

Halloween — a scary night for some, a solemn occasion for others — is upon us. Are you ready? It's time for the . . .

Witching hour

2D • THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1996 • USA TODAY

COVER STORY

Wicca practitioners study healing arts, not hexes

Continued from 1D

"It's a time of magic and lots of spells."

— Lexa Roséan

and to look at Enchantment's large selection of talismans and jewelry.

"I used to buy my candles here, but now . . . I can get them cheaper buying in bulk," he says.

In New York, apparently, even witches buy wholesale.

Learning the craft, however, is a whole different matter. Witches, after all, are made, not born. Initiates study the healing arts as part of their introduction to Wicca.

"The Goddess gives us knowledge of healing plants and essential oils," Roséan explains. "I wasn't always a big high priestess. I was a witchlet once."

Witch-in-training Sean Hill has also stopped by this day. He's 14, a high school student from the Bronx. "I come in regularly to buy incense and candles. If I had a million bucks, I'd buy as many books as I could to learn more about the craft."

How did Hill get introduced to Wicca? His mom. "She's a witch. She used to bring me to Enchantments for rituals. Now she encourages me to come and learn." Talk about your witch family values.

"There is less condemnation against witches today," Roséan says. "People are more enlightened and open, more aware of other religions and the need to be tolerant."

Well, most people are. She confides that she does know a few witches over on Wall Street who have to keep quiet for fear of losing their jobs.

"But not me," she chuckles. "I'm out of the broom closet."

Halloween is all about. If non-pagans choose from skeleton, ghost and witch costumes, does that mean witches don lawyer, accountant and doctor garb to celebrate?

Not exactly, Roséan says. For Wiccans, Oct. 31 is Samhain (pronounced SOW-en), and it's the witches' New Year.

Don't uncork the champagne. "Samhain rituals are quite solemn," Roséan says. "It's a time of great awe. The veil between the worlds of the living and dead is at its thinnest, so we honor the memories of our ancestors."

That doesn't mean witches lack for humor. Take a look at the buttons on sale near the front counter. "Please don't squeeze the shaman," reads one. And: "Life's a witch, and then you fly." Or how about this bumper sticker: "My other car is a broom."

Aren't all those broom references a bit, well, old hat?

Of course not, Otto says. "Witch is not a politically incorrect term. I am a witch. A lot of today's Halloween practices have been taken from the old traditions."

"Yes, Halloween brings out vampires and horror stories and witches in pointy black hats. But I don't have a problem with that. It's all in good fun," Roséan says.

The pointy black hat is out, anyway. Judging from the regulars at the shop, modern witch fashion leans toward the grunge look: black jeans, leather pants and lots of piercings.

Take, for example, Joe Depeau. He's 22, a student living in the Bronx, with an unusual cone-shaped object pierced into his chin. He has come in today to browse through the bookshelves — subjects ranging from angels to zodiacs —

Auth scari

Editor's no spookmeister scariest child

This is act It happene lumbus, Ohio readers' age we lived in a

We had a l was a stretch made of smc was, but it w and high en kids to climb

Everyone neighborhood hang out the like a secre place. We'd i on the stone this pile of what was unc In the day We knew go there a That's becau believed the one was burr Someone o thing was b der this pile o

One Hallo it was late an done our t treating — gone to bed. J "You know, if find out what should." (So We waitec dressed and house, across Well, we g this clank, c hitting stones

Clunk. And that's ran! We nev talked about was so terrifi I think abo of my childr reminded — a pile of ston What we se thing out the scary.

► More abou

Creep

Americans een candies goods this y in holiday sa

Other stat ► About 6 their homes their offices.

► 1 in 3 at ► 9 in 10, brate the hol kin.

► About 5 trick-or-treat pretend no c

► About ; changed.

Source: National Re Detroit News.



By Kwaku Alston

Spellbinding: Lexa Roséan, Wiccan high priestess and keeper of a New York occult supply shop

COVER STORY

Thoroughly modern pagans keep the faith

By Cathy Hainer USA TODAY

NEW YORK — Add Halloween to the list of hectic holidays. Searching for just the right costume. Stocking up on candy. Carving jack-o'-lanterns.

Everyone seems harried on All Hallows' Eve. Well, almost everyone.

Here at Enchantments, a friendly neighborhood occult shop in the East Village, the resident witches are taking the day pretty much in stride.

Pumpkins decorate the in-store Goddess altar, and straw brooms fill a crowded corner. But otherwise, the shelves are stocked as always. Voodoo dolls. Crystal balls. And candles — loads of candles, from tiny votives to a giant eyeball that wards off the evil eye.



By Kwaku Alston

Cat nap: Enchantments' shop cat Jalup shares shelf space with books and ritual supplies.

At Enchantments, every day is Halloween. This month is just a bit busier than most.

"It's a time of magic and lots of spells," says Lexa Roséan, shop staffer, author of *The Supermarket Sorceress* (St. Martin's, \$8.99) and high priestess of Wicca, the pagan faith that over the years has come to be called witchcraft.

The cramped store is cast in perpetual twilight. Sharon Tawes has come in to poke around. She's 33, a New York

artist, and, though not a witch, she calls herself "a believer." She has picked up a magical candle — one that sparkles with green and yellow glitter.

Please see COVER STORY next page ►