

Patrick Biddle's Great Adventure

Where one ten-year old kid befriends an ant named Lutz McCoon,
fights a beetle, eats flyball soup and becomes a hero

by
Kurt Snow

A Table of Adventurous Chapters



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Colonels, Judges and Flyball Soup

“Excuse me, sir, would you just happen to be Patrick Biddle—the Patrick Biddle of Floodwater fame?” The ant speaking to Patrick had a very large nose, and black and purple fuzz spotted the antennas that stuck out of his hat. He spoke in what sounded like a clipped, German accent.

“Uh, yeah, that’s me,” replied Patrick, stepping forward.

“I am Colonel Futz. These are my colleagues, Colonel Putz and Colonel Butz.”

Two small ants stepped forward. They were so small they looked like kids. They were twins. Both wore coats that were too big, with the coat tails dragging along the ground.

“I, and my well-regarded colleagues, have been led to believe. . . .” Colonel Futz paused, politely coughed, looked about, and then continued in a low voice. “That you are an Expert Taster.”

“Yes, that’s what we have been led to believe,” added a high-pitched, girlish voice. It was Colonel Putz.

“I am?” asked Patrick, not sure what to make of the scene before him.

“Oh, yes, yes, yes. That is exactly what we were led to believe,” continued the big nose spokesman.

“And who. . . ?” asked Patrick.

“We have been told that you have a keen sense of taste, possess a cheery disposition, and, all in all, are a good sport,” continued Colonel Futz.

“Thanks, but. . . .”

“Therefore, it is highly recommended that you should join your fellow Expert Tasters as a Soup Judge.”

“Judge!” Patrick exclaimed. The idea shook him. Except for green cow ice cream, he was sure he did NOT like ant food. Yet, for some reason, these kooky judges expected him to judge ant food and that most surely meant he would have to *eat* ant food. He frowned at the thought.

“Oh, yes, a Soup Judge. The most important judging job in the entire Summer Solstice Celebration,” chimed in Colonel Putz with his girlish voice.

“You see, Hero of the Floodwaters. . . .”

Patrick turned to face a deep, bass voice with a southern drawl behind him. It was little Colonel Putz's twin, Colonel Butz, speaking.

"We need five judges. That's them there the rules. And, son, we need you desperate like. It ain't a pretty sight back there. Ever seen fidgety ant women before?"

"Ah, no."

"Well, you don't want to see it. The look in them their eyes is downright scary and who can blame 'em? Some of them women folk, no doubt, have been spending hours perfectin' their favorite soups: gut soup, speckled wing soup, dry weed soup, dragon snap soup, and the best of all, flyball soup. Yes, siree, we got the best jobs in the fair. But the rules say we gotta have five judges. Now that you're on board, we've got four."

"Yep, that's them there the rules," echoed the girlish voice.

As you can imagine, as soon as Colonel Butz uttered the words 'flyball soup,' Patrick's stomach took a dive. He was desperate to find a way out of this predicament.

"But, I don't want to be. . . ."

"Uh, you need five judges?" said Simon.

"Yep," said the three judges, patiently waiting with their hats in their hands.

"Well, who's going to be the fifth judge?" asked Simon, hoping that the judges would pick him.

"Now, that's a good question," replied Colonel Butz.

"Very good question," added Colonel Putz.

"I'd say it was the best question I have heard all day, wouldn't you, Colonel Butz?" chimed in Colonel Futz.

"Without a doubt, Colonel Futz. The best question."

"I agree," said Colonel Putz. "Simply, the best question, bar none. Doubt if we'll hear a better question all day, perhaps all week."

"Yes, all week, no doubt," replied Colonel Futz.

"Or, possibly all month," added Colonel Butz.

"Now, there is the year to think about. What about this year? Do you think we have heard a better question all year?"

"Well, that is a good. . . ."

"STOP!" shouted Lutz. "I say, someone's got to do something, else this blabbering will never end. I'll be your fifth judge."

"Excellent suggestion," exclaimed all three Colonels together. "Capital suggestion."

So with everyone in agreement, except for Patrick (and Simon, who was quite disappointed that he had not been asked to be a judge), the three judges and the two recruits made their way to the soup tent.

