



By King Wekenmann

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Florida Panther Patrols Industrial Area

Jupiter has changed a lot since the early 1970's when I first became employed as a young Jupiter Police Officer. Indiantown Rd. was a two lane highway. Interstate I-95 did not exist, but the entrance to the Turnpike did. Back in 1975 there was a small Industrial area known then and today as Pennock Industrial Park. The Industrial Park area in the early 1970's was a one way in and one way out road, from Indiantown Rd. A heavily wooded area was on the South and West sides of the Industrial Park. To the East, the Industrial park backed up to the Jupiter Christian School and the Indian Village (now known as Jupiter River Estates).

At night, Jupiter was a very isolated and desolate area with a variety of animals frequently spotted which included: Possum, Fox, Armadillo, Bobcat, Stray Dogs, Coyote and Ferrell Cats, and an occasional Weasel. Most industrial parks are prone to night time burglary so it was patrolled more frequently by police. I had heard from other officers that this area never got broken into at night because of a panther patrolling the area at night. Many a night I would come out to the area looking for possible burglaries, or possible perpetrators and trespassers and never did see the panther.

Behind JADCO Sign Company, there was a two story

cage with spider monkeys that were caged there. I had seen them many times hanging around the cage. One night when on patrol I heard the monkeys making a loud noise which I never heard when I would patrol through the area. They were looking in a direction to the West of the cages.

Thinking that they had a possible perpetrator in their sights, I turned off the squad car lights and quietly headed west on the back road of the park. I approached the furthestmost Southwest building and shut off the car and let it coast to a stop. I stepped out of the car and listened for any unusual sounds. The monkeys had gotten quiet. I listened for a while and then heard the monkeys start up again.

I then heard what sounded like a woman screaming coming from the West side of the building. I listened and heard it again and started in that direction on foot. Suddenly, I spotted the Panther at the far side of the building. It was watching me and sounded off again. That's all I needed, I hoofed it back to the car with all the speed I had while the panther felt close behind. I jumped into the car and slammed the door shut quickly rolling up my windows, still hearing the screams behind me. It took me a second to realize that the screams I now heard, were

my own.

Yes Sir, I want to tell you that this panther did a real good job of patrolling the area for a couple of years. This was a big boy, I estimated at about 125 to 140 pounds.

I continued my patrol for a couple of years in that area and was then surprised when I worked my first burglary in the area since being employed by the PD. It was shortly after taking that call that I learned that somebody in West Jupiter was arrested for having possession of a panther pelt, according to the Florida Fish and Game Patrol. It was sad to hear that the industrial park panther that patrolled and kept the bad guys at bay for so long, met such a devastating end.

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