

less, she was. Her son and daughter-in-law had told her that they were moving from San Francisco to be with her and would live in the small apartment at the back of her house. This news was, in large part, the reason she was so happy. But there was another: "I've finished two more tapes." We were going much faster than she thought possible, and she was writing in her journal, as well. She was to tell me that the journal had become her "buddy," that things she couldn't talk about to anyone, she was writing about in her journal. She said that she found it very therapeutic and that, someday, perhaps, it might be a help to others in her position. She said that she still had a lot of things she wanted to say and was leaning toward publication of the journal at some later date. The final decision would be her daughter's to make and, "it'll need lots of editing, of course."

Through this whole period, Margaret's biggest worry seemed to be that she wouldn't live long enough, or be well enough, to finish the memoirs. That was her whole focus. On October 3 she finished the taping. I arrived when she was

taping the last few paragraphs, a very emotional time. She was totally drained. And then the doubts. Perhaps it shouldn't be published — "probably just a lot of garbage" — but felt that, even if that were so, she was glad she had done it, if only for "the kids." She couldn't believe that she had finished, having just started taping September 11.

I completed the typing October 6 and took the last pages to be photocopied on the 7th. Margaret phoned at 5:00 p.m. that day to say that she'd got all the pages together, in triplicate, and had started to edit! She did the editing, and I completed another typescript. It was a joy for me. Usually, when a loved one is dying, the feeling is one of complete helplessness. But in this case, I could help, and helping Margaret went a long way toward helping me.

Of course, the other areas of her life didn't stop. Phone calls, tons of mail, flowers, friends coming to visit. Margaret found herself in the position of comforting others about her own coming death. And she did that. She remained the loving, caring friend she had always been, and

continued to be interested in and concerned about what was happening in the lives of her family and friends. She was, truly, "a respecter of persons."

She had an appointment for further x-rays and examination on October 17, my birthday. She was horrified to think that I was going to spend the day schlepping her around to the hospital and the doctors, and had sent me fifty-three roses, one for each year. When I picked her up that day, I suggested to her that now she had the memoirs as far as we could go with them, perhaps she could ask the doctor if there wasn't something that could be done. I feared that perhaps she may have refused treatment in order to get her work finished — her all-important work. Margaret said, "Oh, kid, you've seen all the flowers and cards and letters. I'd be too embarrassed not to die now."

The world has lost a great voice. Many of us have lost a dear, dear friend. But she emphasized that we were not to mourn her death, but to celebrate her life. We try to do that.

JANICE KULYK KEEFER

Past Reading

The book, remembered, fits my hand, root
through rock to that time
when reading was a door into blue
distances, turnings
round each turning. Not escape
but inscape, a painless orphaning
till you were nobody's child but your own.

Needing no longer the good aunt's hand
in yours. Knowing the Grandfather,
this air so clear it makes your skin sting —
strange and necessary. No lessons,
or clucking tongues — you kick
the bundle of your stiff and prickly clothes
clear off a mountain ledge; climb
to sleep into a hayloft, pale straw
tickling your legs, the stars so close
you can taste their points with your tongue.

And love between you
and the Grandfather grows complete,
sure-footed as wildflowers seeding
in sheer rock; fluent in winds
that blow from the beginning of all things.

You remember, too, captivity below,
endless winter with Clara
and Fräulein Rottermeier. In spite of silver-
papered bonbons, organ-grinders
in the courtyard, even Clara's spongy love,
turning you pale as the damask on which you will eat
nothing —. Still, this passion for opening
windows into city night; searching
by Alpine light for fierce
blankness of snow, sweet discordancies
of cattle bells. Like a rock
grazing your skin, the Grandfather's voice —

She returned, but you never could,
that *Heidi* on a shelf
unreachable as your own childhood.
The books you read now —
mere doors into a room so large
you hardly know it's locked.
World of past reading, intangible,
fragrant as pine needles
rubbed in the winds's hands.