

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS (and Baby Turtles) is written by Peggy Rae Pavlat, 5709 Goucher Drive, College Park, Maryland 20740. Today is February 2, 1986.

My sister, Toni, came from her home in Arkansas to visit Mother in later September. Toni went home, I went to a conference for the State Administrative Board of Elections, then on a trip to Jacksonville for work. I got home on a Friday at 8:30 p.m. Called Mother to let her know I was back. I had been calling her every day since she went home after Bill Evans (her husband for anyone new in FAPA) died in June. During the trips, I'd only called her twice. When I called that night, she had a girlfriend with her, so we didn't talk long. I told her I'd come over to visit on Sunday (this was a Friday night), then tried to unwind from my travels. Something which I couldn't quite put my finger on bothered me. It was like there was something which she wanted to tell me but couldn't bring herself to do so.

It didn't take long to find out what was wrong. Got the call at 10:00 p.m. that she was on her way to the hospital by ambulance, and would I meet our friend, Marilyn Belson, there. Turned out that Mother had had the rescue squad out earlier in the week, and they thought there was nothing wrong - but she didn't want to worry me, so had said nothing when I called.

She was admitted HOURS later. At first it didn't look like it would be too long a stay, maybe four or five days or a week. However, the "long-range" prognosis didn't look good.

A month later she died - she never returned to her beloved garden.

We have been devoting most of our time to sorting through the things at the house and working with the lawyer on the estate. Mother was what is gently referred to as a "keeper". I'm more inclined to call her a packrat.

For example, my sister, Toni, who lives with her family in Arkansas, said that I could send her anything that I didn't want to make a decision about (that might be worth saving/shipping), and, in particular, that she would like any of the table cloths which I (or Missy or Eric) didn't want. So I picked out four tablecloths for myself (Missy and Eric didn't want any) and I mailed eighteen tablecloths to her. (She'll never let me settle another estate!)

Mother didn't believe in moderation. During the three months (when three of us have spent nearly every Saturday and lots of Sundays at 14100 Canterbury Lane - in addition to the two weeks I spent there right after Mother died, usually with at least one other person helping) since mother died, we've come to believe that mother didn't believe in owning one of anything. There were eleven large bottles of Real Lemon; six large and one small bottles of Fantastic, eight bottles of rubbing alcohol a whole box (20 or more) of dust masks and ... the list goes on and on.

We finally think we found something which there is only one of. The vacuum cleaner. However, not to undo her reputation for opposition to moderation, Mother bought it this summer after Bill died, when the old vacuum cleaner decided that Bill was the person who had picked it out, so it's obligation to the family was completed with his death. She decided that since the vacuum cleaner that Bill had selected was one of the really expensive vacuum cleaners, that he would have wanted her to get the same kind. So she got a \$700 vacuum cleaner of the same kind. (She clearly remembered what the brand was, and it says what it is on the machine, but I don't remember it at the

moment and it is one of the things which I haven't removed from their house yet.

It's very strange to learn so much about someone after that person dies. I've had to go through lots of documents and some correspondence which I'd never had occasion to read before. Learned that a wedding which mother arranged for good friends of the family's back in the 1950's (when she was still married to my Dad, Jack McKnight) was held on their own anniversary. I don't remember a time when my Mom and Dad appeared to be happy together (my sister says she does), so this was an interesting perspective. I can't imagine that the date was a coincidence; at that time the marriage must have worked well.

There are pictures of Bill's childhood (he was adorable!) and of his parents when they were children. There are certificates/awards which Bill was awarded over the years (for his work at the National Bureau of Standards - which I knew about because I'd attended the ceremony - and for magna cum laude work in Latin, etc.)

There have to have been 300 maps in the house. Some were obviously of places which they had been. Notes had been made of where they ate and of places where they should try next time they visited. Others were "wish list" maps and booklets from all over the United States. I don't remember any maps from overseas.

Mother always loved to garden. After they bought the house, mother had convinced Bill (I was not a party to these negotiations, so I can only speculate on the conversations which led to actions that I could see) that the corner lot didn't offer enough privacy and that it was silly to spend time mowing the lawn. Fir trees were planted just inside the boundry created by the sidewalks. Raised beds were put in for vegetables and flowers. Raspberries were planted (and boysenberries from Bill's beloved Oregon when I bought the plants for his birthday one year), and hundreds of perennials.

