

In the previous issue, I wrote about how last August my parents' situation in Los Angeles had deteriorated to the point where they could no longer stay there. My younger brother John took charge of moving them and their Life's Kipple out of L.A. to a rented house in San Diego. He managed to find a couple — an excellent pair, as it turned out — who would live in the house with them and provide around-the-clock care. When we talked about it, we agreed this would work until one of them became too far gone for the level of care the live-in couple could provide.

The visit with my parents after Christmas was pretty traumatic, not for what happened but for what didn't happen. My mother is more advanced in her Alzheimer's but she's the more physically together of the two, despite being bent with osteoporosis. She can move around. Over and over again she said, "Don't I know you from somewhere, perhaps a long time ago?" Explaining that I was her son got old after a while, but I did it anyway most of the time. My father didn't recognize me when I first arrived, but snapped out of it. Still, he was pretty immobile (totally so without assistance) and much less lucid than he was the last time I visited them, early April in Los Angeles after Silvercon 3, and would go in and out of it. Much fantasy mixed in — sometimes my brother John would be my brother John, and other times he would be someone on board the U.S.S. Augusta in the '30s (my father was in the Navy). He also seemed to be realizing in classic late-in-life fashion what an asshole he's been his entire life and would be blubbery and remorseful about it. Occasionally I caught him just sitting there with his hands clenched together as if in prayer, deep in some silent meditation and looking frightened. The first evening I was in town my brother came over. My father brightened at this, making much of how "the whole family" was together again at last. It seemed like a sort of epiphany. On the last day, at his request, I took him for a ride. He seemed anxious to get away from my mother's more or less constant aimless prattling. I drove him out to the ocean and then north along the roads closest to the shore, stopping occasionally at good spots so he could see the Pacific. He liked it, but got tired after about half an hour and asked to go home. Still, it was a nice way to end the visit.

A couple of weeks later I had a call from my brother. About ten days after my visit, he related, our father had undergone the beginning of a precipitous decline. We suspect that he may have suffered another stroke, perhaps in his sleep. Things he wasn't doing anymore that he did during my visit: feed himself, know that he had to pee or shit, move around at all. Plus, he was actively resisting the care providers when they tried to deal with him. We ended up putting him in an acute-care convalescent facility. This left only our mother in the rented house with the live-in couple, a financially untenable situation. More consultation and agreements — we moved her into a small rest home located anonymously in a residential area, not too far from where our father is situated.

I flew down January 30th to survey the situation and, at my brother's special request, to make arrangements concerning disposition of their stuff, arriving late afternoon. My brother picked me up at the airport and we went straight to his girlfriend's house in the mellow Ocean Beach section of San Diego. That evening we all went out to dinner (all including girlfriend's 13-year-old son Robert, who was a nice kid) and hung out getting sercon together. The following day John took me out after work the following day to visit both facilities. (We didn't do it the day I arrived because a Welcome Home Chargers parade had messed up traffic patterns.) When we arrived at the convalescent hospital where our father is located, it was the dinner hour and lines of elderly people in wheelchairs ran up and down the halls aimed in the direction of the dining room. However, due to being on an IV for his various medications my father was going to have his meal in his room, where when we went in he was lying, eyes closed, on his bed. Perhaps we shouldn't bother him, my

brother offered. No way, I thought, moving close to his face and saying "Hi, Alex," several times. He opened his eyes slowly. My brother had previously told me that part of his medication was something to mellow him out — otherwise, he pitched a fit and was hard to deal with because he's so pissed off over what his life has become. That the medication was working well seemed evident as he looked at both of us. There followed a lucid moment in which he acknowledged both of us and, in response to our queries, said he was being treated well and the food was okay. Then two nurses arrived to prop him up for his meal. He checked out on us once they showed up, so we said our goodbyes.

Driving on to where our mother was staying, dinner time was just ending when we arrived. She recognized us when we entered the dining room, but didn't really know who we were other than familiar. We took her into the living room and sat on the couch, one of us on each side of her. Although we both said who we were, she persisted in referring to me as Vicky, the name of the woman who was coming in during the day during my parents' final months in Los Angeles. After fifteen to twenty minutes, we'd gone through any number of conversational circles and it was time to leave. In parting we both gave her a hug and a big sloppy kiss. She liked it.

