

## ***Sell or Hold***

About a third of my work is in homes that my clients are trying to sell. They don't know why, but the places just sit on the market. Sometimes they're showcase homes, sometimes not, but it's always puzzling, that every deal falls through, or no one even makes an offer. Having lived there so long, my clients lack the ability to see what might be uncomfortable to a potential buyer, especially when they've already swept them under the rug.

## **Hey Pops**

Bill and Lara were close friends of my friends Tim and Randi, and I had met them socially several times. On occasion, conversation dipped into my work, but after they decided to move, Randi suggested they hire me. Of course, they didn't. They had a beautiful hilltop house in Marin, full of Bill's exquisite hand-made cabinetry, and the market was booming.

Bill had planned to roll his Marin house into a rural property where he could build a custom house and have his shop adjoining it. He had already bought the property and eventually broken ground, but in the year they'd been trying to sell the house nothing happened. They'd been through a change of listing and

realtor; they'd had numerous open houses, showings, and some interest, but nothing panned out. This was extremely odd for Marin (where you could sell an outhouse in a junkyard for half a million), and they were beginning to get a little desperate. They had already begun settling up their business affairs in Marin and needed dough to build their new house.

I talked to them occasionally over the period of that year, running into them at events at our friend's house, and offered them my services when nudged by Randi, but "no, no, it was nothing out of the ordinary." They just assumed it was taking a long time and they couldn't really imagine why there would be any sort of problem like the ones that would require my attention. Eventually, because at this point it was starting to really cost them, they decided — what the hell. I offered them easy terms, based on the sale of their house, so they didn't really have anything to lose. Still though, when I spoke to them they didn't really have any idea why there might be a problem. They didn't know the previous owner very well, but they had been there over a decade so there didn't seem to be any residue from that, or any problem that they could put their finger on.

Timing being what it is, they weren't quite able to get my form filled out and back to me until I'd gone over to the house to meet them and do the job. It certainly was a lovely home, tucked up on the hill with glass running the east wall looking down on the bay, so I looked through the rooms and then talked to Lara about the situation. She told me that the downstairs section of the house, which was now somewhat vacant, doubled as an in-law unit, and had been home to Bill's father for the last few years of his life.

They were very close; the whole family. Bill and Lara's sons spent a lot of time doing things with their grandfather and they all lived there together for several years. Quite unexpectedly, some eighteen months prior, Bill's father had succumbed to a heart

## *Healing Houses*

attack, right there in the downstairs. Bill had found him there, and that was a great loss for them all. Perhaps that spurred their decision to move. It rather amazed me, that in a year of talking to me about my line of work, it hadn't come up at all, but I know it's hard to convert from a rational perspective to seeing things the way I do, or recognize the signs when they're that close.

I could tell that Lara was feeling a bit affected by opening this memory, and I asked her if there had been any occurrences that might have indicated to her that Bill's father was still there. She mentioned that she had in fact seen him walking through the house, and setting the dinner table once, as he always did, but in the twilight of the evening she had dismissed these spectral appearances as tricks of the light.

Whenever there's a deep emotional connection to a person and their death, it doesn't so much matter whether the person who has died is really leaving a *ghost*. The intense energetic tie the living and the *memory* of the dead, and the expectation of them to simply walk back into life, holds their energy in such a way that their place is marked. For Bill and Lara, trying to sell the house and leave that chapter behind, *without having fully let go or completed their grieving for his father*, still kept a very large piece of him in residence downstairs.