

May 21, 1986

# 'Bye, Brenda; 'bye, Tupperware

I came home Monday night from a long weekend in Vermont and the dining room table was gone.

I walked into the kitchen, and saw a box half-filled with Tupperware.

End tables have disappeared, the sewing machine is gone, there was no light in the living room, and my roommate was sleeping on a mattress in the middle of a curtainless room, surrounded by piles of boxes.

It wasn't a surprise. Each day, another Tupperware container has been emptied out, washed up, and stored away. Brenda is getting married in June, and she's been preparing to move into her new home all month.

As I walked through the rooms, I remembered when we first moved into the apartment one year ago.

It was filthy. Three partying college girls had lived there before us. The dining room was covered with sticky beer stains that had never been wiped up, the bathroom was moldy, and the closets reeked of cigarette smoke.

We scrubbed and scrubbed for days before we moved our stuff in. It was the first apartment for both of us, and the cleaning was part of the adventure.

When the peeling linoleum floors, baseboards, walls, and windows were thoroughly cleaned, we moved the furniture in.

First came the dining room table.

I didn't think we'd have a table — I pictured myself sitting in the middle of the dining room floor eating Kraft macaroni and cheese off a paper plate with plastic spoons pilfered from Wendy's.

But Brenda bought the wooden, expandable table with her parents the weekend of graduation. It was carted over from her dorm room, carried upstairs piece by piece, and eventually assembled.

Next came the clumsy brown couch with stuffing that leaks all over, and wooden arms that fall off if you stumble into it.

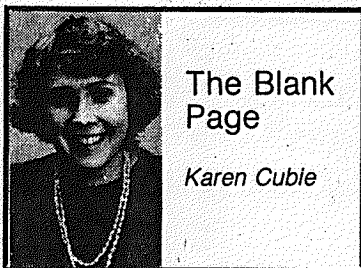
Brenda inherited it from a friend who was moving to Maryland to get married and didn't want it anymore.

Don hauled it up our narrow flight of 50 stairs, jarring the bannister, and loosening it.

The green, black and gray couch my parents donated was carried up by my brother and father. It was too wide for the stairway, and it scraped huge clumps of plaster and wallboard off the wall, and tore the bannister completely away.

The rest of the furniture was easier to move.

Brenda's prized possession was an old, wooden, double bed she'd bought from friends for \$50 — mattress and box springs included.



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## Place for everything

After living in the apartment a few weeks, we finally set down to open the hordes of kitchen equipment Brenda had collected.

It was like Christmas. Brenda owned more Tupperware, stoneware, and kitchen utensils than my mother had gathered in her 25 years of marriage.

She had pitchers, and ice-cream holders, a bread box, a flour bin, a potato chip holder, and refrigerator containers. There was a container for everything. Nothing of Brenda's stays in its original wrapping.

She had a pizza wheel, a cake pan, a full set of "Farberware" (pots and pans), nice glasses,

plastic cups, a full set of McDonald's glasses, Jello molds, Corningware, and good china.

All I had to offer was an aluminum tea kettle, a small pot, old peanut butter jars, and a set of stainless steel utensils my cousins had thoughtfully given to me as a graduation present.

When we set up the kitchen, we were all moved in.

I leaned back on a dining room chair and peered over my whole apartment.

From where I sat I could see the five, wildly clashing patterns of wallpaper we inherited from twice-removed previous occupants.

The dining room paper held orange and beige blossoms, the kitchen was bright yellow with dark brown paneling, the paper in the spare room is white, with huge exploding rose blossoms, the living room is cream with tiny apples and cherries, and the bathroom is pink and green.

"Not bad for a first apartment," I thought proudly.

At first, everything was special,

but over the year I've grown used to the Tupperware, the Farberware, and the dining room. I take it for granted.

Thanks to my coordination, the glass collection has rapidly decreased, but I never broke any stoneware.

Cleaning is no longer an adventure — it's a chore, the wallpaper has sunk from "interesting" to obnoxious, and the number of working electrical outlets is constantly decreasing.

When Brenda leaves at the end of the month, my earlier idea of apartment life will become a reality.

She'll leave me with the wallpaper, two worn couches, shabby carpets covering the linoleum, a box of stainless steel utensils, and old peanut butter jars.

On June 1, when I come home for dinner, I'll break open a box of Kraft macaroni and cheese, grab a paper plate, carry it into the dining room, sit down in the middle of the dining room floor, and dig in with a stainless steel fork.

There's no place like home.

