

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Saint Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter

No. 618

7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016 651-459-9341

May/June/July 2007

E-mail address (St. Paul Chapter) peachy3536@comcast.net

The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 Phone No. (Toll free) 877-969-0010

The Saint Paul Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends
Meets on the second Thursday of
each month at
Beaver Lake Lutheran Church
2280 Stillwater Avenue;
Maplewood, Minnesota
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

For initial contact and meeting
information call Linda at
763-862-5179

The Compassionate Friends National
Web Site is located at
www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF St. Paul Chapter Web Site at
tcfstpaul.org

*MEETING TOPICS:

*The following meetings include
General Sharing & Discussion to
also include the following topics:

May 10: Ways to Remember -
Sharing ideas such as a memorial
garden - please come to share
and/or learn from each other.

June 14: How We All Grieve
Differently

July 12: Open Discussion

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Would you like to help with the work
of the St. Paul Chapter? Then please
join us for our quarterly Steering
Committee meeting. If interested,
please call Cathy for date, time and
place at 651-459-9341 of our next
Steering Committee.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Compassionate Friends' vision is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK - what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE don't stay away from a meeting because the topic scheduled does not interest you. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind; we do not stay on the topic only. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the others is okay too. Remember also that our meeting is open to adult siblings, grandparents, or adult family members such as aunts or uncles.

**We Need Not Walk Alone.
We are The Compassionate Friends.**

ST. PAUL CHAPTER INFORMATION

Chapter Coordinators/Steering Committee: Cathy Seehuetter, Jan Navarro, Debbie Halfen, Lyle Lindberg, Dave Esberg, Denise Bjerke & Dick Peterson

Newsletter Editor: Cathy Seehuetter

Treasurer: Lyle Lindberg

Librarian: Jan Navarro

Remembrance Cards: Kathy Lesnau

1st Contact: Linda Bergan

Outreach: Karen Gorz

Hospitality: Kim ZumMallen

Chapter Webmaster: Dave Esberg (tcfstpaul.org)

National Board Member: Cathy Seehuetter (651-459-9341)

TELEPHONE FRIENDS: Please call the following phone friends if you need someone to talk with:

ACCIDENTAL/SUDDEN DEATH

Cathy 651-459-9341

ILLNESS

Jeanne 651-330-7613

SUICIDE

Dave (cell phone) 612-747-8225

ONLY CHILD

Kathy 651-426-2446

INFANT LOSS

Lori.....952-229-4630

CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Lois.....651-777-2342

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS

MINNEAPOLIS: Meets the 3rd Monday of every month at Calvary Lutheran Church, 7520 Golden Valley Road in Golden Valley. Contact Carol Hawk at 763542-8528.

RICHFIELD: Meets the 2nd Monday of every month at Hope Presbyterian Church, 7132 Portland Ave. So. For directions or more information, call Chris or Bob Lewis at 612-825-6500.

ST. CROIX VALLEY: Meets the 1st Thursday of every month at United Methodist Church, 1401 Laurel Avenue, Hudson, WI. For more information, call Ron or Kathy Felsh at 651-439-3290.

APPLE VALLEY: For meeting times and location, please call Shirley Doering at 952-432-5955

CHAPTER BALLOON RELEASE

We will again have our annual balloon release in the summer. We are tentatively planning this for Sunday, August 26th. Look for more information in the next newsletter; as well, you will be sent a personal flyer/invitation. We would love to see more of you at such as special event, so please mark your calendars with more information to follow.

SUPPORT GROUPS AND NEWSLETTERS

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NATIONAL OFFICE
TCF.....toll free: 877-969-0010
E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
National Website: <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

SUICIDE

Survivors of Suicide 612-922-5830
Suicide Awareness 952-946-7998
Or 1-800-511-SAVE
Crisis Hotline 1-800-784-2433

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

St. Paul Chapter 651-484-0336
E-mail: pomcmn@isd.net
National number (toll free) (888) 818-POMC

OTHER NEWSLETTERS

Alive Alone: Loss of an only child. There may be a minimal charge.

Kay Bevington
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, OH 45891

The Compassionate Friends. National newsletter published four times per year. Cost is a donation of \$20 or more. This publication is for siblings and grandparents also.

