

# PowWow #13

**PowWow #13** is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, Nov. 5, 1994. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Thirteen, and marks the First Anniversary of this August Group (November Group doesn't sound right). Who would have ever thought we'd reach our annish point, when the Topic of the Month, is  
**\*Animals & Pets\***

Daisy, Daisy, Give Me The Answer Do.

The whole world (well, at least the fannish part of it) knows that I'm a Cat Person; my yellow tomcats have been immortalized by Ross, Jay Kinney, Mickey Rhodes and Pam Janish; reported on by Arnie, and lovingly catalogued by me. But this very year I lost my heart to a dog named Daisy, and this story is about her.

I spent a few days in October away from my computerized world, visiting with my brother in St. Joseph, Missouri (home of the Pony Express, and jumping off place for The Mormon Trail.) A pretty little town (about 70,000 honest souls), it has lots of old time charm spread up and down the hilly streets. It's cuddled up to the East Shore of the Missouri River, just a mite north of where the Platte comes in. I liked it a lot; it wasn't quite home, but very close.

When we entered the parsonage, Daisy sprang toward me snarling, baring her fangs, hair standing upright on her back. "Now, Daisy, you settle down," Earl reasoned with her, and she obediently backed off, while keeping me on point.

My sis-in-law was pinned down with a bad back; she'd picked up a piece of paper the week before and strained a muscle. Earl's probably the best cook in my family, and not a bad housekeeper, either, so the hospitality was fine, but it wasn't a good weekend for site-seeing.

This actually worked well to my liking; when I visit folks, I'd rather sit and talk.

As we sat together, me on the loveseat and Earl in the rocker, while Marilyn lay on the sofa, Daisy eyed me menacingly, now and then growling low under her breath. "Daisy, you be still," Marilyn said, then told me, "Try not to look directly at her. She's funny; doesn't like strangers to look at her."

I obligingly looked away, while putting my hand down and patting her. "Good girl, good girl," I said, staring into the wallpaper.

"She really likes to be rubbed under her chin," Marilyn encouraged. So I sat rubbing this snarling behemoth under her chin, saying "Good dog," and wondering if she'd let me live.

The conversation roamed



freely; we'd not seen each other for 7 or 8 years. Earl's been preaching for 40 years or so, and we were disagreeing a lot even before he started in the ministry. But despite our very basic

dissimilarities, we're kin, and have a lot of stances in common as well. It used to worry me, back when I was still in steady contact with him, that we didn't get along too well; in later years, it worried me some when Earl and I got along too well.

But by now, time, age, loss, death, disappointment --all the things that make people strive harder for wisdom--have restored us more to familial status; I suppose we try harder to understand one another now.

Perhaps that's why we found more points of agreement than usual. Earl's interests are more political than mine. I expected him to be religious; in his line of work, I'd be sad if he were not. But the depth of his political interests were a surprise. He sees bad intent and downright evil plot in many things I'd never even thought about. He's sure of conspiracies, where I see only coincidence. Yet we did find, to my surprise, many concerns in common. We both bemoaned the state of education. We both worried about the cost of medical expenses, the homeless, the disadvantaged. We found ourselves in similar stance on the plight of abandoned children.

Friday morning, Daisy eyed me with distrust, and complained that I was still on her turf. As we sat at breakfast, Daisy barred her fangs as I chucked her under her chin, 'good dogg'ing her as I gazed through the window at the

Missouri landscape.

My brother had some chores to do at the church, so I went along for the ride and my first look at St. Joe.

After a rolling tour of 19th Century architecture, we came to his own church, a charmingly traditional stone work. I toured the Sunday School rooms, saw his office. Then while he did his duties, I sat in the small sanctuary, second pew center right in front of the preacher's podium, where Joanne, Tommie and I had always sat, like three no-evils, before I left religion behind. I browsed the hymnal--I liked the music best of anything back in the First Baptist Church of Poplar Bluff, and the short time passed

comfortably as I read through my favorite old songs.

