

50 Years

It was a dark and stormy night;
Halloween, 1969 and the Panthers, the elite
Patrol of BSA Troop 42 were restless.

In that haunting nether world of the late teens;
too old for Trick or Treating and too young for
drinking parties they fumed.

Halloween used to be FUN!

Prowling the streets together, enjoying the
enveloping darkness, the oppressive Miami
heat under the costumes.

But scorn from parents and friends had kept
them home the last few years. dealing with
the ghosts, princesses, and hobos, screaming
at the front door.

But this year something had to change.

The Parents had told their stories of
Halloween. Knocked over outhouses, soaped
windows, egged houses. But these boys were
Scouts, and their Oath, and Law, prevented
acts of malicious behavior. Malicious, no: but
perhaps mischievous could save Halloween.

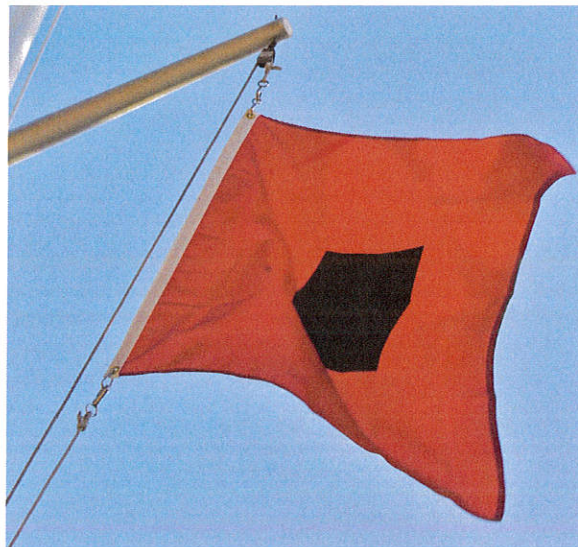
Panther Patrol was the best patrol, in the best Troop in South Florida Council and could paddle our Troop's signature red canoes farther and faster than anyone else.

Troop 42 ranged deep into the Everglades, camping on Hell's Bay, Snake Bight and Alligator Creek.

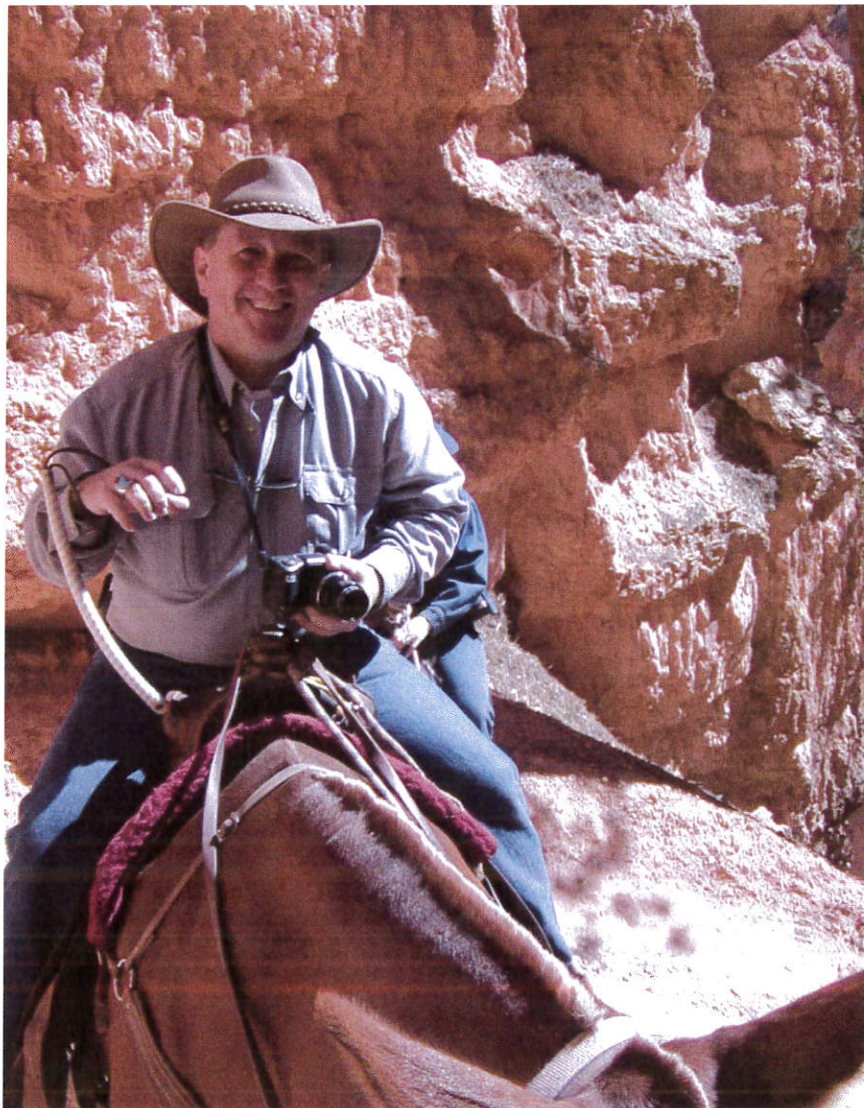
Panther Patrol Scouts had just returned from the National Jamboree in Idaho and Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico.

