



# One raider tells how she did the Lion

By CELESTE McCAULEY  
Collegian Staff Writer

One brisk November evening in 1966, two women with jars of orange paint in their hands headed toward the Nittany Lion Shrine. Their mission: to give the limestone feline a new coat — of paint, that is.

A driver in a getaway car waited nearby to whisk them away after the mission was accomplished.

But these pranksters were not college students from one of the Lions gridiron rivals. Nor were they a trio of conspiring teenagers out for a good time.

They were, in fact, Suzanne Paterno, wife of Penn State Head Football Coach Joe Paterno, Sandra Welsh, wife of offensive backfield assistant George Welsh, and Nancy Radakovich, wife of linebacker coach Dan Radakovich.

These culprits were involved in just one of many incidents where the Nittany Lion Shrine was marred by the Temple red, the West Virginia blue and the Syracuse orange.

"We did it to try to get some spirit among the students," Sue Paterno said. "Everyone sat in the stands and didn't do anything — the students didn't have any spirit." The Lions, with then new coach Joe Paterno, had a 4-3 record at the time.

But how did she keep her scheme, designed to rekindle football spirit at the University, hidden from her husband, who was in the midst of his first year as head mentor of the Lions?

"Joe did not have a clue we were going to do it," she said.

On Thursday nights before games the coaches had get-togethers and then went to dinner.

Sue Paterno said she left a birthday cake for someone at home and wanted to bring it back to the coaches' dinner.

"I actually left the cake in the back of the car," Sue Paterno confided "I said I had to run home for it and that's when we went and painted the Lion.

"Nancy drove us. She sat in the car with the headlights off while Sandra and I went out in the back and dumped about six quarts of orange tempera paint on it to make it look like Syracuse did it.

"Right before I got into her car I looked right into the eyes of John Doolittle, the assistant track coach then. He looked at me, then looked at the lion and didn't say anything," she said.

"She started down the street and there was a campus patrol car coming towards us beeping — they didn't have flashing lights then," Sue Paterno said. " 'Nancy,' I said, 'put your headlights on — you're going to get us all arrested.' "

"She was so nervous that she forgot to turn the headlights on. There she was driving down the street jerking the clutch on her Renault.

"I wasn't nervous, but Nancy was," she said. "We still call her 'Nervous Nancy.' "

Sue Paterno said they did not use brushes to slosh the paint on. "We just dumped it on."

The two did not realize they not only doused the lion with orange paint, but also spilled some on themselves.

"When we went into the (restaurant) a couple of the wives guessed what we had done because of the orange splotches on our raincoats," she said. "And everyone started to whisper.

"Joe got suspicious, but he didn't say anything," she said.

The next morning someone walked into the (Joe's) office and told him they arrested the people who painted the Lion, she said.

"Joe panicked because he thought, 'Those three did it' meaning us. He just put it together," she said.

He called me and said, " 'You know you're going to be arrested.' He was quite upset," she added.

What actually happened, she said, was that after they poured the paint on the lion, three Syracuse students came at about 4 a.m. and covered the mascot with oil-based orange paint. They were arrested.

"They were the ones that got arrested. Joe didn't know that and neither did George or Danny so they were all petrified — they all panicked," she explained.

"My mother thought it was hysterically funny — Joe never did. But he's over it now. It took him about a week," she said.

Although the Lions lost to the Orangemen 12-10 and ended their 1966 season with a mediocre .500 record, Suzanne said the prank that Sandra, Nancy and she committed that November night was worth it.

"Every year since that they have guarded the Nittany Lion Shrine for Homecoming. So it did pay off," she said.

The three conspirators had a part in raising campus spirit.

Whether Sue Paterno and company will raid the shrine again is questionable.

"I don't give away any secrets," she chuckled.

Recalling the way she felt at a party held that Friday night before the Syracuse game, she said, "I guess I wouldn't because all the alums there were just horrified that anyone would ever dream of painting the lion.

"It was very difficult to stand there, when it's your husband's first year as head coach and listen to them cut up the people that did it," she admitted. "I was so glad those other (Syracuse) kids followed us."

# Shrine history: Paint, wax and a few missing ears

By CELESTE McCAULEY  
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Typically noticed just as a backdrop for occasional photographs, the Nittany Lion Shrine is once again in the spotlight as Homecoming activities begin.

This is the busiest time of the year for the Lion Shrine, carved from a 13-ton block of Indiana limestone, by sculptor Heinz Warneke.

The putty-colored mascot standing between Rec Hall and the Beaver Field main entrance was a \$5,000 gift from the Class of 1940. It was dedicated on Homecoming Day, Oct. 24, 1942, for the Colgate game.

Penn State became the first of 15 colleges that tied athletic fortunes and campus traditions to a lion mascot.

The adoption of the Nittany Lion as Penn State's athletic symbol was the idea of Harrison D. "Joe" Mason class of 1907, later called the "Father of the Nittany Lion."

At Princeton in 1904, he and other members of Penn State's varsity baseball team were shown two Bengal tigers as an indication of the *merciless treatment* they would encounter in the game.

In reply, Mason fabricated the "Penn State Nittany Mountain Lion," king of the beasts, who would overcome even the tiger. The team defeated Princeton and Mason persevered with his idea of implementing the lion as the school symbol.

Since its dedication the shrine has been the subject of numerous paintings, particularly by Penn State's football opponents.

The shrine escaped its annual painting for the first time since its dedication on Oct. 31, 1941.

Four Pi Lambda Phi pledges started the Homecoming vigil tradition by guarding the shrine throughout the night before a Temple game in 1950.

A contingent of Temple men was sent here to paint the shrine, but didn't attempt it because of the guard.

As a result of these attacks, the shrine was coated in 1951 with a wax substance to prevent the paint from seeping into the stone's pores. But this time, the maple stain has even penetrated the wax.

"If it's a situation where they just put some paint on it and don't physically mar it, it constitutes a fine and restitution," University

Police Services Supervisor Robert McNichols, said.

"If the ear is broken off like what happened in 1978 it's a desecration of a monument and constitutes misdemeanor charges," he said.

McNichols said campus patrols check the shrine on their regular patrols, but the manpower is not available for someone to watch it all the time during home football games or Homecoming weekend.

"The students guarding the lion during the vigil do help," he said.

The lion sculpture was never seriously damaged until November 1978 when vandals knocked off the right ear.

At 84 years old, Warneke flew from his Connecticut home to Penn State June to make a plaster mold of the damaged ear. This he turned over to Vincenzo Palumbo, a nationally known stone carver. With Warneke's impression, Palumbo carved a new ear.

Warneke suggested a mold be made so future repairs would be easier. The Class of 1940 spared no expense and raised almost \$12,000 to construct a mold cast last July.

Because the limestone mascot has been subjected to paintings so many times it requires special care from workers at the University's Physical Plant.

Guy Mussey, landscape foreman, said a protective coating is used on the lion.

"Because the limestone is porous we coat it with a protective wax polish, which doesn't take away from the natural beauty of the stone because it is completely transparent."

Mussey said the shrine is coated monthly and before every home game to prevent paint from penetrating the stone.

"Once they paint the lion, which is inevitable, we clean it by using a solvent degreaser which takes just about every kind of paint that they put on the lion off," he said.

Mussey said the wax is the only thing saving the lion's color because the solvent is not able to completely remove the paint from stone pores.

"If we didn't coat it the lion would be discolored by now," he said.

Having survived many a midnight raid not to mention frequent scrubbing, the lion, embodying art, tradition and the spirit of the University, still stands vigil under the trees by Rec Hall, ready to pounce upon paint-wielding Lion foes for many years to come.