TCF
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522

Parents of Murdered Children. This "survivors" newsletter is issued three times a year and costs \$10. POMC helps survivors deal with their grief and the justice system. Write to:

Parents of Murdered Children
MN HOPE Chapter
PO Box 516
Circle Pines MN 55014

Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education:

SA/VE
9001 E. Bloomington Freeway
Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55420
888511-SAVE
www.SAVE.org

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and their families

LOVED...MISSED...REMEMBERED ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS AND ALWAYS:

MAY

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| 5-01-87 | Micah, son of Michele & Tommy Thompson | 5-15-82 | Andy, son of Dick Peterson & Valerie O'Neill |
| 5-03-95 | Jared, son of Grace & James Kuznia | 5-15-91 | Eli, son of Randy & Therese Meyer |
| 5-05-82 | Brent, son of Nancy & Jim Hendrickson | 5-17-90 | Katie Clapper, daughter of Paul & Kellee Wallace |
| 5-07-85 | Danny, son of Mona Morrissey, brother of Rob | 5-19-85 | Rita, daughter of Karen Gorz |
| 5-09-77 | Indrani Thoreson, daughter of Georgia Skare | 5-25-86 | Patrick, son of Julie Niemi |
| 5-10-75 | Bryan Montpetit, son of Patricia Lilly | 5-30-90 | Luke, son of Shannon Sievers, and grandson of Karen McLaren |
| 5-14-78 | Charlie, son of Kathy & Allen Lesnau | | |
| 5-15-79 | Sabrina, daughter of Lyle & Jan Lindberg | | |

JUNE

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|---|
| 6-02-65 | John, son of Mary Ann Pojar | 6-17-96 | Erin, daughter of Colleen Como |
| 6-02-67 | Nick Chavez, son of Judy Coleman | 6-17-83 | Fallon, daughter of Steve Bowell |
| 6-03-99 | Jacob, son of Laura & David Tussey | 6-25-57 | Barry Wesbrook, son of Claudia Eliason |
| 6-05-76 | Jon, son of Carol Allis | 6-26-58 | Julia Ann Bartlett, daughter of George & Carol Konkle |
| 6-11-68 | Kerri Braun, daughter of Barb & Dave Deters | 6-26-60 | Jon Wesbrook, son of Claudia Eliason |
| 6-14-00 | Devon Jenson, niece of Kristine Lampert & granddaughter of Linda Jenson | 6-28-60 | David, son of Jim Franzen |
| 6-16-79 | Nicholas, son of Colette & Jim Carlson | 6-29-54 | Carla Rosenthal, daughter of Elaine Henthorne |
| | | 6-29-76 | Jami Agudelo, daughter of Pat Ossell |

JULY

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|--|
| 7-02-98 | Blake, son of Katy McCarty | 7-14-82 | Nicole, daughter of Mark & Mary Pagel |
| 7-03-85 | Katy, daughter of Mary & Tom Blehm | 7-18-71 | Becky, daughter of Jeanne Vogel |
| 7-05-53 | Larry, son of Lois Nyman | 7-19-80 | Julie Rosenthal, granddaughter of Elaine Henthorne |
| 7-12-52 | Betsy, daughter of Don & Eleanore Baumann | 7-23-83 | Kyle, son of Steve & Sherry Lagoon |
| 7-15-86 | Andrew, son of Donald & Leigh Harwell, brother of Ashlee | 7-29-85 | Germain, daughter of Laurel Vigeant |

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN...IN OUR HEARTS ALWAYS...

REMEMBERED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR DEATH

MAY

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|---|
| 5-06-98 | Betsy, daughter of Don & Eleanore Baumann | 5-16-81 | Brenda, daughter of Dave Esberg |
| 5-08-91 | Cheryl, daughter of Denise & Steve Bjerke | 5-23-06 | Russell, son of Faith Ann Jackson |
| 5-11-95 | Kristina (Nina) Westmoreland, daughter of Cathy & Greg Seehuetter, sister of Lisa, Amy & Dan, and granddaughter of Harlan & Ellie Plumb | 5-24-04 | Katy, daughter of Tom & Mary Blehm |
| | | 5-25-00 | Tom, Jr., son of Tom & Laura Burbach |
| 5-12-02 | Amber, daughter of JoAnn & Hans Tholey | 5-26-89 | Jesse Buchanan, son of Carol & Gary Malek |
| | | 5-30-06 | Jon, son of Carol Allis |

