Grandma Pat
And
The Bees
Dedicated to my wonderful grandkids – Emily, Kyle, Zoë, and newly arrived Rowan
When Grandma Pat was a young girl, she liked bees. She’d very carefully catch them and put them in a jar to study. Then she’d let them go, because, after all, she *liked* bees.
When Grandma Pat grew up…
She still liked bees, so she kept hives.
One afternoon in early June, Sammy the dog and Grandma Pat went for a walk to see the bees. They walked through a path filled with Hesperus, a tall wildflower. The path was surrounded by blooms of blue and white and smelled like fine perfume.
When Grandma Pat and Sammy got to the hives, they noticed the bees were very active. Usually the bees were quieter in the late afternoon, flying lazily back to the hives. Today things were buzzing! “Aha!” thought Grandma Pat, “I bet they are getting ready to swarm.”
Sometimes bees decide it is time to start a new hive. They bring a young queen with them and many of the bees leave to find a new home. They leave the old queen and enough bees to keep up the old hive.

Sammy and Grandma Pat walked back to the house. Grandma Pat decided she should bring an empty hive body back down to the bee yard. Sometimes a swarm will decide an empty hive is just the thing for their new home.
But then Grandma Pat thought about all she had done that day. She’d started with a three mile run, worked hard in the garden for a long time, walked with Sammy the dog, and now she was tired. She didn’t want to go back to the bee yard!
Just then Grandpa drove up. He looked at Grandma Pat on the porch and said, “Hey, you look tired.” Grandma Pat told him all she had done that day and that she still needed to take a hive down to the bee yard.
Grandpa said, “I’ll take it down, you sit there and relax.”
The next afternoon Grandma Pat and Sammy went back down to check the hives. They walked through the path filled with Hesperus and to the open field where the bee hives were.
And there, on a small bush, at the front of the field, was a big swarm of bees. Grandma Pat was so excited! She ran back to the house to get her bee equipment.
When she got back to the bee yard with her equipment, she first checked the empty hive. When she popped the cover off, a small snake face peered up at her. Grandma Pat rapped the side of the hive with her hive tool. “Go away little snake, this is not your home!” The snake disappeared down in the hive. Grandma Pat lifted one of the hive bodies off and took out some frames.

There, curled in a ball, were three more little snakes. Grandma Pat rapped her hive tool on the hive body again. “Go away you snakes; this is NOT your home!” The snakes didn’t look very happy, but they slithered out the hive entrance and disappeared into the grass. Grandma Pat put the hive back together, except she left the cover off and a few frames out.
She put on her bee hat, a long sleeve shirt, and her long leather beekeeping gloves. Bees are pretty gentle when they are swarming. Usually bees sting when they are protecting their hive; swarming bees have no home to protect. And before bees leave the old hive, they eat a big meal of honey to tide them over. Who wouldn’t be gentle with a stomach full of honey? But Grandma Pat put on the clothes, just to be safe.
The swarm was clustered on a small branch in a low, shrubby tree. Hundreds and hundreds of bees hung in a huge mass from the branch. Grandma Pat took a pair of clippers and cut the branch off. A clump of bees fell off with the jostling, but most of the bees just hung there. Grandma Pat walked over to the empty hive and placed the branch of top. After a minute she shook the branch and all the bees landed in the hive.
Grandma Pat went back to the shrub where she had clipped the branch. The bees that fell off the branch were clustering again. Grandma Pat sat next to the shrub and waited for the cluster to form. When most of the bees were in the cluster, she cut that branch off and took it to the hive. She gently shook those bees into the open hive body.
After she was sure all the bees were safely in the hive, she put the cover on and she and Sammy the dog went back to the house.
The next morning Sammy the dog and Grandma Pat walked back to check on the new hive. They walked through the path surrounded by Hesperus and sniffed the lovely air.
When they got to the hive, Grandma Pat saw the bees liked their new home. She was very happy and so were the bees!