

PowWow #17

PowWow #17 is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, Mar 4, 1995. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Seventeen, and it's only one month til Corflu Vegas. I'm pretty excited. And, because it's Corflu Vegas, the topic for this month is our own home town, our own little piece of Paradise in the Desert
Las Vegas

Going Into The West, Part 4

Our flight was late in departing, and we paced the Kennedy Airport impatient to leave. Once aboard, there were still delays, and I gazed at the skyline with few regrets; my heart had already flown west. As time passed, me glancing anxiously at my watch, I worried more about Slugger, already in the baggage hold.

But time passed as it always does, and soon we were lofting over the city. As we veered toward the sinking sun, I caught a final glimpse of Beautiful Brooklyn under our wings.

I've never had any complaints about New York City. I was never robbed, raped, mugged, homeless, or abused. I always had work; I made a good marriage there; I built a career in New York. The City owes me nothing, and I owe it a great deal.

I didn't take time to be swamped with memories, I did feel a churning as I said goodbye to the past 19 years.

Arnie was jumpy, but he picked up a book and tried to concentrate as we winged toward our destinies. Even Bill, whose ability to sleep on planes is legendary, was restless. We'd each sit quietly in our own thoughts, then rouse to exchange a round of enthusiastic burbles about Las Vegas.

This time when we flew over Missouri, I kept my eyes chasing the moon. My future lay somewhere there ahead of the

plane, and I wanted to see it arrive.

Waiting for our luggage, I only had eyes for one container: a helpful airline baggage handler, all smiles and solicitousness, carried Slugger's cage to me. He was unhappy: a wail came from the cage. But he had been cared for: there was sand, and someone had followed my urgent message painted on his tag "Please water me in Phoenix." I put my fingers between the bars to calm him, and his sad song quietened as I held his cage in my arms.

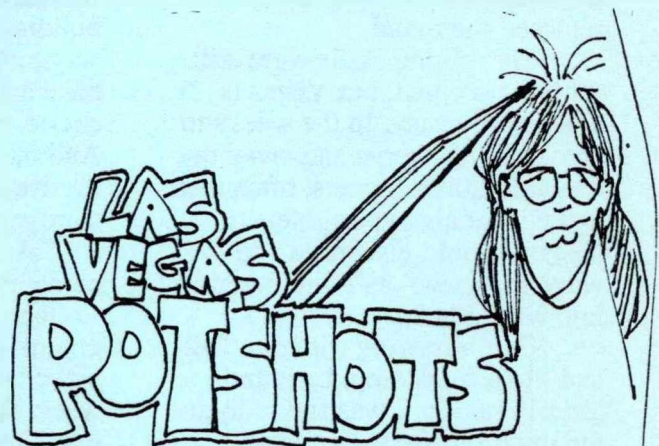
Cathy Bittinger met us at the plane. We loaded gear into her BMW, and hired a limo to take us and the rest of the stuff to Bill's new condo.

We carried a great deal of luggage through with us on the plane: a mistake, since it was costly, and it would have been better to lessen the load and shipped it through. The limo driver grumbled about our gypsy-like load of boxes, bags and Slugger's king-sized carrier sitting on my lap. "A car like this isn't meant for this kind of load..." We hushed his worries with a stiff tip, and he happily helped us carry the goods into the condo.

A year or so later, one night while picking up someone at the

airport, I saw another couple, surrounded by pet carrier and boxes, and knew instantly I was seeing our own arrival again.

Bill's new place already had its furniture sitting in place and Cathy had stocked the frig with



fruit and sodas and snacks. We were exhausted, but too excited to settle down. Instead we set up Slugger's cat box (new sand courtesy of Cathy) and let him from his cage. He stalked out on wobbly legs; even he was cramped from the long trip.

Eventually we settled into our beds, waiting for the sun to rise on our new lives.

Federal Express came through like troopers the next day: our three computers came out of the packing crates and our work never missed a beat. By 10 a.m. we were all writing the final articles and news for the next issue of the magazine.

When we'd planned the move, we knew it would occur

right in the middle of our deadline period. It was simply impossible to take time off: the issue must be finished on time. So we arranged the move to have the least disruption in our working lives as possible. We actually only had one day downtime: the moving/flying day.

Federal Express impressed me a lot during this. They kept to their schedule, and nothing was damaged. We couldn't have done it without them.

