



Western Romance #4 is done for FAPA and Fandom by Joyce Katz, 330 S. Decatur Blvd., PMB 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107, in February 2001.

Thanks to **Arnie** for the layout and copying help. The lovely logo is by Alan White, who also manipulated the doll photo used this issue. Email: JoyWorley@aol.com. Member fwa and afal.

Guise and Dolls

It must have been Christmas 1948 when I was nine years old. It could have been 1947, but I can't tell for sure, so I'll say 1948. Yet it might have been 1947 when I was eight. It's not too likely that it was 1946, although there is just a chance....

I was getting to be a big girl. I had already lost most of my interest in dolls, although I faithfully cared for my little family. I dutifully arranged their dresses, and saw that they were bedded down each night snug and warm. But my heart wasn't in it — I preferred roller skating along the sidewalks of our neighborhood, or climbing trees with Larry Wilson, the boy next door. Charlotte and Carolyn Griffith, the two little girls who lived on the other side, still liked to play house, so I'd drag out Emily, my favorite, for an afternoon of Little Mothers. But I'd rather have a tea party, or play a game. And if I was alone, I was beginning to develop an interest in reading.

Ed, my older brother, had been a reader, too, so I gradually grew into the bookshelf of Tom Swift, Jack London adventures, and Tom Sawyer. On rare occasions, I'd be gifted with a new book, such as *Shepherd of the Hills*, *Black Beauty*, or *A Lantern in Her Hand*.

The funny thing was, my mother just hated to see my Doll Days pass. I was her youngest child, and I suppose she saw the way I was cooling toward them, and realized it was the end of an era for her. After about 20 years of raising her family, with the steady stream of baby dolls and crying dolls and rag dolls, she dreaded the end of it all.

Downtown Day

That year, and I just can't remember whether it was 1947 or 1948, the Christmas Season was extra special. Things had been rough in Southeast Missouri during the Great Depression. Then the War came along, and that didn't do much to improve life on a 40



acre dirt farm. Toys were scarce, and money to buy them was even harder to come by. We moved to town in 1944, or maybe it was 1945, and very gradually, life got a little easier. By 1947, or maybe it was 1948, there was a little more money and quite a bit more merchandise.

It was a good year, whichever year it was. For the first time in my lifespan (which very inconveniently had started with the advent of WWII) we had a turkey in the icebox waiting for Christmas Day. There were stacks of presents under the tree, and a general feeling of better things to come had put smiles on the grownups' faces.

Poplar Bluff was decorated with lights and garlands up and down Main Street. Almost everybody turned out the Monday night before Christmas for a parade and the arrival of Santa Claus. The shop windows were decorated with lights and Wonderful Things.

We watched the parade and then walked up and down Main Street to see the displays. I remember the excitement, the crisp cold burning my cheeks as we peered in every window, admiring the displays of trinkets and toys. For me, it was the first time....and for the others, it was the first time since the War.



It was so wonderful, we just couldn't go home even though it was well past my bedtime. But I wanted to see everything, every store in town...and Mother must have felt the same, because we walked all the way down Main Street to the part where we never went. We rushed past the town's pool hall, eyes discreetly averted, to visit the sporting goods store on the end of the block.

I'd never been there before....there was that pool hall next door, you know...and I was fascinated by the displays of tackle boxes and hip high boots and camping gear. I was especially enthralled by the beautiful fishing lures, and hung over the counter to examine every single one. Mother told me to stay there, she'd be right back, then she went to the far end of the store and started examining the shoeboxes stacked there.

I really liked those fishing lures. In fact, I still do, and have one or two around here that I keep for no other reason than that I fancy them. I knew there'd be a pair of house slippers under the tree for me, and wasn't particularly interested in watching Mother pick them out; I was perfectly content to study the lures and flies.

Snow

The week passed in blissful playtime. School was out, and there was snow on the ground; we kids spent every possible minute outside. My brothers and the older kids on the block had brutal snowball fights every day, while we littler kids tried to stay out of range. We spent our time making snowmen, lying in the snow to make snow angels, and sledding down the easy streets.