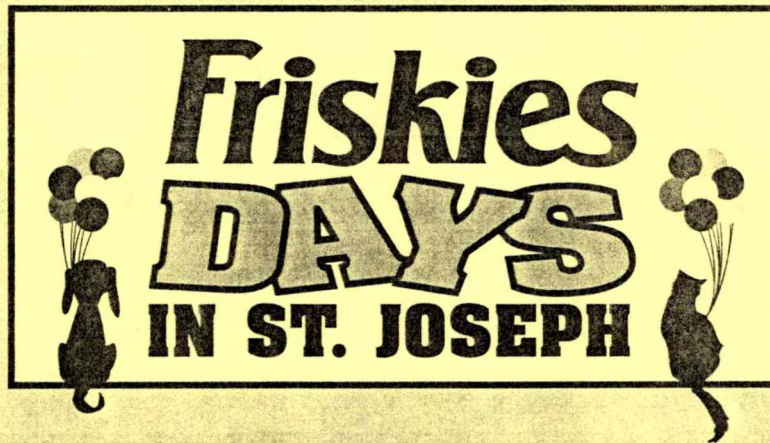
Daisy greeted us with a bark and a wag. She sniffed suspiciously at me, but let me pat her head. That night we brought in barbecue, good Missouri hickory smoked ribs and brisket and pork roast, made the old way, in a smoker, the way Pruitt, and Hayden, and Spencer used to do it back home. We gorged ourselves on this uncommon treat, and Daisy got her share, too.

Later in the living room, Earl brought out a bowl of candies, and we fed Daisy little bits from our fingers. Then she came and laid her head on my lap.

We watched Earl's slides from his most recent mission to Nepal--a primitive country where they still burn their wives; where orphans are cursed by the Hindu gods and therefore left unaided; where disease, poverty and cruelty are constant. He showed me the snapshots of himself and the six or seven other missionaries in Katmandu, and of

Simon Peter, the Nepalese convert who'd taken 265 orphans, adopted them into his home, to feed and clothe them and raise them as Christians. Christianity was working out better for them than Hinduism had; shabby but clean clothes, scrubbed faces and little shy smiles peeped from behind every bush and post. Simon'd built bunkbeds for them all, and they all ate two meals of rice and vegetables every day, with chicken or water buffalo meat two or three times a week.

Christianity was an illegal practice in Nepal until last year; now it's permitted in a sort of dangerous and uneasy compromise. Conversions have been numerous -- 500 here, 600



there, a thousand somewhere else, and I asked my brother, "Why are they so eager to convert."

"For a better life; before they had no hope at all. Now they say, 'Even if I am killed, I will go to Heaven', so they try to live by the Golden Rule." He showed me the picture of a murderer, now converted and preaching against killing. He showed me a picture of a child, no more than 15 but small as a six year old, who was in a street gang, cutthroat and brutal, now baptised Christian, living indoors, eating regularly, loved by his adopted family.

The last morning, Daisy woke and greeted me. She brought her ball, and we played her strange game of keepaway.

"Let me have that ball," I'd say, and try to take it from her. She'd grip the ball in her teeth, then growl ferociously, as I put my hand into her mouth, secure and positive that she'd never bite. I'd pull and wrestle the ball, her hot breath and bare fangs against my fingers, until she'd give it to me. Then I'd toss it in the air and play that I'd keep it while she quivered waiting for me to toss it, happy in her faith that I'd give it back.

Paul, Earl and Marilyn's middle son, called that day. He's got an inoperable malignant brain tumor. The doctors said "There's nothing we can do; you'll die before October 1," but he's still feeling well and strong. There's no hope left but prayer, but their

faith is unchanged. Marilyn told me, "Paul says he will be cured. Either here, or he will be cured in Heaven."

Paul believes the tumor has already stopped growing, maybe even gone away, and he's

praying about whether he should stop all medication. He asked his mom and dad to pray that he'd have the wisdom to make the right decision, and to ask their congregation to pray for him too.

That night Daisy crawled into my lap and lay in my arms with adoring eyes fixed on my face. "I love you too," I told her. "Good girl, good dog."

There was a little spark within me that longed to stay with Daisy, to keep within that loving gaze, to never disappoint that adoring faith she had in my love for her.

And I wished with all my heart I could have explained why I must go away from her trusting love, back to my own home, my own life, my own pets.