



A magical time of year for kids; the ability to hide in a costume and navigate the neighborhood looking for the best treats. The challenge with the activity is that if you are sensory challenged and don't eat sweet treats; then it's not as much fun. The selection of costumes for Halloween was both easy and hard in our household. Paige always wanted to be a princess, while Nicholas didn't want to be anything.

When Nicholas was about 4 ½ years old we lived in Phoenix. The end of October is generally a forecasting challenge in the Valley of the Sun. You see, for the prior 5 months, the temperatures would surpass 100 degrees, but sometime in October, you would generally see the temperature drop below 100, but you never knew when and for how long. As a result, Halloween was generally at dusk, when it cooled off as the sun vanished for the evening.

Katie decided to try a full body costume on Nicholas that year. It was a dog outfit, complete with full fur, paws and ears and a zipper up the belly to keep the heat inside. If the temperature was above 100 degrees then Nicholas going to be a very hot dog! If the temperature dropped, then he would be ok. Now, knowing that Nicholas needed time to adjust to a new costume, we generally shop for costumes in late September or early October. Then we leave the outfit hanging around for Nicholas to get used to. In a little while, we'd be able to encourage him to try it on.

This particular year was rough. He didn't want to be a dog. We knew, at this point in his life, that his sister could get him to do and try things that we couldn't. We enlisted her enthusiasm for the costume. He asked her to try it on. We asked her to crawl on all fours, she pretended to be a dog and chase her brother around the room. A blonde, bouncy dog. She was relentless. He finally gave in and said he would put it on.

Nicholas in a dog costume was about the cutest thing you ever saw. He got down on all fours to try and be a dog. He barked a few times and decided that was enough. Over the next few days, Paige both put on the costume and encouraged Nicholas to do the same; which he did. Over the weeks leading up to Halloween, Nicholas became a dog more often. The night of Halloween came and fortunately the temperature dipped down to the mid-90's during the day and low 70's at night.

The division of responsibilities was as follows: Dad would take Paige, Nicholas and Drew around to houses, while Mom manned the candy bowl. Dad took the camera. Mom chatted with the neighbors and watched all the ghouls and goblins approach our house. We generally walked down a few streets and then Nicholas would go back to the house, while Paige was 18 months older and wanted to hit every house that her feet could take her towards.

On this particular night, we walked down our street which has about 25 houses. We worked one side of the street, crossed the street and started our return on the other side of the street. About three houses into the return trip, without notice, Nicholas hands me his candy bucket. "Hold



this”, came the request. As soon as he handed me the bucket, he was down on all fours on the sidewalk, becoming a dog. He was laughing and barking. The parents nearby were all laughing at him being silly and he liked it.

He only did it for a house or two, and then reverted back to walking and collecting treats. The zipper was starting to be unzipped and he was starting to have enough. He would never actually eat the candy; he didn’t really like it. He did like walking with Paige, pretending to be a dog and then wanted to go home. I dropped him by Mom that night and went back out with Paige to finish our tour of neighboring opportunities.

That night I learned that Nicholas could be spontaneous, as long as we rehearsed it before. I also learned that full body costumes at 90 degrees could wear someone out pretty quick.

In subsequent years, we were able to coerce Nicholas into being another dog and Spiderman. Every year he marches further into the neighborhood. The progress is not particular to costume, brotherhood or weather. The boy has started to like chocolate and is learning that Halloween has an element of Chocolate that is pretty intriguing.