Fifth Street, in front of my house, was a long gradual slope. On the other hand, Neat Street, which ran beside my house, was a steep incline. The big kids would throw themselves

on their sleds, belly down, and hurtle down the incline at hair-raising speeds. Charlotte, Carolyn, Larry and I sat upright, poised in prim safety as we tried to steer the sled.

One day my dad came outside to watch us play, and the snow must have triggered some childhood memories of his own, 'cause he dragged out a couple of shovels and showed us how to sit on the blade holding onto the handle in front of us. The shovel rides were wild uncontrolled careening trips that spun us and flung us down embankments in a dangerous thrill ride. Naturally we loved it, and spent hours tempting fate as our worried mothers wrung their hands.

The Turkey

There were still a lot of items that were hard to find; it took a few years for the world to get off its war footing. In 1946 (or was it '47?), turkeys were still scarce. The City Fathers somehow got their hands on a dozen live birds, and staged a Turkey Toss a few days before Christmas.

There were several hundred people gathered around the Court House, including my two brothers and me. Excitement was high; everyone hoped to catch one of the birds. The Mayor and his cronies had the birds in a cage, up on top of the Court House. At four stories, it was the tallest building in town, and the crowd craned necks trying to catch a glimpse of the desirable meat-on-the-roof.

Finally, after what seemed like hours of waiting, they started throwing the birds from the roof to the crowd below.

Probably they thought the turkeys would fly. In fact, they fell like bombs on the waiting crowd. And it was ugly....a terrible scene, as people struggled to catch, were knocked down by, and in at least one case, actually tore a living bird apart as the mob tried to wrench them from each others hands.

My brother and I weren't even close to ground zero. I guess that was lucky for us. Even so, I was pushed to the ground by the surging crowd grappling for the birds. Trampled, my brother managed to pull me to my feet, and when we knew we were out of luck, we trudged home to tell Mother that we'd failed.

The entire turkey toss was such a disgrace that the city never staged another. There was a story about it on the front page of the paper that night, and it even mentioned me, saying "one small girl was thrown to the ground and trampled in the crush." My first brush with fame.

On the 23rd, Mother went to the grocery for our dinner supplies. Although she went to every store in town, even to the farmer's stores on the other side of the river, there wasn't a turkey to be had. Disappointed, she settled for a couple of fat hens.

On the way home, she swung by my grandpa's house to visit with her father. Grandpa and Gramma divorced many years before, and Grandpa had a second wife and a second family of five children, half-brothers and sisters to my mother. Their ages ranged from 16 to just about my age.

While the grownups talked, we kids played. My half-uncles and aunts were in a high state of excitement about Christmas; the first thing they did was take me into the back, to an unheated room to look inside a laundry tub where their own turkey chilled, wrapped in brown butcher's paper. Every few minutes one or the other of them would leave our games to peer at the package in the washer; whispering their anticipation of their first turkey dinner.

Eventually Mother called me from play, and we drove across town to our own home. Something was troubling her, and she told me that Grandpa had traded her the turkey, taking

just one of the hens in exchange. She said he insisted; had said ‘he didn’t care for turkey much anyhow.’

A Sidebar

For all my life, and now I’m over sixty, this has grieved me, as I thought of his children and their disappointment, as I thought of five children and two adults making a Christmas dinner from one hen.

Why did he do it? And how could she have taken it? I have pondered this question for over 50 years, with tears in my eyes for the shame and pity of it. The son of Irish-German immigrants, raised on a hill farm west of Poplar Bluff, was it some fierce Ozark mountain pride that required him to satisfy the need of one family at the expense of another? Was it because, as my Mother believed, he favored one daughter so much more than his other children that he let them hunger for her good? Or was it because he was a old broken down drunk who was so thoughtless that he didn’t think beyond the moment of the gift?

My family of half-aunts and uncles are gone; lost to me now, I can never ask them to forgive me.

We cannot know what our parents and grandparents went through to make them as they were, we cannot know how they suffered. If they made mistakes, we can never truly understand why.