After a few hours writing, I went to the corner to use a payphone, to line up a rental car. Ended up having to take a cab back to airport row, but a nice little 4-door sedan soon had me wheeling my way back to Bill's place. I kept it for a week, got my NY license changed to Nevada, then leased a LeBaron and returned the rental.

My driving skills were still fairly unevolved, but Vegas is delightfully easy. In the weeks to come, as I'd swerve and sway my way through the streets, often lost and almost always frightened, Vegans would just smile and wave me ahead, as I blundered into wrong lanes.

One blistering trip took Bill and I to a truck stop. Lost and already scared, I was suddenly in the middle lane between two triple-van behemoths. My terror reached its highest point in the history of my driving. In the long run, it was good: I was never again that afraid.

The previous owner of our house hadn't yet vacated despite her promise to have the place cleared by the time we arrived. Didn't happen, though. "Some friends came in and I decided to party for the weekend instead," she told us.

This left us pretty much up the creek. The van was due to arrive in three days...and we had no place to put our belongings. Ended up we stored our stuff in Bill's garage. This was a financial disaster, of course. But, as ever, Cathy came through for us. She knew a couple of guys with a

truck. When we finally did get possession of the house a week later, we hired them to reload and move all the furniture and boxes. It cost an addition \$800 we hadn't planned on, but we were fixed.

But, for the first seven days, Arnie and I and Slugger stayed with Bill. We got the phones turned on (the rest of the utilities were prearranged in our first trip) We got Bill settled in, did the magazine, and spent most afternoons exploring our new home town.

The thing is, the place is beautiful. Long sunny days slipped into long twilights. The surrounding rim of mountains changed their makeup as often as a Vegas showgirl; every hour's angle of the sun, every passing cloud, showed them in new light.

As we drove around town, we marveled at the pretty buildings. Most of Vegas' shopping centers and strip stores have a vaguely Spanish motif, exotic and pleasing to our eyes. And the graceful palms added a bizarre touch to eyes used to the sturdy trees of New York State.

Autumn seemed to never come; the long slow summer stretched on with a stately and unhurried pace. We splashed and played in Bill's pool for the first week, then in ours all the way into November. We used the hottub the rest of the winter: our hot thick New York blood laughed at the Vegas winter. Old timers (anyone who's been here five years or more) said it'd be different next year...and it was...but for that first winter, we revelled in the mild season.

Each afternoon we'd hop in the car and explore a little more of the city. We found a good comic store, Page After Page, in the phonebook, and that was a once-a-week trip.

The three of us stuck to each other pretty close that Fall. We found it wasn't quite as easy to make friends as in New York. People tend to think new comers are transient, and don't get involved. I was hoping for a welcome wagon or something

but no neighbors called. So I painted on my best smile and called on five or six of the closest. They all received me politely, even with friendly attitudes. And when I said, perhaps we'll have a block party, they said, great, we'd like to come. But it started no chains of neighborliness: polite, but aloof, each stayed in his own castle.

Most nights the three of us had dinner together. Late each afternoon Arnie'd ask, "What's for dinner?" I quickly went through my repertory and into repetition, and the inevitable response, "Oh, you look tired, we'll eat out."

That's the real Vegas vice, you know. Most people think it's gambling, but the fact is, though most Vegans gamble some, they quickly get that jones under control. If not they go under.

But food's a different matter. There's a Vegas axiom the residents all repeat to each other, like a Golden Rule. "It's cheaper to eat out than to cook at home." It's not true, of course, but all Vegans live by it.

We worked our way through the casino coffeeshops. Sahara won for club sandwiches, but Riviera had the best chicken in a pot. We zeroed in on Palace Station's Iron Horse Cafe for the best 24 hour menu. One day, driving through town we spotted the New York Deli. That satisfied those cravings until, just as suddenly, one day we found it closed... it was years until we found the Celebrity Deli.

On Thanksgiving, Arnie and I went to Phoenix to visit his family, and Bill spent it with Becky and Dennis, our first Vegan friends. Christmas, Bill went to his family in NY; and Arnie and I talked about, maybe, possibly, going back to Fandom.

And when the New Year rang in 1990, a new decade and a new life, we toasted ourselves and gazed to the future. We knew that changes would come, but could not imagine what they would be.

Soon: Going into the West Part 5