

PowWow #10

PowWow #10 is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, Aug. 6, 1994. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Ten, (we've reached double digits!) when the Topic of the Month, is Amusement Parks.

Growing up in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, there were no theme parks, amusement parks, nor any form of standing recreational area. Instead, we looked forward to the one or two traveling carnivals that came through town each year.

That was before the end of the great traveling groups that crisscrossed the midwest. Later, they dwindled into insignificant little parking-lot shows. But in the good ole days, there were midways, freak shows, exotic dancers, peep shows, and all sorts of wonderful spectacles otherwise pretty much unknown in Tom Sawyer Country.

My interest in carnivals went far beyond the rides; those splendid brilliantly lit wheels of terror (and nausea!) I loved it all: the scent of the greasy bubbling oil, the cotton candy, the sawdust under our feet. I always told my mother I wanted to run away with the carnival when I grew up; she dissuaded me with discussions of hygiene ("such dirty places; no provision for sanitation...")

filled with travel, new places and people...and, yet, with a strong tie to their fellows. The carnival people were a family: even I could see that, and I admired and craved that sense of belonging they each seemed to have, despite their easy ways that swept them from one county to another, one state to the next, like birds flying from one field to another.

I never really got over my love for carnivals, even when the rides and midway had lost their appeal. It was my awareness of a special society they belonged to that kept dragging me back.

Later, when I read **Quandry** and **FanVariety** and some of the other fanzines of that period, I saw that same sense of family in the quips and banter between the fans who wrote for them. It fascinated me that they all knew each other. I believe that sense of family was what really attracted me to fandom, even more than my interest in artistic creation.

Becoming a fan was just my way of running away to join the carnival.

"It's for you and Arnie," Ben said, as he handed me the large, beautifully wrapped package. As the heavy box entered my hand, I felt a spark of electricity: I knew it contained something important.

I tried to gracefully open the box, then gave in to my feelings and ripped it open. Inside: a pristine copy of the screenplay of *Generations*, the next *Star Trek* movie, THE glittering jewel in my science fiction collection. Thank you, Ben!

In the center of the exhibits, was the coin-toss event. Stacks of glittering glassware were arranged in the center of the display: bowls and plates and tumblers and soup tureens, and usually in the center, one magnificent large cut glass piece, like a punch bowl or fancy candelabras. Surrounding this wonderful heap of shiny silicon was a fence, and a walkway for the coin-tossers. The object was simple: pitch a coin, and any dish it landed in was yours!

I believe my love of glassware goes back to those displays. The coin-toss event was most popular during the Depression (no, I wasn't there, but I've seen pictures) and the colorful Depression Glass and glittering pressed crystal were more shiny to me than gold.

My entire love of collecting probably goes back to those stacks of glassware I never could possess, in whose shine I could always see the reflection of the carnival.

***This article is dedicated
to Ben Wilson.***

None of her arguments affected my love of the troupes that traveled through town. In my eyes, their lives were glamorous,

Carnivals used to have one special exhibit that, even now as I think of it, catches me even more than the ferris wheels.