JUNE

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|---|
| 6-03-05 | Jaden, son of Teresa & Jason Karsten | 6-13-90 | Steven, son of Kathy & Vince Schettner |
| 6-03-06 | Todd, son of Judith Ryan | 6-15-00 | Kevin, son of Debbie & Joe Halfen |
| 6-11-91 | Brett, son of Mark & Lonnie Bohnen | 6-19-00 | Nicole, daughter of Mark & Mary Pagel |
| 6-11-05 | Michael, son of Mary McGuire | 6-19-05 | Kelly, sister of Tina Thompson |
| 6-11-05 | Michael, son of Merrilee Towne | 6-27-95 | Jessica Swanson, granddaughter of Ruth Krause |
| 6-12-70 | Carla Rosenthal, daughter of Elaine Henthorne | | |

JULY

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| 7-01-87 | Marit Eldri, daughter of Gregor McDonald | 7-18-04 | John, brother of Maureen Johnson |
| 7-04-79 | Jon Wesbrook, son of Claudia Eliason | 7-19-04 | Deborah, daughter of Jean Byland |
| 7-08-87 | Kellie Kaye, daughter of Joannie Kemling | 7-25-95 | Charlie, son of Kathy & Allen Lesnau |
| 7-09-00 | Sabrina, daughter of Lyle & Jan Lindberg | 7-30-06 | Sandie Anne, daughter of Susan Rogge |
| 7-18-04 | John, son of Marlene & Joe Keyser, | 7-31-04 | Samantha, daughter of Mark & Teresa Bierbauer |

Sincerest apologies to Theresa & Jim Klover, and Mardell Cavanaugh. The birth date and anniversary date of their daughter/granddaughter, Angela, was missing from the last newsletter. It should have read: Angela Klover, Birth Date: 2-16-1988 - Anniversary of Death: 1-24-2006

LOVE GIFTS™ are tax-deductible donations given in memory of our children or other loved ones by family, friends, or other caring people who wish to help with the work of the St. Paul Chapter. Our chapter is self-supporting and donations are our only means of existence. We gratefully accept these gifts with the knowledge that our children are warmly remembered. **Love Gifts™ were generously given in loving memory by the following:**

- Theresa & Jim Klover, - daughter, Angela
- Kim ZumMallen - daughter, Hannah
- Cathy Seehuetter - daughter, Nina, & TCF friend, Mary Lou Linn
- Kathy & Al Lesnau - son, Charlie
- Brenda Bauman - daughter, Baby Carley
- Tom & Carol Nace - son, Tommy
- Mary Kay Shannon - son, Aaron Brown
- Johanna Lester - son, Loren Lamb
- Ronele & Jerry Janes - TCF friend, Mary Lou Linn
- Don & Eleanore Baumann - daughter, Betsy
- Theresa & Jim Klover - daughter, Angela
- Don & Shirley Terhell - son, Todd
- Lois Klindworth - daughter, Kathy & granddaughter, Briana
- Judy Coleman - son, Nick Chavez
- Diane Nelson - children, Darlette & Joey
- Joannie Kemling - children, Mitchell John & Kellie Kaye
- Sue Taylor - son, Matthew Stark
- Laura Burback - son, Tommy
- Mary Lou O'Connor - daughters, Kathy Jo Whitehead & Tammy Malcolm
- Judith Ryan - son, Todd Anthony Rossow-Ryan
- Marlene and Joe Keyser - son, John DeForest Keyser
- Claudia Eliason - sons, Barry and Jon Wesbrook
- Sandy Frank - son, Jesse

The Passing of a TCF Friend

Mary Lou Linn, (who was a former St. Paul Chapter Leader with her husband Dave), died on Easter Day, April 8th, after a long and courageous battle with ocular melanoma. Those of you who have been to a meeting will probably remember that first person who greeted you at a chapter meeting. You were anxious, worried about what to expect, and had to muster up all the courage you could to walk through those doors. Mary Lou was that person for me. She held me in an extended comforting hug as I sobbed my heart out, and I will never forget that. She offered hope and understanding to those newcomers to our chapter. When friends, Ronele and Jerry Janes, made a donation in Mary Lou's memory, they attached the following: "This donation is in memory of Mary Lou Linn. It is in remembrance of all she has done for TCF. Her involvement was a godsend for so many. She was a leader and a planner, forever remembered." We will truly miss seeing Mary Lou and Dave together at our chapter's Candle Lighting Service and Balloon Release. The St. Paul Chapter extends our love and deepest sympathy to Dave.

