The Metropolitan State Morgue

Kevin J. Franken

[fz2751fb@metrostate.edu](mailto:fz2751fb@metrostate.edu)

October is the time of orange leaves, orange pumpkins, and Halloween—which, of course, means orange jack-o’-lanterns. It’s when we dress up as zombies, vampires, goblins and ghosts. We willingly visit haunted houses to have the wits scared out of us.

For whatever reason, many get a charge out of getting spooked. There seems to be a certain invigorating feeling of being alive when facing the darker side and our inevitable demise, even if it’s just for fun. In the spirit of All Hallows Eve, keep that in mind as you read: the Morgue of Metro.

The site where Metro State’s Dayton’s Bluff campus now resides was purchased in the late 1980s, and was the former home of St. John’s hospital. The buildings, where the New Main and Founder’s Hall now stand, were torn down and rebuilt. The structure for St. John’s Hall, however, was left intact and the interior refurbished to suit Metro State’s needs.

Across the street (where the library is now located) was the Nobles building; this according to Thomas Maida, director of public safety and security at Metro State. The Nobles building housed Metro’s Fine Arts program, among others.

When the Nobles building was torn down for the new library, Fine Arts moved to the small brick structure on the corner of Maria Avenue and East Seventh Street (across from Burger King). Still the original structure today, and used for art and music classes, this was formerly the morgue for St. John’s hospital.

Maida believes that the garage door on the east side was used for transporting a body inside. It was then lowered to the basement by means of a casket-sized elevator, where the embalming was performed.

Regarding both the Fine Arts Studio and St. John’s Hall, and having been at Metro State for almost 19 years, Maida recalls, “There’s been many stories of security officers and cleaners who told of walking through cold spaces or hearing moans and groans,” Maida said. He then added, “I imagine when people know an area and its history, their minds start to wander and think about things.”

Trick or treat.