

## Big Pumpkin Day Nov. 2000

I hope that all of you in the netherlands away from northern michigan had a great Big Pumpkin Day. For those of you who live in communities who don't celebrate Big Pumpkin Day, here is a brief description of the holiday.

Between the Fourth of July and the First Day of Deer Season, there is a long period of time when there is no holiday for the Goneawansians to celebrate. You might say "Hey Wade, what about Labor Day?" No, we do not celebrate Labor Day. Goneawansians Do Not celebrate anything with the word Labor in it. Labor Day isn't a holiday at all. It is LABOR day; it is the one day of the year we actually work. So on Labor Day when you are relaxing on the beach catching the last warmth of summer, Goneawansians are working in their yards putting their snowmobiles and rusty pick-ups back together and building deer blinds for deer season. Anyway, we Goneawansians needed a holiday to fill the void between the Fourth of July and First Day of Deer Season and came up with a unique late fall holiday called Big Pumpkin Day.

It started a few years back and now is a tradition of the north. Preparations for Big Pumpkin Day start of course during the spring planting season. However, it is thought that some of the more serious Big Pumpkin Participants start much earlier by beginning their seedlings inside during the winter. Now although Big Pumpkin Day is a festive day, the weeks and days preceding the weigh-in are fraught with misdeeds, deception, and chicanery. All means are used by participants to discourage and deceive other Pumpkin Participants. Pumpkin spies are out in force as early as August to spy on growers and report back to other participants on the progress of other growers. It can be a nasty business.

Now the first Pumpkin Day festivities were less than spectacular because of the summer drought of '97. Pumpkins were not as large as expected. In fact the largest was a paltry 16 lbs, which all the growers thought was a little ridiculous to parade through town with the Pumpkin Queen. However, always a community ready to celebrate, the town fathers came up with a solution. They went ahead with the parade, but a smaller scale parade. Read what I wrote. Not a scaled down parade, but a smaller scale parade, literally. Instead of having the pumpkin pulled through town on a hay wagon towed by the town fire truck, the pumpkin was pulled through town with a John Deere lawn tractor pulling a Red Flyer wagon. Instead of the Goneaway High School Band marching behind the championship pumpkin, the town fathers hired a bunch of traveling midgets, er excuse me, traveling "little people" to march behind the wagon. The effect was amazing. The pumpkin actually did look really BIG. Now you're probably saying, "Wade it is pretty unbelievable that there would just happen to be a traveling group of midgets, oops little people, who also happened to be musicians in town during big pumpkin day." You're right, that would be pretty unbelievable. You notice I didn't say a band of midgets, er "little people", I said a "group" of midgets, er "little people". Now the midgets, er "little people", didn't actually play the music, they just carried the instruments and the music was from Bennie's boom box in the Red Flyer wagon. Now everything would have went without a hitch except for one thing. The bass drum. It seems that the town fathers overlooked the fact that the radius of a bass drum is just slightly smaller then a midget, er "little person", leaving little room for error. Now everything went well until the bass drum "player" hit a pot hole on main street. The midget, er "little person" carrying the bass drum of course fell into the pot hole. This made him shorter than the radius of the bass drum. Well, you can imagine what happened after

that. The laws of physics took over. Having considerable momentum and looking like Captain Ahab strapped to the Great White Whale, the bass drum with midget, er “little person” attached went rolling down main street knocking out spectators and worse yet, knocking the Big Pumpkin off the cart. Here the story takes a turn for the better. The “Big” 16 lb. Pumpkin rolled into the Northwinds Bar excitedly followed by half the town. Rather than be discouraged by the days happenings, the enthusiastic crowd decided that this was so much fun that they ought to do it every year. However, it would have to be celebrated without the midgets, er, “little people” though. Seems Captain Ahab and the Great White Drum rolled on down main street and out of town chased by his little people friends-a site quite reminiscent of the Keystone Cops. Rumor has it that they rolled all the way to Posen arriving just in time for the Potato Festival Parade. As they rolled through town, they were mistaken for one of the floats and were wildly cheered. If memory serves me they won first place. Anyway, they kept on rolling out of Posen, never to be seen in these parts again. So that my friends is more or less the way Big Pumpkin Day got started.

That brings us to this year’s Big Pumpkin Day. The pumpkin spies had let it leak out that old ‘Muddy’ Path was about to win the biggest pumpkin for the third straight year. Now Foster Fenster entered the contest this year for the first time and being a competitive type fellow, he doesn’t like to lose. Also, this year, since the midgets were gone and the GHS band was unavailable, the participants had agreed to have the losers in the contest pull the winner, his pumpkin, and the pumpkin queen through town. Sitting in the 210 Tavern, I overheard a sinister plot by Foster Fenster and Big Jake. Since Foster’s pumpkin could not win and Big Jake’s was probably next biggest, a plot was hatched to throw the pumpkin contest to Big Jake. Foster arranged a hunting trip to North Dakota in an area near Muddy’s home town. Then Foster invited Muddy to go along with him. If Muddy accepted and went with Foster, Foster would avoid the embarrassment of losing and pulling the winner. Muddy would miss the weigh-in and Big Jake would win the Big Pumpkin contest. (The political, smoke filled, back-rooms have nothing on the maneuvering that goes into Big Pumpkin Day.) However, Big Jake was snared in his own web of intrigue. Foster and Big Jake made one, slight miscalculation. Seems there were only three pumpkin contestants this year. With Foster & Muddy in North Dakota, there was nobody to pull Big Jake through town. So the setting sun on Big Pumpkin Day found the townspeople watching Big Jake sitting on his pumpkin on the wagon on Main Street with nobody to pull him. Big Jake was robbed of his proudest moment, stung in his own Big Pumpkin sting. What about the Pumpkin Queen? Well, for the third year in a row Ashley Fenster won, as her main competition Princess, for the third year in a row, was in jail. And since Ashley is the wife of Foster, she was of course in North Dakota with Foster & Muddy.

Since this years parade was such a disappointment, the town fathers, hoping to repeat the festivities of the very first Big Pumpkin Day, voted to spare no expense to find the midgets, er, little people and bring them back for Big Pumpkin Day. They also voted to buy an even bigger bass drum and dig more pot-holes in main street.