BIRTHDAY TABLE



Every month at our meeting, we will provide a birthday table. In the month of your child's birthday, please bring pictures and small mementos of your child to place on the table. You may also bring a favorite cake, cookies or other snack for the table in

memory of your child. We do this to celebrate our children's lives and to share their special day with others who understand



July 20-22, 2007 The 30th National Conference of The Compassionate Friends Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

July 19—Pre-conference Professional Outreach Day
July 20-22 National Conference
July 22--8th Annual Walk to Remember

The National Conference includes keynote speakers to include TCF founder, Rev. Simon Stephens; Elizabeth Edwards, bereaved parent, author, and wife of declared Presidential candidate John Edwards; and more, many wonderful workshops, butterfly boutique, bookstore, annual Walk to Remember, sharing sessions, Sibling programs, and especially the friendship and understanding you will find from the other attendees.

For further information or to register, go to
www.compassionatefriends.org

Or call the National Office at (toll free) 877-969-0010.

Compassionate Employer Recognition (CER) Award

I had the distinct honor to present a CER award to the employer of one of our members, Marsha Williams. Marsha, along with her husband Russ, parents of Larry, are frequent meeting attendees and always a welcome presence. The honor went to Marsha's employer, Independent School District #622 (No. St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale). She nominated them for the wonderful and carrying support she got, above and beyond the call of duty; not only at the time of Larry's death, but from the time he was first diagnosed with cancer.

Marsha, Russ, and I (as a representative of TCF National) attended the April School Board meeting. TCF National gives CER recipients a beautiful plaque and I presented them with that. Marsha then read aloud to the school board members her emotional and heartfelt letter that she wrote in nomination of Ind. School District #622. Many of them were so moved by this tribute, that the board president felt that a recess was in order! They were very appreciative of Marsha's nomination and proud to receive recognition from the TCF National Organization.

If you would like to nominate your employer (even if you do not work for them now, but did at the time of your child, sibling or grandchild's death), look for further information on the Home Page of the TCF National website (www.compassionatefriends.org) on the right side of the page. It not only gives an employer a much-deserved pat on the back, but spreads the word in the community about TCF and our chapter.

Thoughts from the Editor...

A PATCH OF BLUE

Today is a beautiful spring day in Minnesota. I welcome being able to sit on my deck barefoot and in short sleeves, feeling a warm gentle breeze on my face, listening to robins singing their sweet springtime song, and breathing in the clean fresh air of the season. I watch the brilliant sun come and go as puffy white clouds race through the azure sky oftentimes blocking its light. My time on the deck is my private time for contemplation over all that was and all that is.

In two weeks, it will be 12 years since my Nina left this earth. During most of that period of time, spring brought with it trepidation and feelings of loss and emptiness. There is an uneasiness that has not been completely erased. Whether it is the smell of the air or the look to the sky, it brings me back to the most horrific day of my life.

Yet, I have come so far. I remember the "all-nighters" in early grief that my daughter Amy and I pulled; we stayed up all night, talked and cried, until the sun came up. It was easier to stay awake all night than to wake up to the painful realization each morning that Nina was truly gone. That I would never again begin my day seeing her sitting at the breakfast table with the daily newspaper and her bowl of Rice Chex, and her always cheerful greeting, "Good morning, Mommy!" with her ever ready smile. I would never again feel the warmth of her hugs as she snuck up behind me while I was working at my desk, wrapping her arms around my neck with a kiss on the top of my head, as was her goodnight ritual. I began my day with a deluge of tears, and ended the same way. My life was a never-ending blur of anguish and sorrow.