Honor and Oath constrained on that dark and stormy night a plan began to form. Murky as the black waters of the Everglades at first and growing clearer as a day breaking over Haulover Beach. Remember that steeple on North Miami Public Library? And so it began. A blending of the Scout Oath and Law, "It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown", and a good old fashioned childhood prank. And so a pumpkin was found, a poem was written, a steeple was climbed and a tradition was begun.

It's not always been easy. And, for the record Bill Furbee, at Halloween 2007, Tropical Storm Noel was going up the Gulf Stream bringing tropical force storm winds (47kts on Miami Beach) AND the torrential rains to South Florida. Coxies Army might be brave, but they are smart enough to back off to fight another year. That steeple is high enough when dry and in calm wind.

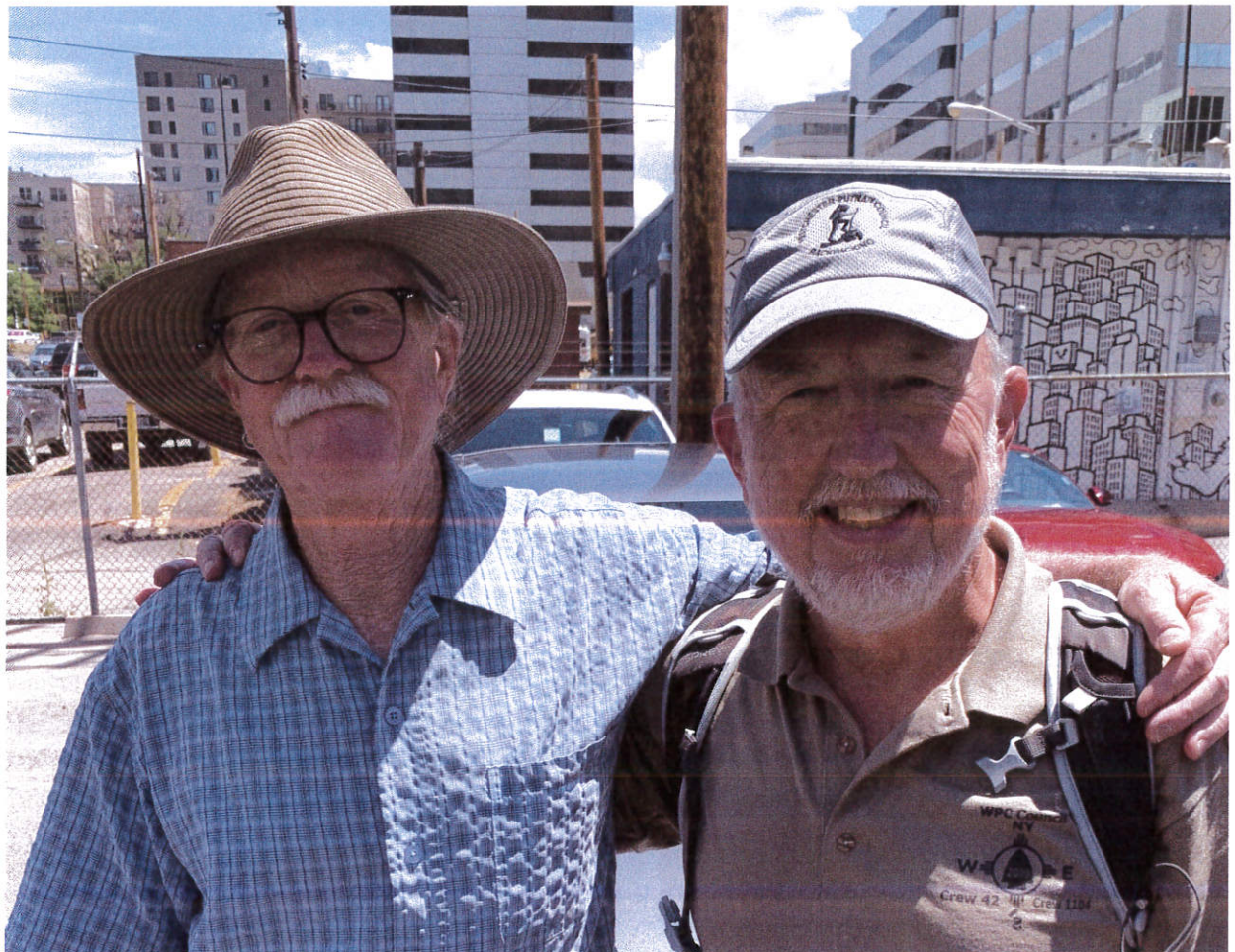


Of the originals; this year Lt. Col. Yeti P. Sasquatch and (after being AWOL for too many years) Lt. Col. Major Minor are in attendance. Major Minor's work is creating food in his restaurants, but other times he is riding the range.



Sgt. Skeeter's family (who has held the tradition together since Skeeter's passing) and some other Troop 42 alumni. Col. Coxie himself will receive a full report after the mission. His health and work load prevented his traveling from his home on the Chesapeake.

Col. Flavius participated in a mission over the summer with Sasquatch out in Colorado. It had been too many years.

