

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS (and Baby Turtles), June/July 1991, consists of an invitation to a FAPA Party, an essay and some mailing comments by Peggy Rae Pavlat of 5709 Goucher Drive, College Park, Maryland USA 20740.

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Consider this to be an invitation to a party at Chicon V. The party will be in my hotel room, in the Hyatt, the day of the Hugo Awards (NOT the Magicon/ConFrancisco suite). The time will probably be half an hour after the Hugo Award Ceremonies end. Check with me or other FAPA members at the convention. See also the last page.

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In my real world, I've noticed a pattern which I hope is more a figment of my imagination than of reality. I need to understand.

The Handmaid's Tale, by Margaret Atwood, is used as a point of departure. Having healthy babies was rare in the near-future world postulated in The Handmaid's Tale. The essay does not attempt to be a book review or even an evaluation of Atwood's premise.

I am torn between a number of needs. My own need to make sense of reality competes with several FAPAn's own losses of a child and their possible sadness in response to reading this material.

However, much in the same way as Redd's Gretchen seems to be a continuing part of his life, Bob is a continuing part of my life. Each day reminds me of things he did or we did together. I think of him whether or not anyone mentions him to me, and (mostly) it no longer hurts, rather I like remembering him. I hope any pain felt while reading this by those who have had a child (or children) die will be mitigated by the knowledge that the child is still remembered.

I have no first hand personal knowledge to draw upon for guidance with regard to losing a child. I have been fortunate both to never become pregnant except the two times Bob and I were trying to have a child and also to be able to conceive each time within a year of when we decided we'd like a child. Most of my friends and acquaintances had the same experience.

In all of the time when I was growing up and until about ten years ago, there were only a dozen or so child deaths or other major problems involving children which affected people I knew directly.

Maybe today's statistics are more positive than the anecdotal evidence I have from my friends' experiences, but it seems to me that almost all of the pregnancies of people I knew when I was younger were carried to term and healthy babies were born and are growing up. This no longer seems to be true for the people I

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know. I wonder if my friends and acquaintances are atypical or if there actually are more problems today.

When I was in fifth or sixth grade, a classmate named Elizabeth died in a car accident. The child of my father's best friend had serious heart problems. (A successful operation repaired the damage and she is now a woman with children of her own). After I was married, I remember my reaction when a friend's child died in his late teens (as will his father when he reads this). Another friend's baby was born with multiple problems and died after four months filled with operations. Another small child just lay in bed and didn't do anything at all (No doctor could tell why.) Another child was severely retarded.

That's too many problems, but within the context of thirty-five years.

This pleasant reality did not entirely protect me. While he was growing up, I struggled with my fear that my son would die. (No reason that I could ever figure out - Eric just always seemed fragile.)

A few months ago, friends (whom I'd introduced to each other some years ago) had a charming, happy, healthy two year old son. On May 20th David didn't wake up.

Last year other friends had a baby girl who died at birth.

The previous year still other friends discontinued a pregnancy after it was determined that the fetus had died.

John Foyster has discussed his sons' problems in these mailings.

A son was born to a friend at work after eight months of pregnancy - the child weighed three pounds - looked more like a kitten than a human baby even when I first saw him some months later. (He is doing quite well now - a happy and rambunctious two year old.)

A year ago, two other colleagues each had a child who was born with multiple health problems which have required extensive operations (and are likely to require more operations as they get older).

Did Atwood's tale have more truth than we imagined, or do I know more people having children now than I did twenty or thirty years ago? I don't think I do, but I like any other explanation I've come up with even less. Comments?

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Mailing Comments:

R. Alain Everts: Weinbaum's tale of the Yucatan reminds me to suggest for members' reading pleasure both Lewis Shiner's Deserted Cities of the Heart and Pat Murphy's Falling Woman which share this general story location.

My next book recommendation is not related to your comments, but since I already recommended two books, let's enthuse about a writer I've only recently discovered: Robertson Davies. I haven't been so charmed since I read Half Magic when I was a girl. Not only is there an interesting story with characters doing Peggy-Rae-people-like-things but the writing itself should entice anyone who loves to play with the English language.

Redd Boggs:

Gretchen's hypothesis that Mrs. Zane Grey was the author of some of the Zane Grey books has the ring of truth. An unarticulated question that has persisted since my sister-in-law told me the origins of her nick-name "Toni", is also neatly resolved by this theory.

The place was Nebraska. Shirley Pavlat and her friends were about 12 years old (which would make it between 1932 and 1934) when they went to (another) Zane Grey movie. Each of the girls took the name of the most similar character in the movie as her own.

The others girls apparently quickly reverted to their given names. However, Toni remained "Toni" for the rest of her life (except when the family was talking about her as a young girl, when they would unconsciously refer to her as Shirley.)

The question resolved by Gretchen's theory is how it came to be that a group of girls could find role models in a Zane Grey movie.

Bruce Pelz:

Wait, wait, what's with this "To be continued later ..." business. I'd be delighted to be part of the "General Circulation".

My Dad (Jack McKnight) developed a love for sailing. Consequently, from the time I was ten years old or so, we had a small-ish sailboat. (They were in the 14 to 18 foot range.)

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I was therefore disappointed that the cruise part of the trip Eric and I won was "only" four hours. This cruise would take us from Ft. Lauderdale to Freeport in the Bahamas.

After forty-five minutes or an hour, I was surprised to note that I was having a bit of a problem keeping my balance walking from place to place on the ship (LARGE ship) and, worse still, that I was feeling queasy. About an hour later I recovered my senses enough to note that even the crew members were holding on as they walked from place to place and that positively everyone looked a little green. Turns out that hurricane season extends to December down in that area. The one consolation for the awful trip was free bingo. I even won a bottle of champagne - you can guess how much I felt like drinking it right away to celebrate!

Bob Rodgers:

Your title brings back sharp memories of visiting Nebraska and Kansas in the late 1960s so that we could show off Kathy (now Missy/Melissa) to Bob's side of the family.

I'd never been in that part of the country before and was astonished that one actually could see the edge of the earth. Between that oddity and the closeness of the stars (which are supposed to, by Ghod, stay up in the sky!), I'm sure I would have liked the Mountains of Kansas a whole lot better.

For those of you who weren't brought up in the Pennsylvania/New York, Maryland area, the field of vision out of doors is supposed to be layered with hills and trees and all manner of thing hiding the only mythical horizon!

FAPA Party:  
Nolacon

Perhaps better late than never ...  
At Nolacon (1988), the FAPA Party was attended by (sorry if I missed you): Art Widner, Gregg Trend, Bernadette Bosky, Richard Brandt, Fred Lerner, Don Thompson, Arthur Hlavaty, Harry Andreshak, Gregory Bridges, Janice Eisen & Ken Meltzer, Lester Boutillier, Julius Swartz and Lee Hoffman.

One of the other piles (a small one, thank heavens) is related to ConFiction and the final pile is the remaining things which accumulated from the three weeks when I was in California (things like my homeowners insurance is suggesting that I take a slightly different policy with a slightly higher premium but that is 100% replacement value - this sounds like a useful thing to look into, but they want to know all kinds of things like the outside dimensions of my house and the kind of roof I have (I assume shingle, since it's not slate or tile or wood shingle/shake, which are the other choices.) If I "file" this, I'll never ever fill it out. So it's here on the pile and sometime soon (I hope) I'll have someone help me measure the outside of the house.)

I wonder if two years will be long enough to finish this special project!

You're Invited  
to a FAPA Party at ConFiction  
3:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday  
of the Worldcon  
See text on page one!

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TO: