

PowWow #9

PowWow #9 is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, July 2, 1994. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Nine, (which, by the way, is my Lucky Number) when the Topic of the Month, is Americana. "No matter what I did, I apologize; come on baby dry your eyes and go outside: it's the Fourth of July" (from a song by X)

Holidays really provide the framework for ties with family and friends. On each one, it's natural to recall how you've spent that day before: what the family always used to do; what cousin Rena did to Uncle Buck on this date a million years ago; which particular picnic table we liked most to squat beside.

Midwestern holidays are steeped in a sort of Jean Shepard Americana of ice cream and apple pie, parades and picnics, and firework displays at night. We went to Keener's Cave (where Jesse James hid out), Sparkman's, Roxy Road (where my great grandpa homesteaded and built the bridge over the beaver dam), or maybe to Wappapello Lake. Mother would make home made ice cream in one of those old-fashioned handle-turners, and we kids would try to blow our fingers off with fireworks.

One June we visited my dad's family home in the deep backwoods of Kentucky (in the pines, where the moon always shines...and they ain't yet paid no

tax
on
it.)
My
pa
got
the
no-

tion to bring his old Aunt Renee home with us. So, she was with us for the 4th, and the mean, cranky, sick old woman kept us at home

instead of going on a picnic. I guess my mother was as disappointed as we were; she really did love to picnic. Anyhow, she told us to play outside and try to keep quiet, to keep from disturbing our aunt.

We didn't even try; in fact, we lit firecrackers and tossed them toward the side of the house where we knew she sat in the old black rocker; I think we hoped the poor old soul would drop dead, so we could have our holiday.

That really marked the end of our traditional 4th of July celebrations. The year after that, my folks decided not to go on a picnic after all ("We'll have a picnic the week before...and another the week after. But we'll avoid the traffic on the 4th.") So we moped around the house until night fall, when we went out to see the firework displays.

The next year, Poplar Bluff baned fireworks inside town. That really crimped our style. My brothers tried to make homemade ones, tossing jars of coals and

waving burning sticks like sparklers. But, the thrill was gone. It would be many years before the 4th was special again.

The Insurgents gathered rooftop for the Bi-Centennial Celebration in 1976. First we'd had a steamy supper of burgers and dogs, with apple pie and ice cream, in our incredibly hot apartment in Brooklyn Heights. Then as dark fell, we climbed to the roof. The Parade of Sails spread below like a David McLean panorama, with the Statue of Liberty framed by the fireworks that blasted overhead, as all of New York stood at attention and watched the show.

The holiday looks different in New York. Somehow, the war seems closer there. New Yorkers approach the day with a fervor unmatched by any other I've ever seen.

Standing on the rooftop overlooking Brooklyn's patriotic fervor, the skyline is lit by a hundred, no a thousand, bursts of firey rockets. The sound of the crackers and whompers fill the air: no one who's seen that display can help but think of the thunder of the battlefield. The scene stretches from Coney Island, to Staten Island, to Liberty Island, to Ellis Island and Manhattan, and up and down the Jersey shoreline. The water makes the sound bounce and reverberate til it seems to come from every side.

I learned to love the 4th again, standing on top the roof. The fervor I saw from that vantage affected me, and touched my secret Midwestern, apple pie, patriotic self, and made that banner wave again in my heart.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
ARNIE**