I stayed at the rental house, all mine now that the live-in couple had moved on, and spent the next several days sorting through all their stuff. Eighty to ninety percent of the contents of the L.A. house was still in boxes. I went through all of them sorting out family archival stuff and important papers of all kinds. I made calls checking with appraisal, antique, auction and estate liquidation type people. A wide array of possibilities presented themselves, but many of them involved an estate sale held at the premises and since the house rent ran only through February 20th, there wasn't sufficient lead time to go that route. Others involved our having to take care of unsold leftovers. Neither my brother nor I had additional time to devote to any of this. In the end the arrangement that best suited us was one in which the entire contents of the house — all the kipple, furniture, kitchen stuff, everything — would be removed in one fell swoop, organized and listed, then sold off by auction, direct sale, whatever. The unsalable residue would be donated to a local charity. All undiscovered (by me in my rummaging) family stuff would be returned. For this they will keep 35% of the proceeds. Perhaps high (?) but fair enough for never having to see or deal with any of the stuff again, just a check in the mail eventually. I had the auction/antique people over one afternoon and they seemed pleased at what they could see in the unpacked portion of the stuff. They pointed to several pieces of Oriental furniture and spoke nice-sized sums.

I ended up with half a dozen large boxes of stuff to bring back up here, which I transported in a rented Ford Taurus. This includes some items I'd evidently left there when I moved out in early 1965 and was surprised to see again: science fiction and other books — even my childhood Oz books and a couple of ancient Tarzan books handed down to me by my Uncle Joe. I kept a couple of table lamps they'd bought from a custom lamp manufacturer I'd worked for in the early '60s, a few Oriental art objects (picked rather at random as I sorted through the many boxes of their stuff) and a set of '50s Fiesta ware, but didn't end up keeping any furniture as I'd originally thought. The rest of what I bought back up is strictly family archives: everything from my baby book (complete with lock of baby hair) to my maternal grandparents' death certificates, with a vast range in between.

I slept very little during the entire experience — four or five hours at most. Aside from seeing them and making the sale arrangements, the amount of stuff to be gone through was so daunting that I stayed up late nights and got up early in order to get it all done. I expected to be exhausted afterwards, and indeed I slept eleven hours my first night home and nine the following. But in fact the physical exhaustion combined with the mental and emotional aspects of what

I'd undergone kept me dragging for a full week after my return.

In a phone conversation on March 4th—the first we've had since my visit—John told me that in the past month nothing much has changed in either of our parents' condition. He said that about two weeks ago, my father finally remembered that he had a wife and briefly asked after her. This was reported to him by the staff at the convalescent hospital. My brother said they should call him if he asked again, and three days later they did. John took our mother over to see him last Sunday, and said the visit lasted about five minutes before they both zoned out. Oh, and the people at Mom's care facility say she hasn't asked after her husband at all. Nonetheless, John has arranged with one of the relief people who used to come in when our parents were living at home to drive her over to see him once a week.

Still, there are my lingering doubts about my brother. My personal jury is definitely out. Their wills and the family trust document state that I'm to be the executor of their estate, but in fact my brother holds power of attorney and all their accounts at the present time. When I saw him in late December, he spoke of turning it all over to me at the earliest opportunity, saying he just wanted to get on with his life. But during this last visit, I mentioned on the last night various documents I'd found pertaining to the L.A. house and he was hot to get his hands on them. I begged off by saying they were in six boxes of jumbled stuff. He wanted me to send them to him registered mail as soon as possible. I'm not going to do this because I don't trust the mails, and may take them to him personally following Corflu next month.

This came up during the March 4th call, when I asked after the promised reimbursement for my trip expenses, which I hadn't yet received. John said that it was his understanding that part of my function in making the trip would be to sort out financial records and turn them over so he could add them to the collection he already had, in a safe deposit box, so he didn't feel I'd fulfilled this. In fact, he hadn't adequately communicated this to me, but I mostly let it slide. I admitted I had some concerns about their being in a box in my spare room subject to possible total destruction at any time, just like everything else I own. We agreed I would bring the papers around in April and that he would reimburse me then.

The part of me that is still short on trust for John thinks I shouldn't do it, because it would force cooperation in order to accomplish things. This is because of fears and concerns of him scamming along the way, not that I doubt his capability to handle it in general. But on the other hand, the level of care he's taking to ensure that things like visits happen and that they don't fall into the hands of uncaring people is all exemplary, and my other half thinks I should take this as indicative, and relax. After all, if he really wants to keep handling it until they're both dead—because, he says, of the legal red tape involved at this point in changing the power of attorney (because now they're *both* incompetent, and it would look potentially strange), and because it makes sense to him to keep everything in his hands while he's actively on the scene for them—then I suppose I should be grateful. This leaves me more time for myself, for now, and when I do take it over later on it will be a "wrapping up" sort of thing, not an ongoing chore.