At last, Christmas Eve Day arrived. Mother started working on the turkey — it was a skinny, stringy beast, tough as shoe leather. She looked at the bird, and calculated the likelihood of it turning out tender and juicy. It seemed remote, but Mother wasn’t to be daunted so easily. She got out her giant pot, normally used only during canning season, and she boiled the bird.

It wasn’t long before turkey steam was sweating up the windows, and a fabulous aroma started to fill the house. While she busied herself making cakes and pies, she just kept boiling that tough old bird throughout the day. The steam got thicker, and the essence of turkey floated all through the house, even out the windows to scent the neighborhood.

By late afternoon, the smell had attracted us all...the whole family kept drifting into the kitchen to get a

whiff of that boiling bird. For me, it was the first turkey I’d ever seen, and for the rest of them, certainly the first since before the War, and maybe even since before the Depression started. It permeated the house with its magic; it scented our skins with its sensual perfume.

Rocking around the Christmas Tree

We had homemade chili for supper — a Christmas Eve tradition in our family — and for the first time ever, Mother agreed to let us open our presents on Christmas Eve instead of waiting ‘til the next morning.

I don’t remember much except the highlights. There was a book or two for sure, some lavender cologne, a stack of toys. I got my fluffy pink house slippers, a nice collection of loot. Then we all had a slice of Mother’s no-bake fruitcake and a cup of eggnog, and went to bed to dream of sugarplums.

I woke up early on Christmas morning. Doesn’t everyone? Mother was already in the kitchen. She lifted the boiled bird out of its tub of rich broth, filled it with stuffing, and had it in the oven before six a.m. By noon, when we’d have our Christmas Dinner, it would be brown and beautiful, juice dripping from every pore, so tender it fell apart under your fork. I’ve never seen nor heard of anyone boiling the bird since then, but my mother’s magic worked wonders.

She insisted that, before I walked into the living room to start playing with my new toys, we should all sit down for a hot breakfast. Finally, she nodded her agreement, and followed behind

me as I walked into the parlor.

Finally We Get to the Main Event

Spread across the sofa, on every chair, on the coffee table, were twelve identical shoeboxes. Inside each was a doll, twelve beautiful ladies dressed in elaborate costumes made of silk with lace trims, real hair falling over their shoulders.

Each box was stamped across the end with the name of the country the doll represented. Yugoslavia, Norway and Belgium. Spain's doll had a fabulous black lace mantilla; Argentina's was dressed like a lady gaucho. The doll from Alsace Lorraine wore embroidered blouse and apron. United States' doll was dressed in long silk organdy like a Southern belle. There was a bride doll, and even a Roman Catholic sister. Twelve exquisitely made beauty queens, each with gorgeous silk costume and real human hair, and faces to steal your heart.

It was staggering, even daunting. I did not come from an era where children expected to receive whole sets of anything. I didn't come from a family where anyone expected to own silken-clad ladies with hand-made finery.

The gift of the dolls dominated the holiday season for all of us. The entire family took a turn staring at their magnificence. Mother cleared room on the family bookshelf, and gave me a dozen fruit jars. We stood each doll inside a jar, with the long skirts hiding the improvised stands, and there they lived, opulent and extravagant.

Mother eventually explained that the sporting goods store received a shipment of these dolls, and let them go at some basement price. I believe she got them for \$2 each, an incredible bargain even for the 1940s.