Hundreds of ants were packed inside the soup pavilion. As soon as Patrick and the others entered, a loud murmur erupted across the tent. On the stage was a table. Along the center of the table was bowl after bowl of soup, hot steam wafting into the air. But Patrick did not pay any attention to the steam; it was the smell he noticed. It was wretched! As the judges made their

way across the stage Patrick thought he was going to barf. It smelled as if someone had made the soup from garbage.

A bell sounded. Colonel Futz stepped forward. "Ladyants and Gentleants. May I have your attention, please? Oh, thank you. Thank you, indeed, for your kind, kind attentions. It is with great honor that I present our most distinguished judges for the keynote event of the Queen Mum's Summer Celebration."

"Long live the Queen," shouted someone from the crowd.

"I agree, long live the Queen. Splendid notion. Splendid."

"Oh, no," groaned Lutz, "this is going to take all night." But to his surprise, Colonel Futz was not distracted and stuck to the point.

"And we will have a toast to her Highness a little later in the program. First, we have a bit of judging to do, do we not?"

The crowd roared their approval.

"And to help us on our way in this year's soup contest we have a most celebrated guest. Allow me to introduce that enterprising explorer, the doer of great deeds, the rescuer of the rescuees, that famous and noble human being, Patrick Biddle of Floodwaters fame."

And the crowd roared again.

Patrick froze. Now everyone would be watching him.

"On with the program," shouted Colonel Futz.

"Follow me." Colonel Futz beckoned to Patrick and Lutz. They followed him along the table.

"You will begin here," instructed Colonel Futz, placing Lutz in front of a soup bowl filled with brown liquid.

"And you, my boy, here."

Patrick looked at his bowl. To his relief it looked normal. There were bits of lettuce, celery, and other plants floating in the soup. It looked like regular, old vegetable soup.

"Judges, your aprons, please," instructed Colonel Futz who had returned to the podium. Several assistants ran up to Patrick and Lutz. They tied on huge white aprons. The apron ran from under Patrick's chin down to his toes. Next, they fastened goggles around his head that went over his glasses. Finally, they placed a plastic bag over his hair.

"On your mark, get set, SOUP!" shouted Colonel Futz. He clanged a bell to start the competition.

Colonel Futz, Putz and Butz grabbed spoons that were the size of fly swatters, and started shoveling gobs of soup into their mouths. Lutz and Patrick sat frozen, staring at the other judges.

"Come on, you have to get going," encouraged one of the assistants, nudging Patrick in the ribs.

Lutz and Patrick looked at each other, shrugged, grabbed their spoons, and like the others dived into the soup.

Much to Patrick's surprise (and relief) the soup actually tasted good. After a couple of bites he laid down his spoon. Although it tasted good, there were more soups to taste and he did not

want to get full. He wondered how he was to mark his score. He glanced around for help, but all the other judges, including Lutz, were bent over, their heads in their bowls. Each judge was quickly shoveling the soup into their mouths. Red, green, brown and black soup was flying everywhere. Soup ran down Colonel Futz's chin, down his bib, down his legs and onto the floor. Colonel Putz shoveled soup so quickly it flew past his open mouth, drenching his head and antennas. Colonel Butz's soup was flying out of his bowl and sloshing the audience in the front row. But instead of scooting away, the audience rushed to the stand, their mouths wide open to catch a taste of the flying soup. Patrick was dumbstruck!

The bell rang. The judges dropped their spoons. A voice sounded over the speakers, "And your scores, judges?"

Colonel Futz picked up his bowl and poured just a few drops into a jar.

"Guess he liked that soup, ladies and gents! The mark is nine on the jar."

Next, Colonel Putz poured out his bowl, a little more came out than Colonel Futz's bowl.

"Colonel Putz scores . . . eight on the jar."

One by one, each judge poured out the contents of his bowl. When they got to Patrick, he poured most of the soup into his jar.

"Well, audience, it looks like our newest judge didn't like that one. Only a score of three."

It dawned on Patrick how the contest worked. If a judge liked the soup, then he tried to eat all the soup before the bell rang. If he didn't like it, then he poured the contents back into the jar.

Five more bowls of soups appeared in front of the judges. Patrick had liked the first bowl. He was irritated that he had given it a low mark. He looked up. Simon and Spurt were in the middle of the audience. They waved. The bell sounded again. He stuck his head down and started shoveling soup into his mouth. Again, he was amazed. He liked this soup better than the first. When the bell rang, there wasn't a drop of soup left in Patrick's bowl.

