

Museo Libo

by Steven Gowin

At Halloween, he decorated the museum with dozens of candle glowing jack o' lanterns under black and orange streamers.

He'd tend the door himself in high lace up boots, orange rhinestone hot pants, a tight black t-shirt, and black boa with orange swirl. You could eat the cupcakes, no poison, chocolate with orange frosting. "Take two, sweetie," he'd instruct, poking the sterling tray at you.

My Auntie and I lived in his neighborhood, East Tropicana, and the museum was just around the corner. *A Cowboy Jim's Video Poker*, *The Alameda Smoke Shop*, and *Terrible's Chevron Car Wash* also occupied *Liberace Plaza*. Spilled soda, motor oil, and chewing gum stained the *Plaza's* asphalt.

Inside, a rhinestone encrusted Rolls Royce sparkled, and you could touch and play a baby grand that Lee himself had used in "the famous Riviera performances." Who's Who photos lined the walls; Lee with Richard Nixon, with Miss Patti Page, with William Kunstler, with Al Kaline, and Fidel Castro. Yup, Fidel. And one photo pictured Wladziu Valentino in purple sash with gold letters reading, *Mr. Showman, Las Vegas!*

Outside, big tourist busses belching black, acrid, diesel smoke, motored up on the hour to disgorge sweet senior ladies. Silk scarfs over perfect hair, hands clasped before them, staring ahead, heads slightly tilted, they'd pause before their idol's huge photo and whisper, "Isn't he wonderful? Wouldn't he make a fine son!"