The Centennial

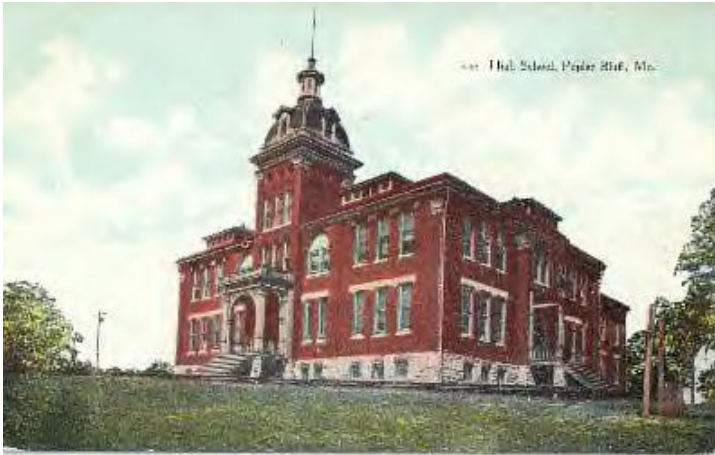
Poplar Bluff, Missouri was settled in the early 1800s. First a trading station, then a lumber camp and rail head, it incorporated as a town in 1849. In celebration of that fact, when I was ten and the town was a hundred, the city fathers staged a celebration for its Centennial year. There was a carnival-like atmosphere, public picnics, fireworks, a county fair with pies and canned goods, livestock and tractors. The high school band played on the Court House lawn every day, and there was a steady flow of free ice cream and soda pop.

The locals went all out to make it special. The City Council passed a law that every man and woman who appeared on the street on Centennial Day must be properly dressed in 1849 gear. Men had to sport beards, or at least long hair. Women were expected to wear long dresses and sun bonnets.

Naturally, there was a parade. All Poplar Bluff's children were invited to march in their 1849 costumes, with their pets and bicycles and roller skates and toys.

Mother was terribly excited by the Centennial. She had family roots going back to the beginning, and a civic pride that was almost possessive. She talked the men folk of the family into beards and gingham, while she and I sported hand-made garments made from old-fashioned patterns.

She jumped right into the parade thing; she had a concept. We borrowed the Griffith's little red wagon, and with a little carpentry and a lot of crepe paper, created a two tiered platform.



Then we circled the dolls around this podium, with my four favorites on the top level. The idea was for me, in my 1849 skirt and bonnet, to pull the beauty queens on their float along the parade route.

The parade gathered behind Junior High school. The band led the troupe, some of the town's real beauty queens rode in convertibles, and we kids formed the body of the parade. There must have been a hundred there, and barking dogs, bicycles, skates and

scooters...a marvelous mélange of kid stuff. After what seemed like endless milling around, the band struck up a march, and the ragged company began the long walk, down Vine Street, turn left on Broadway, then up to Main, and finally to the Court House. The Mayor talked; there was more music, and finally the whole thing was over and we trudged back home.

Later that afternoon, someone took a picture of me and my mother with the dolls. Mother told everyone that I had won first prize with the float, though I don't remember anything like that. I suspect it was one of those parades that all the children were awarded first prize just for being there.

Through the years, the dolls moved from bookshelf to the top of the piano, to my bedroom. Eventually, although it did take a long time, they went back into their boxes and onto the shelf in my bedroom closet.

A couple of years after I was married, when I was 19 or 20, my parents sold their house and moved to Arizona. At that time, Mother sold the dolls to a local collector....got \$100 for them, which was quite an increase on her investment. I didn't mind; my life had moved on. I was just happy that they went to someone who'd appreciate how beautiful they were.

The Collecting Channel

When I was hired as the first writer for the Collecting Channel, I began with articles about what I knew. I had a lot of collectibles, mostly in the glass field, and filled a number of columns



by writing about what I owned. But eventually, I had to do research each day to come up with new topics.

Searching for information on the web is an addictive sport. It's rare not to find at least some data on whatever topic comes to mind, and it's a satisfying experience to run the links on a topic and uncover fascinating new facts. I guess that's why web surfing grabs hold of so many people; there's a lot of instant gratification in it.

Although dolls were not my bailiwick, it eventually occurred to me to try to locate my twelve little beauties. I was curious to see if they ever attained any real value. I also hoped to find information about when and where they were made. I didn't actually expect nor hope to recover them, but a few pictures would be nice to own.

Ebay.com is a great hunting ground for researchers. There aren't many items that don't cross those portals sooner or later, and I figured I'd eventually stumble across them.

But how? There are, at any given moment, literally thousands of dolls offered for sale on eBay. Sifting through all the entries could be a real time-filler.

