

PowWow #8

PowWow #8 is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, June 4, 1994. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Eight, (who woulda ever thought we'd make it this far?) when the Topic of the Month, just for the record, is Summer. *Sigh* My very most favorite time of year.

It's really easy for me to get sweated up talking about Summer. It's always been my favorite time of year. I spent more time anticipating Summer than Christmas when I was a kid. It always seemed like the Summer Vacation was a big cornucopia of good stuff, the true heart of the year, wrapped in the other Seasons like a three-month present.

To tell the truth, I wasn't much for school. I dreaded each and every day through grammar school, and didn't come to enjoy it until I was in the 8th or 9th grade.

Mother was wise to my lackluster interest in education, and wouldn't give in to my whines and pleas to be allowed to skip school....unless, of course, I had something actually, demonstrably wrong with me, like Temperature. I used to stand over the floor furnace with my head down and mouth wide open on Winter days, trying to get one. I don't believe it ever worked.

But, Summer. The days of Coca Cola and Roses. Picnics at Cane Creek, and outings to Sparkman's Cave. Tree-climbing and dam building on the drainage ditch during the almost daily summer showers.

Matter of fact, it rains quite a lot in Southeast Mo., and there's a good deal of water around most years, in the ponds, creeks, sloughs, rivers and lakes. And where's there's all that water,

there are skeeters. Skeeters and beetles and dragon flies and all manner of creatures that like to hang about waterholes. Watching a little patch of water through the sunlight, you could see whole colonies merrily buzzing about their business; Summer's a good season for them, too.

Do I have to say it? Where there are all those insects, there are birds to harvest the annual bounty of summer stock.

Great swooping clouds of birds; whole families. Cities of winged predators dined happily off the tableland of Southeast Missouri. East of Poplar Bluff, on the wrong side of Black River, stretches a fertile flatness that goes all the way to the Mississippi. Since the mighty river carved its path to the Gulf, the land has been home to a nation of mud-lovers. Once swampland, it was cleared and drained to become cotton land...and soy bean paddies and melon patches. But those civilizations of insectoid lives just dug in a little deeper. Like Deros, they burrowed further into the rich loam, and avoided human contact.

One particularly damp year, on a day when the soil was wet and Summer made the land into a feeding ground for crawlers, a dark cloud masked the sun over the fields between Poplar Bluff and Dexter. Hundreds and thousands...tens of thousands starlings gathered above our

St. Louis fandom started when Hank Luttrell, Dave and Jim Hall, Rich Wannan, Duggie Fisher and I held our first meeting and founded the Ozark Science Fiction Association (OSFA).

Hank was the most hyperactive pubber of the group, since he joined several apas, as well as doing his own genzine, Starling. This piece is dedicated to Hank, who now lives, deals books, and sometimes fans, in Madison, Wisconsin.

heads, then began to swirl their way downward like a feathery tornado cloud. Their wings beat the air like a flight of all of Heaven's Angels. They wheeled and turned, their caws producing an insane racket.

Then they settled to the ground on the fields outside of the town (1000 souls) of Dexter, and set up their camp. And there they stayed.

Every morning, the sky would darken as the colony took to the wing; every night they'd settle to roost on the same fields.

And, they fed. And fed and fed and fed. Insects weren't all they ate: they also devoured every sprig of green, every seedling, every sprouting crop.

A flock of..well, some say 30,000 and some say 100,000, starlings now make Dexter their home, resisting all attempts to dislodge them over all these subsequent years.

And this is the reason that Hank Luttrell named his fanzine Starling.