We agreed that I'd be calling again before my visit after Corflu to pin down the day and time more exactly—at this point my post-Corflu plans are a bit fluid. Beyond that, I said I'd be calling about once a month to check in on our parents' situation. "Whatever...." The beat goes on....

All this family stuff definitely put the brakes on getting out the next issue of *Trap Door* per my original plan (which would have had it in your hot little hands by now). I just didn't feel much like intense fanac for a few weeks after this last trip. I was mentally, emotionally and physically pretty wiped out. But I've rebounded and am back at work on the issue. I finished up the first draft of the lettercol the other evening, and am going to attack it after I finish up this zine.

Current plans are to get it out sometime in May and to expand

back to the 48-page size I abandoned when I allegedly went twice-yearly a couple issues ago. I'm relaxing from that position, too, realizing that with zines like *Blat* and *Apparatchik* (and to a lesser extent, *Habakkuk*) on the scene, the sense of wanting to do more to provide a fannish center is no longer as urgent. I prefer the roominess of that size, but may alternate in some fashion between 36- and 48-page issues to keep from slipping back to an annual or worse. What I don't want to do is become one of those fanzines like *Mainstream*—welcome when it comes, but so infrequent as to beggar the sense of continuity.

It's going to be a good issue, with contributions from Redd Boggs, Cora Burbee, John Foyster, Arnie Katz, Len Moffatt, Ray Nelson and Candi Strecker. Carol Carr is working on a column, but I don't actually have it yet. I'll finally be publishing four pages of ATom artwork drawn for Terry Carr's never-written TAFF report. (This I plan to put on the center sheet.) Dan Steffan and Bill Kunkel have done the covers.

But this will wipe out my backlog. Will y'all help rebuild it?

How about some mailing comments on the 96th?

Jeff: So you're another one of those millions of Americans somewhat younger than me who discovered the Joys of Hippie through the pages of *Life*. I saw those articles, too, and sometimes I even knew or had at least Seen Around the people captured by *Life's* eagle-eyed photo-journalists. I already identified with the beatniks and part of why I moved to the Bay Area, other than preferring Bay Area fandom's partying ways to L.A.'s, was to meet some of the people (publishers of little magazines, mostly, and aspiring poets) whose stuff I'd been seeing in print. (This gets into my one-time major flirtation with poetry fandom, but that's another story.) The hippies just sort of sprung up among us. It was a matter of being in the right neighborhood at the right time.

The last time I took acid was in 1970 with my ex-wife, who was then a new live-in girlfriend. A quadruple bill of all four Beatles movies was showing in San Francisco, and we each took a quarter tab of Owsley's Orange Sunshine as we left to drive there. This amount of acid helped keep us glued to our seats for at least five hours—until about halfway through the final film, *Let It Be*, which we began to perceive as a bummer and walked out on. On the way home the lights of the City were a little more sparkly than usual, and once we got in the door the acid trip that had been patiently waiting all evening finally came on like gangbusters and we were up all night.

Your piece of land in the country is the ol' hippie dream, Jeff, and I wish you godspeed and lots of luck in getting it.

Thanks for your e-mail address. I'm beginning to add those I run across to the files containing my mailing list, where I already keep telephone numbers. My present computer is too primitive to handle the Internet, but I'm going to get another one this year and it will have a fax/modem built in, no doubt, and I'll probably (reluctantly but with excitement) go on-line.

Steve: Between your commentary on those three downer books you read and Jeff's references to the Business Roundtable, one could get really brought down.

Elinor: It's a real stretch to think of the "child bride Elinor" turning 70. ☺ I know what you mean about encountering stuff that was already in another one of your apas, and I apologize in advance for much of the above having previously appeared in Lilapa.

Lynda: I wish I could telecommute. Ted seems a prime candidate for it with his new job being so far away and all.

Paul: (Mlg. 97 now) Looking forward to reading that essay on Nico's first album. It was one of my favorites at the time; I did my best to wear it out along with the first Velvet Underground album, which I remember coming out about the same time. [3/7/95]