

## The House on Raspberry Lane

By Marilyn Reeves

There was an old house on Raspberry Lane – rumored to be haunted – where old Mrs. Caruthers used to live. It was set back from the street, with tall, dark evergreen trees hovering overhead, painting the house in varying shades of gloom. The property was surrounded by a black wrought iron fence, about four feet tall, high enough that young boys daring enough to climb over it needed a boost. Kids delighted in throwing rocks at the windows, but seldom succeeded in breaking one, as they too were protected by iron bars.

It was rumored that skinny old Mrs. Caruthers was a witch. She was seldom seen, but when she did stick her head out the door to shriek at the children to *Get away!* her menacing countenance removed all doubt. Only the bravest of the boys dared to play Devil on the Doorstep at her house. Those who succeeded were hailed as heroes by their less intrepid friends.

Because it was the spookiest house in town, it was a favorite gathering place at Halloween. But one year, Johnny Jenkins' six-year-old brother Timid Timmy wanted to come along with the older boys. Shorty Gillespie took one look at him dressed in his little pirate costume and said, "Nah, we don't want him along. Let him go around with the other little kids." But then Bruce the Bruiser got an evil grin on his face and said, "How 'bout this? How 'bout we let him go up to the door and say "Trick or Treat" at *this* house?"

Johnny became alarmed and said, "No, that's too mean, Bruce. Even you don't have the guts to go up and knock on that door."

"Oh yeah?" countered Bruce. "Just watch me!" Bruce was big enough he didn't even need a boost – he simply vaulted over the top of the fence and landed with a whump on the other side. With the rest of the kids hovering back behind the safety of the fence, he then tiptoed up to the sagging front porch and started to knock at the door. Much to his surprise, the door swung open on its creaking hinges, but nobody seemed to be there. "Hello? Hello?" he called into the cavernous gloom. Apparently someone told him to come on in, as he stepped inside and the door slammed shut behind him.

The boys outside waited and waited but Bruce didn't come back out. "What the heck is he doing in there?" they started asking. After twenty minutes went by and still no Bruce, they decided that someone else had better go check on him.

"I'll go," said Johnny. But then they heard a blood-curdling scream, and without giving another thought to Bruce's well-being, they all took off running back toward the center of town. "Maybe we should tell the police," Jimmy Johnson offered. "You're right!" they all said in unison.

So they told their story to Officer O'Riley, who took a couple of other policemen with him for back-up. The cops spent a good half hour checking out the place, but they reported back that the house was empty. And poor Bruce the Bruiser was never seen again.

For many years thereafter, it was said that on Halloween nights, a howling could be heard coming from the old house on Raspberry Lane. But perhaps that was just another rumor ...