

# PowWow#34

**PowWow #34** is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, Aug.3, 1996. Amazingly, we're already to August, and the end of Summer is in sight (though not as visibly as if I still lived in the East.) I like how Summer hangs on through October out here. Thanks to Arnie, \*my Best buddy\* for the chores; the topic of the month is **I Had This Friend...**

## I Had This Friend...

### The Gaffate

We were all sitting around the campfire one night, huddling close to warm our bones, when we got to talking about people we'd known. There was about the normal amount of ribaldry, a few outre' scandals, and some big fish stories no one could swallow. It came my turn to say something; I guess it was Ken who said, "Who's the funniest fellow you ever knew?" I didn't have much to offer; just repeated the old saw about Tucker's first meeting of Hoffman. But it got me thinking about the old days, how it used to be, and the ones who are already gone, so I decided to tell them about Joe.

I guess I knew Joe Bob Patterson all my life. His family had the square frame house just around the corner from ours; one of the first things I remember is Joe and me playing under the yard sprinklers while the two families sat around watching us. We grew up together, you see...wasn't but six months difference in our age.

After we'd outgrown the yard sprinkler, we moved on to tree-climbing and softball; I guess we were in the 8th or 9th grade when we discovered science fiction. We'd ride our bikes to the convenience store at the junction every week, to pick up the new

prozines. I'd buy Analog and he'd get F&SF; then we'd trade.

We'd been doing this every week for about two months, when we got a notion to join fandom. We'd read about it, you see, in the magazines, and there was this ad inviting us to join the National Fantasy Fan Federation, so we both sent in a buck.

I don't guess I ever got so much for a dollar in my life. Pretty soon, the mail box was full of **TightBeam**, and letters from the Welcome Committee. Joe and I really took to it. I joined one of the Bureaus, and he got on a couple of Committees. We joined N'APA, and started our own zines.

About that time, Joe met another guy in town who read science fiction. Jackie Dean Clark had a friend, Bill Jacobs, and Bill had a brother Don. Nothing would do Joe but that we start a club. We kept dredging up people, meeting them at bookstores, or on the bus, and pretty soon we had a thriving club, and of course Joe was the president. I still remember him standing up in the middle of a meeting and giving this fiery talk about the destiny of fandom, and how it was our duty to join the great brotherhood of science fiction.

I thought we were having a pretty good time in fandom, but all of a sudden one day Joe started prattling on about how there was a world outside of the NFFF. He

didn't make much sense. He ranted on about how the N3F was a dead end.

I didn't put much stock in anything he said. I mean, I was really busy by this time, writing to a couple dozen NFFFers every week putting out my contribution to the apazine. I was getting along fine, too; I'd already had letters published in the **TightBeam**, and the editor had just asked me to do a column. I sure wasn't going to give that up!

Next thing I knew, Joe said he was going to a worldcon; spent all his savings from his summer job on the trip. When he got back, all he could talk about was the people he'd met. He lost interest in the local club; one day he told me he'd got all he could out of it, and he had better ways to spend his time.

Joe and I started kinda going our separate ways about that time. I was dating; started studying a little harder in school, too. I don't know what Joe was doing during this time; he always seemed rushed and slightly disheveled when we met, with a wild look in his eye. I was making the honor roll every quarter, but Joe's grades were falling; when I asked him why, he said, "That mundane stuff's not important."

Well, after that, we really moved different directions. I was getting A's; got elected President of the Writers' Club, and that's about

when I met MaryJane, my first girlfriend. She was a Neffer, too; in fact, I wrote her the first welcome message she got when she joined the club. She always said she loved me from that first letter....

Meanwhile, Joe was putting out a fanzine of his own, **TimeTracks**. I didn't care much for it; though it had a few good things, like Sam Moskowitz's article about Golden Age Science Fiction. But there weren't any book reviews, and it was stuffed with letters from people I never heard of. I looked up every name in the N3F directory, but they must not have been fans, cause they sure weren't there.

He also was in apas; in fact, he told me he was in seven of them. He might have been lying. He sure wasn't in N'APA anymore.

He was starting and folding fanzines at a furious rate, too. I never changed the name of my own fanzine, **The Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature**, but he kept churning out new ones, and letting the old ones go without a backward glance. He got pretty deep into Tolkien Fandom with one of 'em, but ended up giving that one away to some California kid; Joe said he was tired of it. He used to preach on about things like Fan Funds. There was one to buy this guy a typer; I never saw the sense of it myself.

He tried to get me to donate cash to something called a trip fund too. But the idea of raising money to bring somebody who wasn't even a member of the N3F to a worldcon was pretty stupid. I said so, too; I even wrote an editorial about it in **The Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature**. Like I said there, I'd rather spend my money on something real, like the Neffer, than donate it to someone I never heard of.

After graduation, I got ready for college, but Joe decided he'd give it a pass. He got a job at the Public Library; I don't guess he

ever did much else but library work his whole life.

