

# PowWow #21

**PowWow #21** is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, July 2, 1995. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Twenty-One, and We Have Come Of Age. Today we celebrate Arnie's birthday, while we're gearing up for the 4th of July, and also breaking in our brand spanking newly redone pool. And, as befits the date and season, the topic is one we're all experts in, and Nevada is especially good at:

## Summertime

### *My See-Saw Soliloquy*

Summer is the time for doing all your favorite things. Vacations, picnics, camping trips, canoe floats...these are all the stuff of which a good summer is made.

When I was a kid, I had my own secret summer places: a certain tree branch in Miss Irene's yard, a grassy knoll under a big oak, a bed of moss at the foot of the hill just made for hiding out in comfort.

Even now, with childhood far behind, I still have my secret hideouts....

I glanced at my watch: my cancelled appointment left me with a little over an hour to kill before I had to meet Diane. Too little time to go back home; too much to just arrive early and wait for her.

What to do? Well...there's always grocery shopping. I quickly dismissed that unpopular chore with the excuse, "It's much too hot to leave food in the car while Diane and I have breakfast."

Holiday Sales at the mall held some interest for me, and I started driving toward Meadows Lane. But my heart wasn't in it. "Just not in the mood for trying on things," I mumbled. I mumble to myself quite a lot as I drive. If I'm not mumbling, I usually sing. This produces looks of consternation from other cars, as I speed along smiling and screech-ing out the blues.

I've always figured I was really meant to be a blues singer. My voice is no great shakes, but it's always seemed to me that I might manage some gravelly voiced blues if everyone was pretty drunk when they heard me.

'Course, what I'd *really* like to do is

yodel. I can't, but I periodically make the attempt since I'm certain that one of these tries, it will happen.

So I was mumbling and singing and occasionally yo-de-la-oo-ing as I drove along, not altogether happy with my schedule. And then I thought of what to do.

We all have our little secret vices, don't we? The things we don't rush to tell our buddies. The jeans pulled out of the clothes basket one time too many; the secret cache of chocolate cremes; the envelope of photos that really should have been thrown away. We have our secret places we like to go; the rendezvous with the postcard seller; the afternoon drink at the single's bar; the lace and leather stores.

With a guilty glance over my shoulder I made a quick turn and lost myself on the parking lot, then tripped into the hardware & home center.

I've always found vicarious thrills in hardware stores. I'm happy from the moment I walk through the sliding doors and smell that special scent. It's an indescribably mixture of metal and dust and machine oil and lumber; I can almost list a hardware store's specialties by its smell.

A friend once asked me if I went there to meet men. "Don't be silly," I explained. "All the men in hardware stores are married." True. If you want to meet single men, go to the sporting goods stores.

A whole hour! A found treasure! I seldom get a chance to wander at will, rooting in the corners and bins. Arnie doesn't particularly share my love of hardware stores, and quickly gets tired of my leisurely amble through their aisles.

Today I'd see it all!

I turned right and started with the yard furniture. Now, this is a category I am really well-versed on. Before we moved to Nevada, dreaming of the day we'd have a yard, I bought a Sunset Patio Book, to study up on the basics of Good Patio Living.

You may think it's a simple matter. Pick your square of yard and put a chair in it. Sit. Sip lemonade. Well, that just show that you haven't read the Sunset Patio Book. I quickly learned that the furniture decision has to be weighed against the climate. For example, no ornamental metal benches in the desert southwest. With temperatures hitting 120 in mid-summer, flesh curls at the thought. Similarly, vinyl is a bad bet. The book wisely advised that it might last a season or two, but the heat and dust storms would do it in before I go my money's worth. Glass-topped tables, those fashionably correct and airy styles, are dangerous since the wind might sail them away, and the sandstorms scratch them. Wood is ok. But it takes a lot of layers of protective varnish to keep it safe from the torrential rains. The only real choice is resin; that cheap glistening material is practically indestructible, idea for the desert.

I admired the style of this year's resin collection. The designs constantly grow more ornate; this year's best offering is a white resin reproduction of a Victorian styled wicker.

I hung around the resin for a few minutes, then ambled on into electronics. "Oh, well, let's look at the chandeliers," I thought to myself.

It's strange how chandeliers are displayed, all hanging pristinely from the ceiling like a flock of bats. "Why, here's the very one my mother had," I muttered under one five-stalked branch. "I never did like the way it lit our room." Then my eye hit on its big brother: no fewer than ten branches twisted in stylish confusion, proudly balancing their loads of promise. It looked dusty with the bulbs dark.

