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Dr. O'Donnell

Advanced Composition

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Markoff's Haunted Forest, Dickerson MD: Enter if You Dare

(Must Sign Waiver before Entry)



Picture designed by Markoff's Haunted Forest in Dickerson, MD.

Markoff's Haunted Forest

Website: markoffshauntedforest.com

Telephone: (301) 216-1248

Address: 19120 Martinsburg Rd,
Dickerson, MD 20842

Open Dates for 2015 (most recent
schedule): October 2nd – October
31st from dusk (7-ish) to close

Pre-bought Online Trail Tickets:

- \$30 each, Fridays and Saturdays
- \$25 each, opening weekend (October 2nd-3rd) and Thursdays

Day of Trail Tickets:

- \$35 each, Fridays and Saturdays
- \$30 each, opening weekend (October 2nd-3rd) and Thursdays

My two older brothers, Matt, 33, and Ben, 21, and I,

19, were standing in a single file line waiting to get in as we heard cackling laughter, screams of terror, and the distinct revving of chainsaws in the distance. The date was October 31st, 2014; it was Halloween. As we patiently waited in line, I glanced down at the bright light coming from

my Iphone and saw that it was nine o'clock. An hour and a half prior, we all had been packaged up like sardines into Matt's 2003 Ford Focus at our home in Ellicott City, Maryland. To say I was happy to be out of that tiny car and standing in line would be a serious understatement.

We had been planning this trip for a while, more than two months, and finally we were there, standing in the admittance line at Markoff's nationally ranked Haunted Forest in Dickerson, Maryland. Two months before, Matt called me on my cell phone and relayed to me what his coworker had told him about this wonderfully horrifying place. During the phone call, he explained to me that each year they incorporate a different theme into the attraction, and that this year's theme was Magic. I was hooked.

A few minutes passed as we started to get closer and closer to the entrance. We had bought our trail tickets in advance online, so we were in the shorter, faster moving line. The other line was made up of those who wrongly thought it would be easier to "just buy the tickets there". After just five minutes of standing in line, it was our turn to go next. The witch at the counter was very nice and took our tickets with a smile. She then gave each of us a sticker with the number 36 on it and kindly told us to put the sticker on the outside of our clothing. Then she said, "36 is your group number. When group 36 is called, go to the trail entrance." That was the last nice person I met that night; the rest just wanted to scare me.

Behind the Scenes: Calleva Farm

You may have noticed in the text box on the first page that Markoff's Haunted Forest is only operational during the month of October. This is because Markoff's Haunted Forest is actually just a small piece of a giant farm which is operated as a farm for every other month of the year; the farm is called the Calleva Farm. For the other eleven months of the year the 165

acre farm grows produce, raises cows, pigs, chickens and turkeys for meat, has over 20 horses, and eight bee hives. The farm also runs programs created to educate children as well as summer camps. Since the farm is so big and there is abundant space for it, the owners decided against breaking down and rebuilding the Haunted Forest every year when October rolls around, and instead dedicated land specifically for the Haunted Forest's use.

The Layout (Circle of Death)



Picture Taken by Markoff's Haunted Forest

Markoff's Haunted Forest has been operational for over 20 years. The layout of Markoff's is very simple. At the edge of the forest, they have strung together a circle of small, wooden buildings and then lined them up side by side just like concession stands at baseball games, except the buildings are facing the inside of the circle instead of the outside. This way whoever has already paid to get into the attraction will have access to the buildings and those

who have not paid will be kept out. The space that is created and sealed off inside the circle of buildings is called the, "Circle of Death". This is the "waiting area" of Markoffs where everyone waits for their group number to be called so they can walk the twenty minute trails through the forest. In the middle of the Circle of Death are three, giant, roaring fire pits that eat trees whole. The first time I saw them, I couldn't believe how big they were. The light from the fires was the only thing used to brighten up the Circle of Death. The circle of buildings surrounding the fires housed exotic games, food, live music and death defying performances. So while you wait for your group to be called, you're free to play games, eat, and be entertained.



Picture Uploaded from modernreston.com

Tickets! Get your Tickets Here!

All of the games in the Circle of Death require tickets to play. Most games require only three or four tickets to play, however, there are a few things like the zip-line, the Death Jump, and the Haunted Hayride that cost more tickets. Tickets for games are \$20 for 20 tickets and are bought in the Circle of Death, whereas the "trail ticket" that you paid for earlier was only a ticket of admittance and also allows you to walk either of the two trails through the forest. I don't want to spoil what you will see on the trails, however, I will tell you about my experience with the Haunted Hayride, which is exactly the same kind of stuff you would encounter walking the trails.

The Butcher Shop

This is one of my favorite attractions at Markoffs and it costs fifteen tickets to go, but I promise it is worth every one. It starts when twenty people are loaded up onto a metal cage with wheels. The cage is then pulled by a tractor to the unknown destination. The ride is approximately five minutes long, and ends at "The Town". Upon unloading you are greeted by The Sheriff who corrals everyone into a line. After everyone has their spot in line he tells us that they have one rule in this town, "Don't turn your back on The Butcher!" After he finished telling us the town rule, he began to chauffeur groups of people into the first building, which just so happened to be The Butcher Shop. The Butcher Shop was a small, wooden room with a single table in the middle of the room. On the table was a human corpse with a few limbs missing, and standing over the corpse, at about six foot five inches, holding a huge butchers knife, was The Butcher, who looked like he previously had been a world champion body builder. As my two brothers and I made our way around the table in a single file line, Matt in front, Ben in back, and



Picture Taken by Markoff's Haunted Forest

me in the middle, The Butcher stood in one place, glaring at us, and repeated slammed his knife against the table.

Well, my brother Ben, lacking all common sense, turned his back on The Butcher. The Butcher didn't like that at all, and I know this because he yelled, "Don't turn your back on ME!" and started walking towards Ben showing him his bloody knife. We all froze and watched intently as The Butcher, coming closer and closer to Ben, started to raise his knife. And finally, when he was in arms reach of Ben, The Butcher swung his giant knife and chopped into the wall just next to Ben's left arm. The Butcher started to turn his head ever so slightly, caught Ben's gaze with his own, and sternly spoke, "Get out". We did as we were told and moved onto the next building. We ran through five or six more little shops until we finally found our way outside again. The groups that had gone before us had been loaded back onto the metal cage for the ride back to the Circle of Death. Matt, Ben, and I were the second to last group that went

through the town so after the group following us had been loaded up we started the five minute ride back to the Circle of Death.

My Thoughts

With these final words I would like to stress just how incredible this place really is. The effort that was and is still being put into the creation of this wonderful place is truly astounding. If somebody asked me what I would like to do for Halloween this year, or the year after that, my answer would and will always be "Markoff's Haunted Forest". I have always loved Halloween but after experiencing Markoffs, I found a deeper love for this fun-filled holiday.

About the Author

Joseph A. Haman is a 21 year old Junior at East Tennessee State University majoring in Accounting. He lives on Signal Mountain in Chattanooga, Tennessee when he's not in school and he loves to be outside or doing something adventurous.
