



# SpooFs, Fakes, Reproductions, and Private Issues

## The ISCA Getting Started Collecting Series

When we trade patches, what we mostly see are Boy Scout patches. More and more, we also see patches that look like Scout patches, or are shaped like Scout patches (for example like lodge flaps or CSPs), but in fact they are not Boy Scout patches. Boy Scout patches are issued by a local council, OA lodge, troop, district, or by the national BSA. These other patches were issued by private individuals, usually for personal profit.

Fakes are designed to look like an existing Scout patch in order to fool people into giving a lot for something that is not real. Reproductions are also designed to look like existing patches, but they usually differ from the original in some obvious way. For example, they may have “REPRO” stamped on the back so that no one will confuse them with the real thing. Similar to reproductions, some lodges issue “Historical Issues”. For example they may issue a patch with the name of a lodge that merged to form their current lodge years before. They will typically be worth much less than the original patches. Occasionally, a patch’s original issuer may issue a reproduction. For example, BSA reissued the original “National Sample” CSP set that was sent to every council office in 1970 to inform them to start making their own CSPs.

Some people are deceived into trading a lot for a fake. Probably more commonly, particularly as word gets out about fake issues, some collectors use fakes and reproductions as “hole fillers” to fill a place in their collection that could not otherwise be filled without paying a lot of money for an expensive patch. The primary difference between a fake and a reproduction is fakes are designed to deceive, while reproductions are not. Some fakes are obviously different from the real patch. For example the real patch may have been made with high-quality Swiss embroidery as was common in the 1970’s and earlier, while the fake is very poor quality. Other fakes are very difficult to determine and require an expert.

Some fakes were made using the same equipment and manufacturer as the original patch. More recently, many patches with a computer design have been remade using the original computer program. It may be very difficult to tell these from the original. A very common type of fake today is the “Chang” fake named after a Taiwanese businessman who used the original programs to reproduce a lot of BSA patches. Other new fakes are coming out of Malaysia.

Spoofs are patches that may look like real Scout patches at first, but they are not made to look like existing patches. They have their own design. Spoofs are often shaped like OA flaps or CSPs because that increases interest in them, but spoofs come in all sizes and shapes. Spoofs are often funny or silly, and that is part of their appeal to many collectors. Some spoofs are offensive or in poor taste.

Before the early 1970's, spoofs were almost unheard of and there were very few fakes. Now spoofs and fakes seem to be everywhere. Why do they exist? The answer is quite simple: money. Say you want to go to a Jamboree, and you want to take 500 patches with you to trade and come home with 500 new patches for your collection. Let's also say you buy 500 JSPs from your council which made thousands of them. These JSPs, if they were at a typical price like \$3.50 each, would cost you \$1,750. That's a lot of money! Not only is it a lot of money, but you would be trading patches that people can get other places, so you will be competing with other traders from your council. Why does it cost so much? Because your council would make a profit of a dollar or two on each one, which might be used to help cover council expenses.

Now consider the person who instead of buying patches from his council, makes up his own. He puts some really cool design on a JSP-shaped patch, and orders them directly from the manufacturer. The council makes no profit on him, and his patch may cost on the order of a dollar each. So his 500 patches may cost him around \$500. Also, no one else has these patches, so no one else can compete with him. Why does a person go to a Jamboree with spoofs? Does he go to get other spoofs? No. He may come home with a few other spoofs, but his goal is to get as many JSPs and other Scout patches as he can. He wants the patches that the rest of us pay \$3.50 each or more for. This way he can build up his collection or even sell them afterwards for a substantial profit. Say he trades his 500 spoofs for 500 JSPs and sells 125 of them afterwards for \$4 each. He ends up with 375 JSPs at no cost.

Why do people collect spoofs? Because they are cool and funny and sometimes offensive. Most Scout patches aren't that cool and funny. Why do people collect fakes? Because they can fill a hole for less money than the original. What is harder to understand, is some fakes, particularly older ones, are worth a substantial amount of money, even when both the buyer and seller know it is a fake. As long as Scouts collect fakes and spoofs, as long as there is a profit to be made, people will keep making them.

You can trade for whatever you want, but remember, when you deliberately buy or trade for a fake or spoof, you are helping someone make a profit at your expense. The fakers

and spoofers are not trying to lose money; they are trying to make money. If no one collected fakes and spoofs, if the market went away, we would see many fewer of them.

How can you avoid getting a fake or spoof? Knowledge is key as are good reference guides. If you only trade one for one, particularly when you are getting started, it won't hurt you too much if you pick up an occasional spoof, private issue, or fake. You can avoid them by looking up every patch in a book before you trade for it or by asking a more experienced trader.

-- Warren F. Kuhfeld



**The Real Grand Valley T-2 is on top and the national reproduction is on the bottom. Often there is some characteristic that distinguishes the real from the reproduction or fake. In this case, the easiest thing to do is look at the back. The reproduction has a plastic back while the original has a cloth back.**