

# PowWow #33

**PowWow #33** is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, June 29, 1996, one week early because of the conflict with next week's Westercon in El Paso. Today we are also celebrating, a few days in advance, Arnie's Fiftieth Birthday. This is Mailing Number Thirty-Three, and the topic of the month is that question that haunts all fan ages:  
**Fijagh or Fiawol**

## Sending Burbee Off

### Friday Afternoon

The Friday afternoon sun blazed across the hood of the car; I looked longingly at the shady spot under the canopy at the pick-up entrance of the Las Vegas Airport; but it was a handicap space, and there's no way I could get away with it. I left the car motor on for a few more minutes of cool air, then reluctantly turned it off. Arnie glanced at his watch, and slid out the door into the brightness, then began a slow stroll up and down the platform, making himself visible for Bill Rotsler and Robert Lichtman. He'd made a half-dozen passes when Bill showed up; the three of us were still standing by the car making our hellos when Robert came out the nearest exit.

Once the luggage was stowed, we steered for home; I took my hometown's shortcuts through backstreets to avoid much of the rush of weekenders arriving. If you stay off the main drags, like The Strip or Fremont Street, you miss most of the tourists. Vegas traffic used to be polite, almost gentle, with people gently waving the tourists ahead when they made wrong turns. Now, the city's grown so (and most of us blame the Californians), driving is the same

kind of cut-throat rivalry here that you'd see in any other town, and especially on Friday afternoon when everyone is jockeying to get to a party.

As I drove, Arnie and I brought Bill and Robert up to date on the plans Ed Burbee had sent. Charlie's oldest son was taking care of the final arrangements, and had ironed out the details with me online during the two weeks since Burb's passing. "We want to honor his last wishes, and keep it just as simple as possible; he didn't want us to make a fuss." We'd sliced the attendance list of Vegas friends; several fans who wanted to be there volunteered to step aside to keep the numbers low.

"It will be the four of us, plus Ken Forman and Ben Wilson," I explained. Ken had rented a van so

we all could travel together, rather than taking two cars. I think we were finding comfort in clustering together; being all in one vehicle would give us some kind of mutual support.

We'd not much more than reached the house and unloaded the luggage, when Ken, Tom Springer, Ben and Cathy showed up. Tom had to go to San Francisco to visit his sick sister, so Friday night was his only chance to see our California guests. "Some kind of fannish karma," muttered Arnie. "We get Robert Lichtman here from the Bay area, but we have to send one of ours there to keep fandom in balance."

### Friday Night

Arnie and I talked about dinner, and decided to give the Lichtman test to the newly opened New York Deli. This sumptuous repastery of cornbeef and chicken soup returned to us after years of absence. When we first moved to Vegas in 1989, our first choice in eateries was the New York Deli. Located on the other side of town, it still drew us almost weekly for our feasts of Kosher-style sandwiches and nostalgia. One afternoon, only a few months after we'd first located the spot and attached our home-sick hearts to it, we found it locked and barred, never to reopen. But, we



never forgot it, and actually never stopped looking for it. "They will return," I promised Arnie as passionately as if I were discussing MacArthur or the Messiah. But years had passed...

Then one day this Spring, low and behold! in a location formerly occupied by The Culturati Cafe (I think it had something to do with yogurt and sprouts, but never entered it personally), there it was, bright, bold and beautiful, sporting the same red and black motif as the original. The waitress was thrilled that we were returnees, and proud of the heritage of the old place as she welcomed us into this brand new palace of pastrami.

Arnie, Robert and I discussed the merits of the place, as compared to other delis we have known. This is a topic of great concern to the three of us. Robert is an ardent supporter of Kanters in Hollywood, and despite a sentimental affection for the 2nd Avenue Deli on the Lower East Side, I've been won over. Arnie used to hold out for the Carnegie in New York, but now we're in the West, his loyalty for that spot has faded. We can, and sometimes do have long meaningful conversations on this topic, for after all, what could be more important than remembering the exact spot on which you ate the world's best corn beef.

Well, no loyalties transferred on the basis of this trip, though we all agreed it was credible. "The krepla was good," Robert pronounced, "but the matsoh ball was disagreeable." And Arnie announced his verdict that the pastrami just wasn't quite the thing. By such awesome decisions are restaurateur's fortunes made and lost.

We made an early night of it; Tom had to pack for his trip, and the rest of us agreed to meet at 7:00 a.m.,

and to be on the road by 7:30. We estimated the trip would take almost three hours, and we were committed to rendezvousing with the Burbee family in Amboy between 10:30 and 11:00. The plan was for the group to meet at Amboy's one-and-only retail business, Bob's Coffee Shop and Filling Station. At 11:00 we'd convoy to the spot Ed and his sister had picked, for the scattering.

### Saturday Morning

It's not hard to get up early in Nevada's summer. Mornings are beautiful, clear-aired, filled with songbirds and visits to the backdoor from the neighborhood cats. Hard to tell whether they come for the food they coax from me, or for the birds; probably a bit of both, to judge from the occasional feathers flying around the felines.

The morning passed in the almost poetic slow-motion of well-oiled routine. I fed the cats, made the bed while Arnie showered, and made my own preparations for the trip. By 6:30, I was in the kitchen, starting crockpot beef for the evening's dinner, and loading the ice chest with sodaes. I also filled a eight gallon server with ice water. Not that any of us expected trouble, but if we broke down in the Mojave, we sure weren't going to lack for liquid.

Ken and Ben pulled up at 5 til 7. They too had felt the same sense of slow-motion, combined with the urgency to be punctual. Ben and I went to the Chesapeake Bagelry for a baker's dozen; twenty-five hundred miles away from the Atlantic Ocean, and it's named for the Chesapeake; who can figure. We decided to buy more ice for the chest so dropped by a Circle K; with all of that we were still at the house before 7:20. A flurry of last-minute activity; don't forget a knife for the bagels; remember to wear a hat; make sure the alarm is set.

I felt like there was a hiccup in time; the world slowed, and every motion seemed etched in the air, leaving a departing circle of wavelets, like a hand trailing through water. But the illusion shattered when the six of us loaded into the car. On time, on schedule; we were proud of ourselves for holding to our plan.

Ben took the driver's seat; he and Ken were our good guides. I grabbed the front passenger seat as my prize; I knew better than to risk motion sickness on twisty roads. Arnie and Robert sat in the middle row, with Ken and Bill in the third section. The van was full, but not uncomfortably so, as Ben rolled her out onto I-95 South, heading straight into the mouth of the Mojave Desert.