A formal work, with golden arms and crystal droplets glistened even in the gloom...a little overdone unless you're opening a casino.

Having resisted the calls of the chandeliers, I moved on to plumbing, and eyed the graceful, swan-necked golden faucets. "One of these days," I promised, "I'll figure out how to change a gasket." The thought of changing a faucet didn't cross my mind.

My talents in the building field are somewhat limited. I can hammer a nail, and though I've inflicted many holes in many walls, I've never actually knocked one down. I can use an electric screw driver to tighten things; in fact, if I may say so, I'm very good at that and can master both straight and Philip's head fasteners.

There you have it. I saw not, neither do I sand. I don't caulk, I don't plumb.

I'd tantalized myself long enough with the easy stuff; now it was time for the heady walk through the pre-cut lumber. "Oooh," I cooed, and "oooh indeed," at the roccoco faux trims, the beautiful sanded dowels, the unfinished doors with lead glass insets.

This was a dangerous area of the store; such things could tempt one to actually Do It Yourself. Anyone who hangs around the ready-to-install cabinet tops could easily slide into accomplishment. I walked swiftly away.

I speeded past the rack of electric saws; they lack glamour. But the handhelds were more uplifting, each with a hidden song. My Uncle John was the first person I ever saw play a saw like a poor man's violin, and that's how I learned that each one's tone is different. I paused to admire a new one on me: a tabletopper that held the blade steady to have things run over it to cut. I toyed with the idea of using it for slicing french fries. The notion amused me, sort of the Crazy Guys From

Czechoslovakia syndrome: like their vacuum, this was considerably oversized when compared to a Slice-O-Matic.

Somehow I wandered into the work glove area...a wall of cotton and canvas and leather beckoned me with curled fingers, cupped palms, and limp wrists. There's something very satisfying about work gloves; they look so... handy.

Another thing I like real well are those gorgeous storage boxes with the little bitty drawers to put nails and washers in. They seem so efficient. I yearned some for one tidy box with clear see-through drawers. I've never actually owned enough nails and washers to need such a device. Perhaps it would work well for needles and buttons and paperclips and rubber bands and those extra packets of ketchup and salt that accumulate in strange profusion. But all my needles and buttons and paperclips and rubber bands are already in perfectly adequate containers, and I throw away the extra ketchup and salt.

Big plastic wheelbarrows were the next to lure me. When I was a kid, wheelbarrows were rusted steel things, heavy and caked with dirt or concrete or metal shavings. These nifty lightweight gardener's tools are the cat's pajamas. I only wish I needed one.

About that time one of the clerks came up. He'd been watching me rambling leisurely about, and presumed I was hunting something. I had my answer ready for him. "Oh, thank you," I gushed. "I'm hunting those doohickeys used in a bookshelf to hold the shelves."

"Ohhh," he smiled smugly, "you mean shelf holders."

I fluttered my eyes at him in fake gratitude, then trotted along after him to the hardware counter. I gathered up enough for my shelf.

I tried to look around some more, but the spell was broken. I eyed the putty knives lustfully; "how nice...maybe I could use one to serve pie." But I knew I was fooling myself, and left it behind.

I browsed the endcaps at the cashier's station. Such interesting concoctions. Goo-Off and Plant Feeders and Pocket Lights... I read the label of one compound that promised to remove the oil from my garage floor. But it hinted delicately that some scrubbing might be required...I put it

back in its bin.

After I'd paid my bill, even the outside of the store held charms. There were huge moving dollies, and giant refuse containers. One section was devoted to aluminum siding in a rainbow of colors.

Then a prebuilt treehouse: just assemble and hoist it to the branch. And a giant jungle gym set, with its swings and teeters.

I didn't have a jungle gym when I was a kid, but I did have a rope swing in a big oak tree atop a high terrace. When I swung I went out into open space, high above the garden 20 feet below.

I wish I had a see-saw, not really to teeter-totter, but for its Real Purpose. I think the most successful negotiators must be those who practiced for hours, experimenting with balance on the teeter.

As I drove from the store, I realized I was happy. Humming a tune with a smile on my face. Enlightened. Full of do-it-yourself virtue. And all without lifting a hand.

Then I realized I'd forgotten to check out the price of premade fencing. I grinned wider. A good excuse to come back another day.

--Joyce Katz