Some years, we may sail through these grief days: for example, the upcoming Mother's and Father's Day, days that almost scream out the reminder that one is missing. We wondered where we got the strength to make it through, but somehow we did. On the other hand, perhaps the following year we may feel like we have regressed to Square One. Often it is grief triggers that set it off; you may have seen someone who reminded you of your child, sibling or grandchild - the way they tilted their head when they spoke, the scent of their cologne, or even the way they walked. However, oftentimes there is usually neither rhyme nor reason to why it happens; it just does. Such is the roller-coaster ride of grief. Rather than panic when we feel we have gone backwards, we have come to know that it is part of our "new normal". Whether it was from attending TCF meetings and listening to other more seasoned griever's, or reading from the newsletter, we have found that we are not alone in these thoughts and feelings.

Time is a friend. I will not go so far as to say that overused phrase, that "time heals all wounds". But, I can say that the pain of our loss will become gentler with time. We will have had practice, and learned how to live with the missing and the longing. When someone has had such a profound loss, we can expect to have "shadow grief"; yet, we are aware of its existence and have learned to deal with it and not be frightened that we are going backwards.

Today's lovely spring sky that I wrote of earlier is now filled with dark clouds. However, periodically, there will be a break in them revealing a patch of blue sky. I knew I had found my "patch of blue", a break from the grayness in my life, when I found myself commenting on and enjoying the gorgeous spring days those years before I dreaded.

May a "patch of blue" in a doudy sky remind you that, in time, the dark clouds will lessen and the sun will most surely shine through again, returning too much of its former beauty. May you hold tight to that "patch of blue", knowing that your grief will be gentler, and you will survive. With gentle thoughts,

- Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN

THE 4TH OF JULY

It's getting late...
And dusk is settling in....
The 4th of July fireworks...
Are about to begin.

I wonder how far is Heaven...
As I look up to the night sky...
And wonder if my child is watching...
Just from the other side?

The Fireworks have begun...
As they fly into the sky....
Just like my child, my angel...
Who is forever soaring high.

The colorful bursts explode...
Into a spectacular show of lights....
And fill the heavens above...
It's so beautiful and bright.

And as the fireworks fall...
From the Heavens way up high...
They burn out...and it's dark again...
And the crowd lets out a sigh.

But, then another is lit...sparkling brilliantly
As the light trails through the night sky...
I think I am beginning to understand...
For it's the same when our loved ones die.

For a life that has burned brightly...
Can never fade away....
For it's rekindled through our memories...
Each and every day.

So even though my child has gone...
To the Heavens up above....
Their light will always remain ...
And shine down on me with love.

And our Grand Finale WILL come...
When we are reunited in Heaven again...
But their light will always remain lit...
...Until then.

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Written by Laura Jacobson

Library of Congress TX5-627-966

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Bereavement Balance Beam

Notice the athlete as she carefully and gracefully strolls across the balance beam, she makes it look so easy. We watch and hold our breath, we hope she won't fall. She artistically swivels at the end, Goes back to the middle, And without missing a beat, Lands perfectly on the mat below.

I am not an athlete, nor an acrobat, yet I walk a balance beam each and every day. I trod gingerly across the beam. I know you have not noticed.

I hold my breath, not as a spectator, but as a participant. I wear an outfit, not of spandex or sweats, but of steel-plated armor guarding my emotions. I give a presentation of poise and control, which I've learned with each step I've taken. I know how to survive, take each day one step at a time; sometimes pausing for laughter, sometimes trembling with tears.

Then there are the times I've fallen off, which in the beginning, took but a mere reminder of who I've lost. And I toppled off the balance beam only to struggle silently to climb back on. What caused the fall? Perhaps a mention of his name, perhaps hearing his favorite song, seeing a young boy on a bicycle and knowing it wasn't James; seeing a mom at the store shopping for back to school items, reminiscing about bedtime stories which are now no longer told; watching someone else's child at the soccer fields, driving in the car alone & no one next to me in the passenger seat.

But I learned to stay on the balance beam, handle those moments of pain and loss, keep my composure, let the tears fall, but let not my steps falter, turn the corner without tripping, keep life in balance and in perspective with a huge void on the other side.

Now, almost five years later, I've nearly perfected this trick. I can't compete with the professional athlete; they have the physical, visible aspect of this performance down pat. I'm still working on the emotional, mental portion, but doing quite well.

