

**Arizona Daily Star**

## **All Souls Procession**

### **Tucson's signature event is 20 years old**

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People grieve in different ways. Ed Muren is building a dummy with solar-powered light-up eyes and skin made of latex.

The 31-year-old, who works as a gallery assistant and part-time masseuse, says he plans to bring the character with him to Sunday's All Souls Procession, an event he has attended in recent years with his human friends.

The 4-foot-tall figure, which will have a face painted white and will be dressed in a black cloak, pays tribute to an uncle who worked as a pilot and died in a plane crash last year.

Muren is one of nearly 20,000 people who are expected to don masks and face paint, carry photos or mementos of deceased loved ones, and march from the Epic Café on North Fourth Avenue to the Franklin Street Docks on Sunday. The procession ends with the burning of a large urn that holds prayers, art, photos and scribbled memories of loved ones who have died.

The All Souls Procession is organized by Many Mouths One Stomach, a nonprofit art collective. Several board members are also members of Flam Chen, the performance troupe that stages the finale in spectacular fashion.

This is the 20th All Souls Procession. It began in 1990 with a ritualistic performance piece by Susan Johnson, a local artist who was grieving her father. Her procession, inspired by Mexico's Día de los Muertos holiday, drew a few dozen people.

For this year's celebration, organizers have planned a full weekend of activities, including the Little Angels Procession for kids on Saturday and a post-finale concert by the band Calexico.

Sunday's finale will feature Flam Chen acrobats dangling from a crane and music by the Seven Pipers Scottish Society.

New York's Magpie Collective has constructed a giant larval structure made of LED lights and woven fabric. The "chrysalis" contains prayers that people e-mailed to the group, and at the beginning of the ceremony the structure will open and helium balloons will carry the prayers aloft.

There's little doubt that, in just two decades, the All Souls Procession has become Tucson's signature event.

"The procession has given people a personal and powerful way to express themselves in the face of death, which is a pretty helpless predicament," said Nadia Hagen, Flam Chen's art director.

Many procession participants spend weeks on their costumes, signs and floats. Muren has been working on a plan to mount the dummy honoring his uncle to a scooter. "I just want a way to bring the piece with me," he says. "And being that it's a march, having a slow set of wheels sounds like a good idea."

He's not the only one who is getting creative when it comes to traveling the procession's nearly 1.5-mile route.

Jim Cook, an engineer, built an adult tricycle with bat wings that flap as he pedals. The bike's wingspan is 13 feet, and the wings are outlined with green neon electroluminescent wire.

"I just wanted something that was fun that moved," Cook says.

The Center for Biological Diversity has constructed a float that pays tribute to Macho B, the last known wild jaguar in the United States. Macho B was euthanized in March, 12 days after he was snared accidentally by a research project.

The center's staff went to the Tucson Puppet Works twice a week for two months to build the Chinese-dragon-like tribute to the deceased jaguar.

"There'll be three to four people carrying the puppet," says Julie Ragland, a development assistant. "And we've also created jaguar masks that people can find on our Web site, [biologicaldiversity.org](http://biologicaldiversity.org)."

The procession is loaded with political expression. Expect to see signs and floats protesting genocide in Darfur and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A group of more than 30 former Tucson Citizen writers, editors and their families will march in memory of the newspaper, which printed its last edition on May 16. The group will wear special T-shirts and carry a Tucson Citizen banner and a coffin holding a "press corpse."

The Citizen, owned by the Gannett Co., had published nearly 140 years at the time of its demise. It was the state's oldest newspaper.

"We're just honoring the Tucson Citizen and lamenting the death of newspapers in general," said Rogelio Olivas, former entertainment editor.

The awe-inspiring, mind-bending All Souls Procession is Tucson's creative spirit on parade