Sometimes, when I came home on weekends, I'd stop by the library to see old Joe. He was always preoccupied with one thing or another. Oh, he was friendly enough. But it was clear his mind was elsewhere. He was all the time talking about Willis and Hoffman and Tucker, or some dumb zine he just got, or some letter he just wrote. I couldn't make much sense of it.

One weekend, I guess it was over the Thanksgiving holiday, I stopped in to see Joe, and he waved a copy of F&SF in my face. He'd sent in a short story, and they actually printed it. Paid him \$60 for it, too.

Joe set out to be a pro just the way he'd gone about becoming a fan, at a breakneck, never-look-back pace. Writing science fiction was his life, his whole life.

This seemed to coincide with his drift away from fandom. He dropped out of all the apas, folded his zine, and sent a form letter to all his old friends, something about being kicked by dogs in fandom, and goodbye forever.

He even got rid of his fanzine collection; sold it all to me for 20 bucks. Said he didn't want the trash around anymore, that he'd done everything he ever wanted to do in fandom, had learned as much from it as he could. Said he'd conquered the medium, and he was moving on.

After that, we'd only see him once in awhile. Sometimes he'd stick his head into the N3F room at the worldcons...that's where I like to hang out at conventions; stay there long enough and everybody comes by. But I think he was more hunting someone who'd ask for his autograph than looking to speak to me. Make no mistake, he wasn't a fan anymore; if some poor neofan said something that didn't hit him

just right, Joe'd tear into him, cut him up and leave him a crying quivering mess. He'd always end these temper tantrums by saying something nasty about fans, like they were all dumb, and fandom was a stupid waste of time.

Professionally I guess he was doing ok. He got elected president of the Science Fiction Writers of America, and was invited to speak at most conventions. But Joe couldn't leave well enough alone; he feuded and fought with everyone. He had a set to with Harlan that made all the newszines, and another with Ted that burned up the pages of **Psychotic** until he finally ended it all by stomping away from a convention saying science fiction fans and pros were all a bunch of stupid jerks and he never wanted to see any of them again.

I kinda lost track of him for several years. He had long since dropped out of the N3F, and even stopped going to the worldcons. I can't see his name now and then in some magazine; once I tuned in and he was on a radio talk show. But, mostly, he was gaffiated.

Anyhow, time passed, and one day, I guess it was in the Spring of 2009, I got a call from Joe's brother. Told me old Joe was dead and that there was some stuff in his house that Joe wanted me to have.

It took a couple of days, and when I got over there, the place had already been ransacked. The photographs and books, even his clothes, his piano...everything of any possible value was gone. But, Joe had asked, so I hunted around trying to figure what it was he had wanted me to do.

I went through the rooms on the ground floor, then walked upstairs. The same disorderly mess met me there; not much left but dust and scattered rags to show the place had ever been lived in.

As I moved to the end of the hallway, I found a remarkable thing. A small table against one

wall held an elaborately framed picture. Underneath were some dried flowers; I could see marks in the dust where candles must have stood, like a religious icon.

I couldn't quite make out the picture; it was faded and really dusty. I blew off some of the cobwebs, then lifted it off the shelf to look closer.

It was a mimeographed copy of the map from **The Enchanted Duplicator**. I could see faint marks of staple holes; it was the one drawn by Ross Chamberlain back in the 70's.

Behind the picture, I saw an opening in the wall; I slid the table away and exposed the crawlway. I couldn't see much, so I went to my car to get a flashlight.

When I went into the storage area under the eaves, I saw envelopes...dozens and dozens, perhaps hundreds of 9 by 12 envelopes. Each was carefully closed with its metal fastener, then lettered on the front. **Void, Lighthouse, Hyphen, Oopsla, FanVariety, Quandry, TrapDoor, Psychotic...** The lettering was elaborate, hand-stencilled, with gold highlights, and little red ornaments on the edges.

He must have bought them one by one, through the mail auctions. He probably spent a fortune on them; it must have taken years to accumulate them, and several days each to decorate the illuminated nametags.

I opened a few of the envelopes. Each held an individual issue. My guess about the mail auctions was right, here was a zine that belonged to Boggs, and another that belonged to Dick Ellington; I even saw a couple that were originally sent to Burbee.

Each fanzine was hand wrapped, carefully folded inside white tissue paper, then stored in its own embellished envelope. The envelope flaps were soft from being opened and closed.

As I stacked them up to

carry away, I noticed some small white edged stains on some of the zines.

I'm pretty sure they were teardrops.

Ken stood up, stretched, and said "I'm going to put more wood on the fire." Ben said, "I'm going with you," and they both slipped away into the dark to gather up something to burn.

"But what does it mean?" Tom asked.

"Hell, I don't know. But it's a pretty funny story, don't you think?"

No body said anything. Tom poked the fire for a few minutes, then went out to join Ken and Ben in their search for burnable wood.

I just sat there, watching the flames dance.