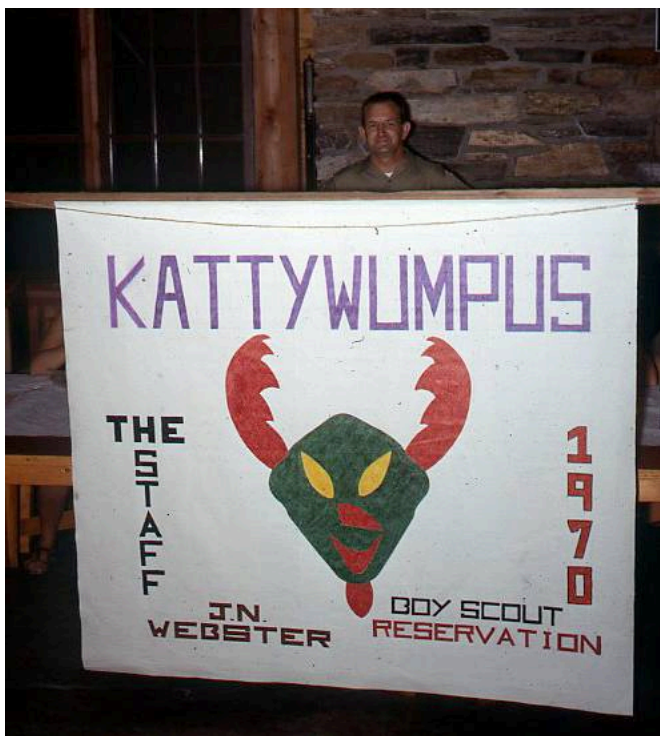


The Legend of Kattywumpus

As told by 1969-1971 Camp Director Sheldon Priest at the Closing Campfire each week during his tenure at JNW.

Back in the days when Maine was only knee-high as a state, when the caribou roamed its Northwoods, and oysters thrived in the Damariscotta, when the woodsmen had scarcely seen the tall virgin pines of the Allegash, there came into the forests a huge giant of a man. Whence he came nobody knows, nor took the trouble to find out. He was a timber chopper such as had never been seen before, more than a rod tall he stood in his moose hide moccasins and his shoulders were three regular axe handles wide. A heavy square-cut black beard decorated his chin, and his eyebrows resembled a birds-nest.

Stories of his fame and deeds soon were told from the Saco to the Saint John, of how his mighty axe with the two-foot blade could drop a tall pumpkin pine with one clean blow, and how he could clear ten acres in a day, and forty teams and eighty men were unable to yard the logs after him. Behind him, the squirrels wore a hungry look, and the beavers were a loss for food and building materials. The quiet trout streams either roared like torrents or dried up altogether



The Spirit of the Forest was worried - really worried. With this Giant in action, there would soon be no trees left. With no trees, the water would soon wash away the earth, the winds blow away the topsoil, and the land would be left only barren rocks and sand. No gardens, no food, no people, no fish, no birds, no animals, no anything. So the Spirit of the Forest decided to call a council of all the other Spirits to decide how they should best stop the destruction. The whole awful matter was discussed in the best Spirit fashion, and it was agreed the only probable weakness of the Giant was in his stomach. From all his exercise, of course, he worked up a tremendous appetite and the tales were being told of the cartload, or so, of food that he ate every evening when his day's work was done, so around this the Spirits laid their plan.

As he chopped to the South, one day he came to the ocean. Now mind you, he was a backwoodsman and had never tasted shellfish or Maine lobsters, so the

Spirits had arranged a huge clambake for his meal. There were clams and oysters, crabs and lobsters, and with some misgivings probably, the Giant fell to eating with both fists. The oysters, clams and crabs he found to be hardly worth the trouble for one of his size and appetite, but the lobsters pleased him to no end, after he got used to the looks of the strange creatures.

Now, to a giant, one lobster is scarcely a taste. He was delighted by this new food, but bored by the task of picking out the meat, so, before long, he just popped a whole one in his mouth and crunched it up. This was much easier, and he kept roaring and calling for more and more until he had gobbled up two dory loads. Then he stretched out by the fire and went to sleep.

This was just what the Spirits had planned for! They had begged the help of an Imp of Mischief, whose golden eyes gleamed for fun. Over his long nose they put a large lobster claw, and two more over his pointed ears. Another slipped one over his beard, and his face was painted sea-green.

The Giant twisted and rolled in his sleep, for lobster shells are hard to digest, especially two dory loads. The Imp of Mischief, whose name, by the way, was **Kattywumpus**, sat on the Giant's chest and tweaked his nose. The Giant moaned in his sleep, dreaming of huge waving claws, bulging eyes, probing feelers and many crawling legs like those of the strange creatures he had stuffed himself with.

Suddenly he awoke and when he saw Kattywumpus crouched on his chest, he leaped to his feet with a roar that was heard from Cape Neddick to Monhegan. He crashed off through the forest heading westward at top speed. Years later, tall tales of a similar giant who had a pet blue ox filtered back to the State of Maine from beyond the Great Lakes. Perhaps that is where he went, for he never was seen in these parts again.

Kattywumpus was so pleased with himself that he continued to wear his disguise and to prowl the forests of New England as a protector. Many of the weird stories from lumber camps, such as the one about the footprints in the snow that suddenly vanished into the air, of the piercing screams from the top of the bunk house in the dead of night, and others are perhaps his doings. No one has ever caught a glimpse of him, but sometimes we see the gleam of his golden eyes on the outer circle of the campfire light. He is ever on the watch for those who would destroy the forests, land, and game by careless or wanton cutting or fire.



Campsite #10 was named Kattwumpus in honor of Sheldon Priest