

PowWow #20

PowWow #20 is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, June 3, 1995. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Twenty, and we're into our Second Decade, trala. My what busy kiddies we have been. A browse of our first collation included only six zines, by me, Arnie, Ken, Karl, Marcie M, and Su. We've come far, and it's high time we report on each other's wicked ways, so our topic for June is:

Life With The Vagrants

My exposure to Significant Criminal Acts was limited back in Poplar Bluff. Taught the Ten Commandments in Bible school, and the morality rules at my mama's knee, I had small occasion to become familiar with the truly wicked ways of the world.

I had to learn it from books, and in fact, this dastardly deed I will tell you about was foreshadowed by The One True Worthy Guide for young maidens, *The American Girl Magazine*. My innocence was complete until they ran a story about another young woman who ran astray, and partook of the forbidden pleasures of (turn aside, Sweet Virtue) The Chain Letter. In the story, the girl's chain paid off in exactly the way that each promises; she received thousands of envelopes within a few days time, which led to her discovery, downfall and ruin.

Shocked by the depravity of it all, I questioned my Mother, who was never one to lie, why the crime was so heinous. In a hushed and severe tone she usually reserved for discussion of the Final Days of Berlin, she explained the evil of clogging the mails, overburdening the postman, and Breaking The Law. Especially breaking the law.

We were a bottom-line kind of family, and if the end result of anything meant sleeping on a cot in a stone-floored cell, we were agin it.

The lesson took. And although many such missives came, enticing me with promises of handkerchiefs and cook-books, dollar bills and perfume sachets, I held firm, well-disciplined and law-abiding, and never yielded to the temptation to chain.

Until the Spring of 1993. Perhaps that's it. Spring, and perfume in the air...many a maiden has fallen for less.

"This is the USED PAPERBACK BOOK CLUB," the letter proclaimed. "It is not a chain letter. It's just for fun."

Well, you can fool some folks, but I'm no dummy. And although I know I could hide my crime behind a plea of ignorance, I won't. I knew right off that this was a Chain Letter.

I wadded it up. And just as I was about to cast it to the trash, a name caught my eye. No less personages than Art & Nancy Rapp had sent me this missive.

I picked it up again. I looked closer. "You'll receive 36 paperback books," it cooed

seductively in my ear in a Rappian duet. "It will be fun to see where they all come from..." The Rapp's line of enticing reason even suggested I would be a better person for it: "...might stir up a new interest or two."

I remembered my mother's words. I remembered the American Girl Magazine. I clutched my purity to my bosom like a capacious shield, and cried, "No -- no -- I won't do it; I've never succumbed before..."

Then they got me. As surely as a dose of Weekend Jewish Guilt, they stuck in the hook and reeled me in: "There is seldom a dropout."

They had me. I didn't even struggle. How could I let them down; how could I disappoint them. It would be somehow...unfannish. "Well, maybe I can get a bunch of books for the SNAFFU library." The art of rationalization and self-justification is well honed in Las Vegas.

I wrapped up a Valuable Pocketbook. I can't remember just what it was, exactly. *I Was A Teenaged Vampire*, maybe. I know that Wrai and Carol Ballard must have thrilled to it when it dropped into their Seattle postbox.

I duitifully moved Art and

Nancy to the head of the two-spot list, and put Arnie and me on the bottom. Now, who to send it to. What six friends would I want to rope into this bonanza of books?

Obviously, not the Vegans. The goal is to get Other People's books, not just circulate our own. Who would have a good library we could plunder.

My list was painstaking, but I thought it was a good one. Redd Boggs, he of the wise words. Andy Hooper, baseball wizard. Robert Lichtman, counter-culture icon. Don Fitch, naturalist and cook. Geri Sullivan, woman of the world. And ShelVy and Suzanne Vick, patrons of all art.

After I'd sent out the missive to the six great intellectual sources of wisdom, I leaned back to wait. Although beset by Guilt, I learned to set it aside, as I slid happily into Greed. What wondrous things would come to me? What miracle of acquisitiveness had I unleashed? I envisioned the letter swirling its way through the great fan centers of the United States, sweeping the debris of bad books before it like a great fog of paper and pasteboard.

I knew that any day the mail would start arriving, the brown manilla envelopes, each with its carefully selected discard from some other fan's library. I anticipated the three dozen titles, and wondered at their nature. I cleared a spot on my shelf to stack them. Books for free. Books for the club library. Heck, maybe even one or two books for me.

I trimmed the hedge in front of the house, the one that flanks the mailbox, so I could watch out the window for the postman's approach each day. I polished up the mailbox, and made it bright and

spiffy.

In the middle of July, I received *Silence in Hanover Close* by Anne Perry. "A Victorian Mystery" the cover proclaimed to me. It came from JaeLeslie Adams of Madison. I mused and wondered, and laid it aside to wait for the next 35 tomes.

At the end of July, I received Barry Hughart's *Bridge of Birds*, from Bill Bodden. "Aha!" I exclaimed, "A pretty set of pictures." But it turned out to be a fantasy of "an ancient China that never was."

And that was that. No wheelbarrows of packages. No mailbags stuffed with books. I had given up my Virtue for this paltry pair.

It was less fun than Art and Nancy had promised. And it didn't stir up any new interest, either. All in all, it was rather a bust.

But, on the other hand, my momma was wrong. I didn't get handcuffed, my head shaved, and thrown into a dungeon for the rest of my life.

SNAFFU got two books out of the deal, and I got the subject of this article.

All in all, not a bad exchange for *I Was A Teenaged Vampire*.