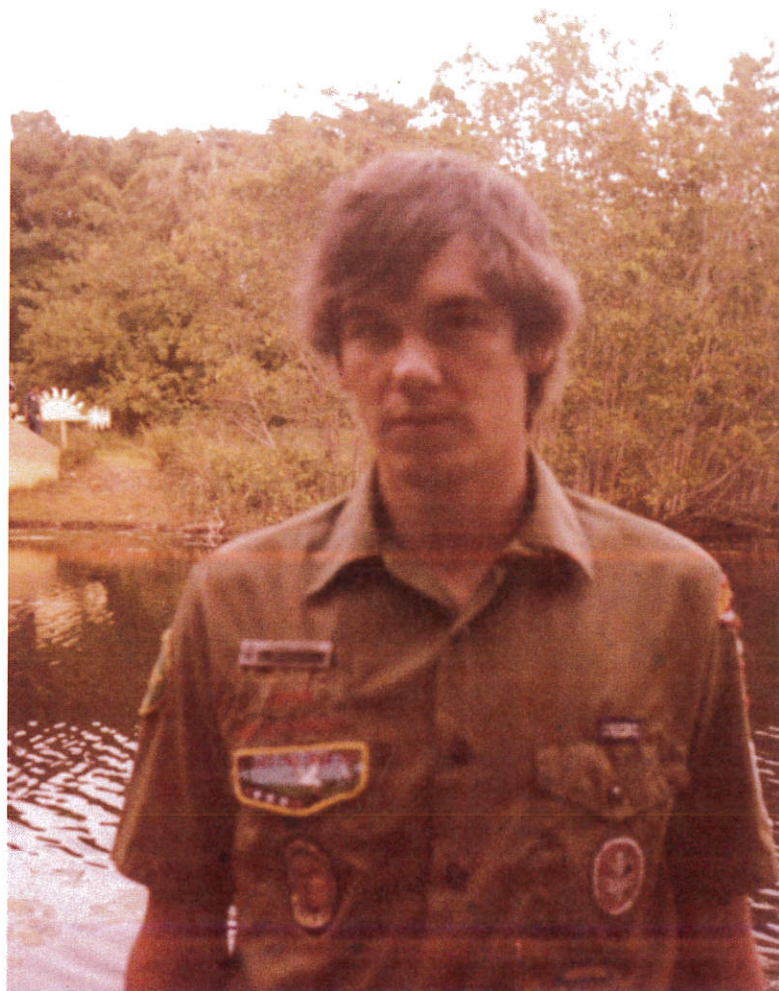


Sasquatch was on his way to Philmont for another 50 anniversary, this time with his sons; he's still a Scout. And still in 42 (which IS the answer to everything!).



Sasquatch and sons at 12,500 feet

While Col. Coxie is the leader, Sgt. Skeeter was the heart and soul. His Loyalty to the mission kept it going when others couldn't, or wouldn't. He never did the Pumpkin all alone, but it was close. Since then his brothers and father have made the Great Pumpkin fly on every year. His father, Camelot, turns out every year even into his 80s. Perhaps the Pumpkin is a Fountain of Youth?



AWARDS

On behalf of the Great Pumpkin the following awards are presented.

In BSA the Silver Beaver is an award given to those who implement the Scouting program and perform community service through hard work, self-sacrifice, dedication, and many years of service. It is given to those who do not seek it.

The Great Pumpkin awards its own Orange Beaver to a leader who served North Miami for many years. The feat of leading a Troop is daunting, but this leader had his own sons in the Troop, all four of which earned the highest award in Boy Scouts; Eagle. But this recipient is awarded the Orange Beaver for what he did after his sons left the Troop. For nearly twenty years he kept Troop 42 going.

Numbers shrinking, adult leaders and parents becoming increasingly rare, as long as there were kids who wished to be Scouts he kept going. When it finally got down to two Scouts it became time to fold the flag. For service to Scouting and to North Miami, Camelot is awarded the Orange Beaver.



The Great Pumpkin "Den Mother" title is bestowed upon two women who did so much for Coxies Army. Since they were not active, they never had to protect their secret identities and never had code names. So, in keeping with the time-honored tradition of naming parents; Yeti's mom and Skeeter's mom are recognized. Yeti's mom put up with years of Pumpkins carved on her dining room table and being the Air B&B for Col. Coxie when he came down. Skeeter's mom? Well, she put up with Skeeter and the rest of the Army. Both awards are posthumous.