We have saved the diagrams mother made of the yard, showing carefully numbered locations for each bulb/plant. There were other sheets which we found/kept which showed numbers and the names of plants. We're assuming these sheets are referring to each other, even though we found them in different locations. The house will probably be sold to someone who loves to garden. My guess is that anyone else will be appalled and want to cover everything over with a "nice lawn". (Then would they be surprised when the bulbs come up right through their lawn!)

Do you know anyone who is interested in stamps? We have a LARGE box of materials associated with stamp collecting (which looks like it would be expensive to acquire) which I hate to toss or even sell at a yard sale. Since none of us is an expert, or even a novice, with stamps, we don't even know what it is we have. There were also LOTS of stamps in Bill's collection. That is, LOTS of BOOKS of stamps. Eventually, we'll want to sell these. Any contacts you could share would be great. These stamps are from all over the world and are arranged by country in appropriate books. I don't know enough to be able to tell the worth of what's here, so I've written to the American Philatelist Society, who say they provide an appropriate service to the family's of deceased members.

Bill and Buddie had an extensive postcard collection. Bill was a mystery fan as well as a railroad buff. (There are lots of records ("only 30 or 40") of

the sounds of different trains.) There are a couple of the metals from the front of engines. I wish that I'd thought to ask him about them while he was alive. I never even really noticed them until after Mother died.

Of course, Bill had an extensive science fiction collection. There are some wonderful books (many, many first editions). There are two copies of the first edition Robots (Asimov). One is in excellent condition. The other may be worth more, even though it's in only fair condition. Ike autographed it to George O. Smith and Dona Smith. It is dedicated to John Campbell; and Ike writes to Dona: "For you I cross out the dedication." (and the dedication to Campbell is indeed crossed out).

There are also more recordings (many never opened) than I can count. Many are classical or jazz. In addition, there's at least a dozen Russian records.

If you are interested in purchasing stamps and materials related thereto (including stamp magazines), or railroad materials (including small trains), or science fiction first edition books, mystery first edition books, records or postcard collections, please do let me know. My house, my sister's house, and our collective kids' houses won't absorb all of the items in our lives.

It's strange to see so many of the things which I grew up with in that house. I'm told by friends who've been to antique shows that some of the furniture that I loathed as a child is now considered very valuable. There is a kitchen cabinet (which Mother painted an intrusive shade of orange - along with another the wood of another glass cabinet and the refrigerator and anything else she could find in the kitchen to paint) with a built in flour bin, pull out drawer and roll top cabinet space in the top of the cabinet. I'm told that this is now worth several hundred dollars to five hundred dollars. My!

Then there was the clothing. Bill was pretty spartan when it came to clothes. And a friend of Mother's had packed away most of Bill's clothes and taken them to Mother's favorite charity for her. Mother however, as I said before, did not believe in moderation. Clothing was no exception. Nor, having grown up during the depression, was mother willing to toss something which might be of use someday. I remember many of her clothes which were hanging up in the racks downstairs from when I was a young girl.

There are a couple of boxes of letters and who knows what from the war years. I have only peaked into those boxes, because I know I'll want to spend hours and hours on each box alone. Missy and Eric spent an entire afternoon poking around in one of these boxes and didn't get more than a couple of inches down. They found wonderful things like a draft of a letter which Mother and Daddy had written to two unspecified soldiers in early December of 1943 (before I was born, but when my sister would have been almost three years old) inviting them to join them for the Christmas holiday. Telling them what kind of activities they could expect - trimming the tree Christmas Eve after a light dinner; and watching Toni during her first "real" Christmas. Then eating Christmas dinner in front of a roaring fire in the fireplace. Christmas dinner was, according to the letter, most likely to be hotdogs and a salad.

This letter is perhaps the very most precious item which we have found so far. It certainly speaks more clearly of the person my Mother was than all of the legal documents in the world.

When I was a girl, we often had guests at our table. There were several

friends who would drop by if they were nearby with never a warning phone call given or expected. There was always enough to feed an extra person (even though things were very, very tight from time to time. It was a rare Thanksgiving when we didn't have students from another country or someone else far away from their home to share our holiday.

Perhaps the time which was most fun, was when a dear friend of my Mother's dropped by unexpectedly on my Dad's birthday. Without explaining that this was a birthday dinner, the friend was asked if she could stay for dinner. Upon accepting, she was served bouillabaisse, with lobster, no less.