife, with a very thin blade for detail work.
- A sharpening stone. It is best to sharpen the knives before and during use.
- A cutting saw for carving fine-detailed areas.
- A poker tool to transfer your designs onto the face of the pumpkin. Use an ice



pick, nail or artist's stylus tool.

- Your pattern.
- Spoons to remove the seeds, pulp and skin from the inside of the pumpkin. An ice cream scoop and a large metal ladle works best.

- Candles and holders. Plain white votive candles, placed in clear glass holders, give off the best light and last the longest.

After you have carved out the pumpkin, save the seeds and roast them in the oven or use as birdseed in the winter.

To help prolong the life of your Jack O'Lantern, soak it in water overnight; this will replace the moisture it has lost. Or after carving, coat all the cut areas, including the inside with petroleum jelly that will act as barrier to seal the pumpkin's natural moisture.

Moving pumpkins to shaded areas during the daytime will also help extend their life.

—By Bob Grimson, special



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