ORDER OF THE GREAT PUMPKIN

Posthumously awarded to Sgt. Skeeter, for his unending devotion to the Great Pumpkin and its mission of watching over North Miami Public Library. It's pretty easy to state; that without his dogged determination, unyielding spirit, and OK, his stubborn cussedness we might not be putting the Pumpkin up for a 50th anniversary.

But in the end this whole saga is about friendship. While it started in Boy Scouts, it endured because of friendship. The tradition of the Great Pumpkin became a bond, a touchstone that brought us together each year. Sometimes over beer creating those awful poems, sometimes over the phone and later the Internet.

The Library was a great place for our dreams to start, unlimited possibilities really. But we grew and left the shelter of our Childhood, but somehow the protection of the Great Pumpkin still shielded us. We endured our breakups and divorces, we lost parents, gained the joy of children and then grandchildren.

We earned livings and a place in the world, but one night, every year, we could recapture a little of the deep friendship we had.

*"Nothing can match the treasure of common memories, of trials endured together, of quarrels and reconciliations and generous emotions. It is idle, having planted an acorn in the morning, to expect that afternoon to sit in the **shade** of the **oak**."*

This night is the shade of our oak, we can bask in the shade of our friendships, talk of old times and absent friends and gaze out on the city that nurtured us, North Miami.

Viva La Pumpkin!

LT COL Y. P. SASQUATCH

LT Col Major Minor

Major McBellicutti

Lt Cherry

SW Inspector Gadget

Corporal Comet

LT. OTTER

In memory of Sgt. Skeeter