The problem was, I didn't know anything about them, not who manufactured them, not their "proper" names, not the year they were made. I got them in 1947, or maybe it was 1948. But they may have been a couple of years old when they were remaindered at the sporting goods store.

I started by searching for fashion dolls. I knew that they predated Barbie, so I excluded her from the hunt...and got rid of several hundred entries right there. I knew they must have been made in the 1940s, so I set the parameters for 194* to narrow the focus. I eliminated Gene dolls and movie dolls, and sat the wheels spinning.

Every time I did a search, I'd narrow the thousands to several hundred, then painstakingly open every entry to look for a picture that matched my memory.

Along the way, I began to acquire some helpful information. I learned, by reading a lot of entries, that the Duchess Doll Company had made a set of "Dolls of the World" in 1948-49. But these were definitely not the same...the Duchess dolls were shorter, and they came in square boxes. Madame Alexander also had some "world" dolls, but they were not the same.

I got my big break when I stumbled on a costumed doll in its original box, and the box matched my memory of the boxes my little queens came in. It was a shoebox-shape printed with stars all over...I almost cried when I saw the picture, as a rush of memory hit me, of the boxes my mother had examined in the sporting goods store, and how they looked stacked on the closet shelf.

The cutie in the box was a Little Shepherdess, a nine-inch lady that looked quite a bit like the dolls I had owned. The text with the picture told me she was made in 1948, and was part of the Storybook Series made by The Hollywood Doll Company. I also learned that Hollywood had made a number of different series during this time period, including a Toyland Series and a Princess



Series. I don't know the family name of my set, but it seems certain that I had found their maker.

That gave me a real hook for my searches. Now I set my browser for Hollywood Doll* 194*. Turns out that Hollywood Dolls made a lot of models, ranging from baby dolls to 20 inch walkers. I actually spotted one that I thought was Emily. But I never found even one of the beauty queens of the world that I had let slip through my fingers.

Well, that's about it. I still search the long list of eBay dolls every week; I still run Copernic searches for Hollywood Dolls; I still hunt for Hollywood Doll collecting groups. But in all the thousands of pictures I've studied, I have never come across even one of my beauty queens. The world simply opened its mouth and swallowed them, and left no trace behind, no trail for me to follow.

But, at least I have the picture. Before Mother got too sick to worry about such things, she went through all the family photos and sent each one of us kids a stack of mementos. And among the treasures she sent to me was the picture that was taken on that hot summer afternoon in 1949, following the children's parade.

So there we are, frozen forever in time, my Mother and I in our old-fashioned sunbonnets, standing in front of the family home, with the Griffith's red wagon decorated as a float, and the beauty queens stealing the show. They look so real, I can almost reach out my hand to grasp them.....yet they are gone forever, buried in the sands of time.

But I had them once...and I believe they rest somewhere in some valued collection, all together like sisters, like virgin princesses of great beauty, wrapped in silk and lace. ***



Council Fires

(Mailing Comments)

Free Radical (Steve Green) I probably would not, myself, particularly object to sending the *Star Wars* fans over a cliff to mark the passing of Sir Alec Guinness as a show of Trusting The Force. But I'd personally choose a march on The Circus to seek the shadow of George Smiley.

I believe I've enjoyed Guinness in every role he played but especially like the LeCarre stories of Smiley and the spy-vs-spy society of the British Intelligence. He was also Feisal in *Lawrence of Arabia*, and General Zhivago in *Dr. Zhivago*, two movies I count among my all-time favorites. He also was a quite credible Hitler (in *The Last Ten Days*.)

If you come right down to it, I think I liked him in all his movies. I'm sad he's gone.

SingSing (Nic Farey) Welcome to FAPA, Nic, and congratulations on your recent marriage. I was interested that you met your wife at Karaoke. Without having ever taken part in one (except at a Katz family wedding, and I took care to keep my mouth closed there) I have always been mildly fascinated by the phenomena. So much so, in fact, that one Christmas nine or ten years back, Bill Kunkel gifted me with a Karaoke machine of my very own.