Till I hear my young niece gets to be a mom, or my sister-in-law moans that her son is away for a week and the house is so quiet; or yet another friend has become a grandmother, someone else we know is graduating or marrying, my nephew turns 16 and gets a license. All the reminders of who I'm missing, what James never will accomplish; the opportunities that James missed out on, the life I wish I could see James experience and be a part of.

It's all a matter of balance, keeping the stride, maintaining a sense of normalcy. Balancing, in spite of a broken heart and an emotional handicap. And learning that when falling below, there are friends to help me back up, memories to give me smiles, determination to live the life James would have wanted...for both of us.

- Meg Avery

In Loving Memory of James R. Avery, III

To Bereaved Fathers...

Who ache, but feel they must carry on.
Who are frightened, but cannot show their fear.
Who are angry, but cannot strike out.
Who are lonely, but have to smile.
Who grieve, but must be strong.
Who love, but are afraid to show their love.
Whose tears cannot fall.

Bereaved fathers are often desperately tragic people caught in the trap of society's expectations. Our coworkers, friends and family expect that we will, indeed, be strong—that we will do all in our power to ensure that life carries on. They expect our behavior and temperament will remain consistent and that through our attitudes and actions, others will be able to observe our will to survive despite the enormity of our loss.

Unfortunately, the world does not always work the way we want.

Bereaved fathers do ache. They are afraid and angry. They are lonely and cry in silent places. They question their sanity and their will to survive. They want to run and hide from their sorrow. And they carry a heavy burden of guilt for not "living up" to society's expectations.

As difficult as it may be, take the risks and develop the courage to express the way you feel.

- Trevor and Audrey Roadhouse, TCF/Regina, SK
In memory of Robert Tristan Roadhouse

WHY BUTTERFLIES?

Since the early centuries, the butterfly has symbolized renewed life. The caterpillar signifies life here on earth; the cocoon, death; and the butterfly, the emergence of the dead into a new, beautiful and freer existence. Frequently, the butterfly is seen with the word "Nika," which means victory. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross movingly tells of seeing butterflies drawn all over the walls of the children's dormitories in the World War II concentration camps. Since Elisabeth believes in the innate intuitiveness of children, she concludes that these children knew their fate and were leaving us a message. Many members of The Compassionate Friends embrace the butterfly a symbol—a sign of hope to them that their children are living in another dimension with greater beauty and freedom—a comforting thought to many.

When Mother's Day Feels Empty

There are no words to completely describe what a mother feels when her child has died. She feels lost, abandoned, afraid, lonely, forgotten, and most of all empty. The emptiness is like none other because it is an emptiness of the heart. When a child dies, part of a mother's heart also des.

Mother's Day is a traditional holiday that has grown bigger and bigger throughout the years. We are bombarded with advertisements to take out mothers for a special dinner or buy Mother's Day flowers. For more than a month before Mother's Day, reminders are placed everywhere. It's impossible to pick up a newspaper, listen to the radio, or turn on the television without some kind of reminder of Mother's Day.

There are Mother's Day banquets, Mother's Day baby dedications at church and special family gatherings to honor mothers. All of this is wonderful except for the mother that is grieving the loss of her child. For the grieving mother, every reminder of Mother's Day is like another wound to the heart. The hole in her heart caused by grief grows larger and larger with each reminder, and the emptiness feels darker and colder than she ever imagined possible. What is a grieving mother to do when there are so many reminders of the precious child she has lost?

Mother's Day is the only holiday that specifically uses the word mother, so there is no real way of avoiding this day. A grieving mother can, however, prepare for Mother's Day well in advance so that she knows how to avoid placing additional pain in her life.

Remember that Mother's Day is not a holiday that has to be celebrated. If a grieving mother does not want to attend a banquet, or watch baby dedications at church, or see special family gatherings at restaurants, then she has the right to choose not to participate in these events without feeling guilty. Many mothers choose to stay home and do nothing special at all on Mother's Day, and that is fine. Grief follows no rules and there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Explain to others that this day is painful. Giving yourself permission to grieve in your own way is very healing and helpful, especially during such a difficult day as Mother's Day.

