

Portland Area Council, Boy Scouts of America

LEGENDS OF SPIRIT LAKE

By Chief Lelooska

The three figures at the top of the pole represent the guardians of the northwest landscape...Y East which is Mt. Hood, Patoh which is Mt. Adams, and Loo Wit which is Mt. St. Helens.

Patoh and Y East were the sons of the Almighty and in the beginning of the world he put one on each side of the Columbia River. As time passed and people began to come into the world, quarreling started and trouble came.

The Almighty decided to try to bring peace to the world and its children by building a great rock bridge across the Columbia so the people could visit and trade with each other, and come to understand one another and end the constant warfare. He went to an old woman whose name was Loo Wit and promised her any gift her heart desired if she would guard the sacred fire on the bridge which was to be a gift to all mankind. All people would come to the center of the bridge and take the fire to warm their lodges. Loo Wit asked for one thing: to be made forever beautiful. This the Almighty granted and he set her down in the center of the stone bridge to guard the fire.

Because she was so beautiful, Y East and Patoh fell madly in love with her and soon the quarreling began. Y East would smile at Loo Wit; Loo Wit would smile back. Patoh would smile at Loo Wit and she would smile back at him. The mountain brothers began to grumble at one another, shake the ground a little bit and sometimes a little smoke would come out of the tops of their heads.

As time went on, things grew worse and the brothers began to quarrel in earnest. They hurled hot rocks back and forth at one another, blackened the sky with smoke and painted their sides with fire as war paint. They drove the game from the country, killed the fish in the rivers with their hot rocks and covered all the green landscape with volcanic ash. The Indians were driven into holes in the ground to hide like chipmunks until the war ceased.

Finally, the Almighty--in anger--put out the fire of his two sons, told them they were to sleep forever, and covered

their slopes with snow. He turned on Loo Wit and told her that because she had smiled on both his sons, she must be punished, also. However, he would keep his word and even in her long death sleep, she would be beautiful. He changed her into Mt. St. Helens and set her down in the beautiful valley where is today.

After changing his sons and Loo Wit into mountains, the Almighty smashed the great stone bridge and it fell into the Columbia River where its pieces remain to this day.

The crouching figure represents an ape-like human resembling the abominable snow man, called by our Indians, "Seatco." In the very beginning of the world this creature inhabited the slopes of Mt. St. Helens. According to the old Indians, it was very bad luck to see one and if they camped on the slopes of the mountains, the Seatcos would become very angry and throw rocks at their lodges. On the slopes of the mountain one may still hear the little voices and strange sounds attributed to the beasts.

The cannibal giant with large teeth lived in caves in the mountain. He would come down in the night, tuck Indians in the folds of his skin, carry them back to his cave to fatten and then eat them.

The figure on the very bottom of the pole is one that some Indians on the Yakima reservation claim to have seen. This is a combination of a bear and a fish...a huge fish with the head of a bear. It is supposed to inhabit the lake and if you go out on the lake to fish, your chances of meeting him are very good. He brings illness just from seeing him and it requires the services of a medicine man to take away the ill effects.

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