



Patch-L

The ISCA Getting Started Collecting Series

Patch-L is an internet list aimed at furthering the principles of the Scout Oath and Law in the hobby of collecting Scout patches, badges and memorabilia. In the beginning, patch trading (or badge swapping as it is known in most countries) occurred at large Scout gatherings like National or World Jamborees, National Order of the Arrow Conferences, or international events like Rover moots or Indabas. Gradually, trading moved to the mail, and badges and patches were swapped using the postal service. The Internet and e-mail have pushed the long-distance swap into high speed. Sites like eBay and Internet discussion lists like Patch-L give traders a wide reach in finding and acquiring their needs and in meeting new trading partners.

Subscriptions to Patch-L are free and are open to members of Scouting programs associated with the World Organization of Scouting movements. Most members are from the United States and belong to the Boy Scouts of America, but membership is open to all Scouting memorabilia hobbyists from any country and the list includes collectors of Girl Scouting and Guiding memorabilia as well. Membership is not automatic, however, and potential subscribers must provide background information that will be reviewed by the list owners who will ultimately determine whether an applicant can join Patch-L. Since personal information has to be submitted as part of the application, subscribers must be at least age 13 in order to apply. Once you subscribe, you can send your trading offers and requests for information to a single e-mail address and have it distributed to more than 700 members' e-mail addresses. Members may respond to your request to complete the trade, or if your post was a request for information that all might be interested in, they may reply to the entire list.

What can I expect to see on Patch-L?

You can expect offers to trade patches, badges, books, neckerchiefs and just about anything that has to do with Scouting. You will also see the latest hobby news, information, and discussions.

What is a LIST?

A list is an information distribution system made up of a LISTSERVER and subscribers. Subscribers send a note to the server and the server redistributes the message to all subscribers. Recipients can reply either to the original sender or respond to the entire list. The server has two addresses: one for posting notes to all of the subscribers and another for adjusting your mail options (like setting your subscription to NOMAIL if you are going

to be away for awhile and don't want your mail box filled when you get back). It's important to remember both addresses and send commands to the server and notes to the list.

Are there rules?

Everything seems to have rules and Patch-L has had to develop a few to prevent some problems that have occasionally occurred on the list. Subscribers are expected to comply with Patch-L ETHICS and Patch-L RULES (so you should review them before you apply) and any new rules that list owners may need to announce to the list. Members agree that they can be removed at anytime by the list owners without notice if the list owners decide it's in the best interests of the list. You can find complete information at the Patch-L website at <http://www.gilwell.com/patchl/>. There are a couple of important rules that we emphasize:

- You must not offer to sell in postings to the list. Even if you don't include prices, you cannot post offers to sell. Patch-L is hosted by a non-profit institution and it's important to respect their rules prohibiting commercial activity. This includes offers to trade for "dead presidents", announcing your e-bay offerings, and every other kind of post that involves selling something or otherwise engaging in what could be considered commercial activity by our host.
- You must not post any sort of "virus" warning to the list. Nearly all of these are hoaxes and posting will get you removed immediately. If you have a concern, contact a list owner first.
- Negative posts about another trader will result in your removal from the list.

Who are the list owners?

Patch-L seems to be the granddaddy of trading lists and was started by Eric Pierce (New York) in November of 1995 while he was a struggling college student. Eric started Patch-L in response to complaints by subscribers on other Scouting lists that did not want patch trading clogging up their e-mail boxes. Kevin Doyle (Hawaii) joined Eric as a co-owner 10 months later to help lighten the load. Eric finally decided he wanted a life and turned over his share of the burden to Donald Shull (Ohio) in 2001. Generally, Don manages the mechanics of the operation and Kevin handles subscriptions.

How do I join Patch-L?

Patch-L is easy to join. First, you must be logged on to the internet from the e-mail account you wish to subscribe from. Then compose an e-mail note to:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.BUFFALO.EDU

with the message:

SUBSCRIBE PATCH-L YourFirstName YourLastName

on one line, in the message portion of the note, and then send it. Be sure and use your real name - anonymous subscriptions are not tolerated. You will get a background information request from one of the owners. Once you provide the requested information and it's reviewed by a list owner, you will be added and you can then post your notes and trade offers to the entire list.

What about other groups?

There are a number of collecting groups on Yahoo, you may want to explore. These are web-based groups, meaning that you will have to visit the group's website to read and make posts, rather than having everything sent to your e-mail box as it is posted. There is a wide variety in how they review and screen members and in their tolerance of harsh posts, so you might want to check a few out, to see how "Scout-friendly" they are.

-- Kevin Doyle