Do what feels right for you. Maybe that means taking a mini trip away where nobody knows you. Maybe it is staying at home. Perhaps a walk in the woods or a walk along the sandy beach would help you during this empty time. Journal your thoughts. Release a balloon. Or, maybe you want to avoid Mother's Day altogether. You know what feels best for your heart, and giving yourself permission to do what is right for you can be the most healing thing of all.

Lastly, remind yourself often that you will not always feel this empty. With each passing day new hope will enter your empty heart until one day you will wake up to realize that the empty hole is beginning to fill with some joy. Mother's Day is only one day. With a little bit of preparation you can make it through, and you will have walked one more step in your journey of healing!

-Clara Hinton (www.silentgrief.com)

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

I watched the flag pass by one day.
It fluttered in the breeze
A young Marine saluted it, and then
He stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform
so young, so tall, so proud
With hair cut square and eyes alert
He'd stand out in any crowd.

I thought, how many men like him
Had fallen through the years?
How many died on foreign soil?
How many mothers' tears?

How many Pilots' planes shot down?
How many foxholes were soldiers'
graves?
No, Freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of taps one night,
When everything was still.
I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times
That taps had meant "Amen"
When a flag had draped a coffin
of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
With interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard
at the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington.
No, Freedom isn't free!!

Copyright 1981 by Kelly Strong

ON MEMORIAL DAY, along with our own loved ones, we will also remember those who have died while serving our country, now and in the past, as well as the mothers & fathers, sisters & brothers, and grandparents who were left behind to grieve. We pray that peace comes to our world very soon.

THE PROMISE

Your birth brought me starshine,
the moon and the sun;
my wishes, dreams gathered
'round my little one.

My life became sacred
full of promise and light,
all wrapped in the girl-child
bringing love at first sight.

The years of your living
filled with laughter and tears,
excitement, adventure,
some boredom, some fears.

but ended too quickly,
ahead of its time.
The loss so horrendous
such heartbreak was mine.

But from the beginning,
one thought rose so clear;
never would your death erase
the years you were here.

I would not be defeated
or diminished by your death;
I would hang on, learn to conquer,
if it took my every breath.

For if your death destroyed my life,
made both our lives a waste,
it would deny your life's meaning
and all the love you gave.

I vowed that years of sadness
would change, with work and grace,
to years of happiness, even joy,
in which you'd have a place.

Memories of you, like shining stars
in the patterns of my soul,
are beacons flashing light and love,
and with them I am whole.

In your honor, I live my life,
now living it for two.
Through all my life, you too will live.
You lived...you live...you do.

- **Genesse Boudreau Gentry**
Stars in the Deepest Night:
After the death of a Child

DADDY, FIX IT

A broken toy? Daddy, fix it. Wagon
broken? Daddy, fix it. Dolly needs a new
eye? Daddy, fix it. Faucet leaking?
Daddy, fix it. Need new wall paneling?
Daddy, fix it. Anything need rebuilding
or repair? Daddy, fix it.

And why not? Daddy has hundreds of
different sized screws, nails, bolts, nuts,
and washers; he has all sizes of
screwdrivers; he has all sizes of hammers
from a 12-lb. sledge to a 3-oz. brad
hammer; he has a brace and bit set, a
hand drill, electric drills, all sizes of bits
to go with the drills; he has several sets
of wrenches, even some metric ones; he
has cheap tools, and some very expensive
tools, and he has books to tell him how to
fix it.

If Daddy doesn't have the tool or the
specialized knowledge, why the Ace
Hardware Man, or True Value Hardware,
or the Sears Roebuck store, or the
Brookstone catalog will have what he
needs to fix it.

Except the last time. Oh, he still had all
of his plain and fancy tools, all of the
screws, nails, bolts, and nuts, and all of
his books. But even Ace, True Value,
Sears, and Brookstone couldn't help him-
not this time.
Daddy, fix it.
Except the last time.
Death.
Daddy couldn't fix it.

Tom Crouthamel, TCF/Englewood, FL

AN ADULT SIBLING GRIEVES

The death of a parent, I've often read,
severs you from your past; the death of a
spouse, from your present; and the death
of a child from your future. Then does
the death of an adult sibling sever you
from all three? I think so.

An adult sibling is part of your past
and your present. You expect him or her
to be part of your future as well. In that
sense, the death of a sibling can be the
most difficult loss of all.

