

Big Pumpkin Day 2 October 2001

You might say it was the best of days; it was the worst of days. It was a day of joy; it was a day of humiliation. The day was a beautiful Indian Summer Day; the best of days. It ended in a near catastrophe at the Goneaway International Airport; the worst of days. It started as a normal Big Pumpkin Day. Spectators streamed into town for the festivities (pictures available upon request). Elmer Fieger won the Big Pumpkin Contest and became Pumpkin King of Goneaway; a day of joy. Big Jake, Muddy Path, Foster Fenster, Digger Dan, Dutch Thomas and the rest lost again this year; a day of humiliation. As the custom, the Pumpkin King and his Queen, in their gilded chariot, were pulled through the streets of Goneaway by the forlorn losers. You are probably wondering who was the queen this year? Well, as in every other year it was Ashley Fenster. Since Ashley wins every year, you might think the election is rigged or that maybe she is the only contestant. Not at all. The wives of the pumpkin growers are the other Pumpkin Queen contestants. Ashley wins fair and square every year. It is by a secret vote of the pumpkin growing contestants and their wives. The fact that Ashley owns the 210 Tavern and buys beer for the contestants and their wives every time she wins probably has some bearing on the outcome, but nobody seems to mind. You see, the other wives feel that losing the pumpkin queen election and drinking free beer is better than being Pumpkin Queen and paying for your beer. Makes good sense to Babe & I.

Now that we have covered the best of days, the day of joy, and the day of humiliation, unfortunately it is time to cover the Worst of Days. I hate to end a story on a tragic note, but sometimes literature must not only be entertaining, it has to be informative. This year Big Pumpkin Day added a new twist to the humiliation aspect for the losers. Dutch Thomas built a Trebuchet to enter in a Trebuchet contest back east. Now what is surprising about this is not that Dutch built a trebuchet, but that someone in Goneaway even knew what a trebuchet was, especially a guy named "Dutch". (Now for all you out there that don't know what a trebuchet is, it is similar to a catapult.) Anyway, Dutch's trebuchet was hauled out to the Goneaway International Airport, which until the second cutting of hay is baled, is also known as Hitchcock's hayfield. All the losers had to haul their losing pumpkins out to the airport. Then trebuchet was set up and each losing pumpkin was set in the trebuchet and each losing contestant had to stand before the catapult, face the crowd and make the following statement "I am ashamed of this pitifully, puny pumpkin" and launch it from the trebuchet. No one figured that Dutch's trebuchet would even work, much less launch those pumpkins as high and far as it did. As surprising as the efficiency of the trebuchet was, it was nothing compared to the surprise of those in attendance when they spotted the mail plane from Mio arriving early. Now the launchers with their backs to the runway couldn't see the plane, they just stepped forward, with their heads hung low, made their humiliating statement, and launched pumpkin after gorgeous orange pumpkin into the crisp fall air. The surprised crowd was too terrified to speak! Although we were terror struck, there was also something mesmerizing and surreal as we watched the mail plane dodging flying pumpkins. I have heard of the old time flying circuses that toured the country during the depression and despite my empathy for the pilot, I couldn't help but think, "Were they this good"? One can only imagine what was going through the mail pilot's mind. The poor pilot, of course, couldn't dodge those pumpkins forever. Fate finally caught up with him. As everyone knows, we all have hidden gifts and, as it turns out, Big Jake's hidden gift isn't that he can grow big pumpkins. Big Jake found out that he happens to be a crack shot with a trebuchet. It was not a pretty sight, but the pilot did manage to walk away from the debris field dazed, confused, and very orange, but unharmed. Unfortunately, despite what the U.S. Postal Service says, the mail does not always get through. So ended the worst of days.