"Ladies and gents, our newcomer gives the flower soup . . . a ten."

Contest workers placed soup bowl after soup bowl in front of Patrick and the other judges. The other judges gobbled up spoonful after spoonful without the slightest effect, but Patrick was starting to feel queasy.

"Last round. Soon we will have a winner, Ladyants and Gentleants. But which soup? The flyball soup is in first place, followed closely by rosebud."

'Flyball soup,' thought Patrick grabbing his stomach. 'Oh no!'

Patrick peered at the black liquid in the new bowl. As he watched the soup slosh round, parts of eyeballs popped to the surface . . . there was a reason why they called it flyball soup!

Patrick started to turn green. He looked around, desperate for a way out of eating flyball soup. He glanced down the stage, then across the tent. No ideas popped in his head, but he did notice something suspicious. At the back of the tent, sneaking behind the crowd was Sotrick carrying a jar.

"Lutz!" hissed Patrick.

Lutz glanced over at Patrick, head bent towards his bowl, soup dripping off his nose, the bib dotted with black, grey and orange soup stains.

“Look! Back there!” He nodded toward the back of the tent. “What’s he carrying?”

The announcer interrupted: “Last bowl, judges. Who will the winner be? On your mark, get set, SOUP!”

While Colonel Futz and the others went straight to business, Sotrick slinked out of the tent. Patrick turned his attention back to the soup. He bent over, grabbed his spoon and slurped down his soup. He took a bite, then another bite. Looking around to see if Sotrick had reappeared, he shoved another spoonful in his mouth. But instead of soup, he felt something round and spongy in his mouth. A flyball! Patrick jumped to his feet. His first thought was to spit, but his sudden movement had caught the notice of the announcer.

“Oh, ho. What is our guest judge up to, Ladyants and Gentleants? Looks like he is not too happy! He’s not thinking about spitting, is he? Must not have read the rules, strictly forbidden!” Every eye in the entire tent looked at Patrick. He stared back at the crowd. A sinking feeling overcame him. He knew he had no choice. Slowly, he crunched down on the flyball. A warm, delightful sensation filled his mouth. A cinnamony, buttery taste flooded over his tongue. It was delicious. Patrick was astounded. He had never tasted anything like it in his whole life. He couldn’t believe it: he loved flyball soup . . . more to the point, he loved fly eyeballs!

“He likes it, folks!” exclaimed the announcer.

By the time the bell rang, Patrick had licked his bowl clean and gobbled up three more eyeballs. He had given the flyball soup a ‘10.’

“Folks, we have our winner,” announced Colonel Futz. “Judge Biddle has put the flyball soup on top. Give a big round of applause to this year’s winner . . . Mrs. McGroon. That’s right, folks, the wife of Ronald McGroon of McGroon’s How Now Green Cow ice cream fame.” Mrs. McGroon came forward and accepted the award (a blue ribbon, a golden soup bowl, and a year’s supply of flyball soup ingredients, courtesy of Garble’s Grocery Store). As she accepted the award, she smiled at Patrick and winked.

As soon as the contest was over Patrick grabbed Lutz.

“Did you see him?”

“Wasn’t that grand, sir? I haven’t had so much good soup in one day in my whole life. Soup judging is the life for me.” Lutz patted his huge, swollen belly. Then turning to Colonel Futz, Putz and Butz, he said, “Thank you, kind sirs,” and let out the longest belch Patrick had ever heard in his life. As Lutz burped Patrick’s eyes widened. Lutz’s belly began to shrink. By the end of the belch his tummy had returned to normal.

“Excellent, Mr. McCoon. That is exactly how we feel, isn’t it, boys?” asked Colonel Futz. Without a moment’s hesitation, the three judges pushed their heads together and belted out a burp. It was, of course, three times louder, richer and juicier than Lutz’s burp, sounding like a barbershop quartet.

While the three judges were burping, Patrick grabbed Lutz. “Don’t you think we should find out what he is up to?”

“Who?”

“You know,” yelled Patrick over the sound of the Colonels’ belches. “Sotrick.”

“Now that you mention it, he did look a bit sneaky.”

“That guy gives me the creeps,” replied Patrick. “I bet he’s up to something.”