I'm (fortunately, according to Arnie, who says I sound like Edith Bunker) very modest about singing in public, but I did have some fun with it all by myself. In fact, I even had the machine out at one Vegrants' meeting quite a long while back. It was a fairly disruptive presence, quickly dominated by morose melodies sang by overly-sincere sopranos.

It's a fact that a great many people think they are soloists who shouldn't get further than the choir. Karaoke seems to charm these frails into baring their souls in quavering tones. This is only barely balanced by the opportunity it gives for good singers to show their stuff.

Of course, Karaoke makes all the sense in the world when put up against lip syncing performers. They represent a mystery I don't understand at all.

I'm sorry for your past losses, and glad of your new happiness. And I'm pleased to have you in FAPA.

The Wizard's Grave (Danaline Bryant) Like you, I have always had a great appreciation of newspaper writers because of the daily deadline. I never believed I could adjust to such a pace until I actually did it. My last three jobs have been on daily publications; the last required a thousand-word (minimum) feature and a group of news items each day. It's like regularly lifting a calf over the fence You may not get to enjoy the weight, but you get really good at handling smaller loads.

I have a lot of family living in Oklahoma (not too far from Midwest City.) Is that near Lawton? If so, it's mighty pretty territory. Nonetheless, pretty or no, it must have been daunting to be locked out of your car in mid-mountain range.

One question: you spoke of the Wichita Mountains being closed at night. How do you close mountains? I have images of great hydraulic presses that push the mountains into the earth at night when no one is looking at them.

This reminds me of my friend Mary going on a weekend camping trip to Big Springs National Park with my family. She had ragged on me, after an encounter with a tourist boy, for my



late-bloomer's awkwardness with flirting, an art she was well crafted in. To get her back, I convinced her that the park rangers turned off the spring every night to save water. This was the cause of some small merriment at her expense when she returned home and told her parents about the peculiar hydraulics at State Park.

Sansevieria 38 (Dale Speirs) You are correct that the reader of pdf zines will make the final decision as to whether the zine is worth keeping or not. That seems entirely appropriate to me, and in fact, not all that different from traditional printed zines. I'll readily admit that I do not preserve equally every printed zine I receive, and in fact there are those that I do not bother to open and read. I fully expect that there are undoubtedly those who receive my electronic zines without bothering to download them, and more who don't print them out or archive them on disk.

I do agree, however, on the desirability of current fanzines taking a longer view, and archiving the events of fandom after they've happened. The online fanac goes by at such a pace that it's unlikely anyone will ever be able to reconstruct the changing attitudes of the days, except as we write them down in permanent records.

The Prodigal Returns (Karen Johnson) If this fanzine is for Anzapans only, why did you send it to FAPA? I read it despite your warning, but wasn't really sure you meant for me to see it.

I am sure all of Anzapa and all of FAPA are joined in wishing you the best of luck. And it will be nice to have you in con-attending range. But it is electrifying to think of you taking such a gigantic step and making such life-changing decisions before you met John Gory. I hope you find great joy, and I also hope you'll update us on how your acquaintanceship grows.

Deciding to marry before actually meeting is not entirely a modern invention born on the Information Highway. Many a Euro-Asian bride arrived in America already engaged to a man they only knew by name and perhaps a letter or two. And, I'd guess, the percentage of successful unions made by such method is probably not actually inferior to weddings born out of long courtships.

King Biscuit Time (Robert Lichtman) You mentioned that the first Indian artifacts you saw were the Navajo rugs and jewelry sold in a bus depot. The first I ever remember were woven baskets sold by farm wives alongside the road to Big Springs National Park, about 50 miles west of Poplar Bluff. Made of split and stained cane, they were sturdy and beautiful, but very cheap. I remember stopping at one such basket stand where my mother purchased a large basket from the Cherokee woman standing there. I remember being deliciously fearful, thinking there may be "wild Indians" hiding in the fields behind the house.... It was a beautiful basket; Mother used it for years as her egg basket when we went to the farm to buy fresh eggs. ***