Siblings are part of your whole life.
You expect parents to die because they
are older. A spouse does not enter your
life until adulthood. And your children,
though born by you, are also part of your
adult life. BUT A SIBLING - a brother
like John - is SPECIAL. A SIBLING IS A
GIFT.

- **Elsie K Neufeld from Dancing in the
Dark**

NATURE RAINBOWS

We held them in our parent arms
for days or weeks or years.
Now we hold them in our hearts
and cry the darkest tears.

The cord attached to children,
eternally fine and strong.
We never leave the missing;
it holds us all life long.

Our children now inside us-
our souls' tattooed with gold.
Their love, their words, caresses,
are hugs that we still hold.

If we open to the knowledge,
that they aren't completely gone,
we will sometimes feel their touching,
sometimes soft and sometimes strong.

When they show us nature's rainbows,
we can feel their proud delight,
sending signs to show they're living,
only far beyond our sight.

- **Genesse Boudreau Gentry**
Stars in the Deepest Night: After the
death of a Child

GRANDPARENTS ARE A SPECIAL GIFT

Grandparents are a special gift...
God gives them to each child.
Their love outshines the brightest star...
Their love can never be defiled.

Oh, but when a child becomes an angel,
Grandparents feel the pain and sorrow.
Beyond any pain they've known in life,
Or will ever come to know tomorrow.

For a grandparent holds a special love
For the child their child has had.
And, to lose what they hold dear...
Leaves them heartbroken and sad.

Their legacy is their grandchildren...
So how can they learn to survive?
Will the dreams of their tomorrows
Somehow be kept alive?

Yes, a grandparent is a survivor...
And life has taught them how to be.
- ©Kaye DesOrmeaux

CREATING A MEMORIAL GARDEN

Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor, University of Vermont

A memorial garden provides a long-lasting tribute to a loved one who has passed away, as well as offers a place for the survivors to remember and to heal. The garden can be as small as a single tree or perennial plant or as large as an oversized flower bed or garden with many different flowers, ornamental grasses, and even shrubs and trees, depending on available space.

When selecting plants for a memorial garden, consider the favorite flowers of the individual you are honoring. Did that person love daisies or lilacs? Prefer peonies or poppies? Did he or she have a favorite season such as spring, making a bulb garden of daffodils, tulips, and other spring bloomers the perfect tribute?

Or think about the fragrances or colors that evoke fond memories. Perhaps the scent of lavender or roses reminds you of that person. Another possibility is to include plants that have the same name as your friend or loved one, such as black-eyed Susan, veronica, or sweet William. If red was his or her favorite color, consider planting a garden consisting primarily of red hues with a single accent color such as silver. For example, you could plant a mixed bed of red impatiens, geraniums, and verbena edged with silvery dusty miller, lamb's ear, or one of the silver-leaved varieties of artemisia.

You also could select plants that have specific meanings, such as forget-me-nots (memories), rosemary (remembrance), poppies (rest or eternal sleep), yellow tulips (friendship), or pink carnations (I'll never forget you). If the memorial is for a baby or young child, plant daisies for innocence or white lilies for purity. Or use varieties such as baby's breath or 'Sweet Dreams' coreopsis rosea. If your memorial garden is a single tree, plant an oak for strength or a yew for immortality. Just keep in mind that these can get quite large and need adequate space if they are to last and remain there over the years.

If commemorating a war hero or veteran, plant a red, white, and blue garden, including varieties such as red poppies and daylilies, white phlox and peonies, and blue Jacob's ladder and Siberian irises. There are very few true blue flowers, so you may need to substitute dark purple varieties, perhaps some of the delphiniums or campanulas for blue. Or choose plants with inspirational names like the 'Patriot' hosta, 'Peace' rose, 'Freedom' alstroemeria, and 'Over in Gloryland' Siberian iris. Other popular choices are gentle shepherd daylily, remember-me hosta, or guardian angel hosta.

When planting your memorial garden, you will probably want to include a mix of varieties, as well as keep rules of proportion in mind--taller plants in the back, smaller ones in the front, for example. What makes it a memorial garden though is that it's planted from the heart. Don't worry whether you're planting fits rules of design or will be appreciated by others. Do what is most meaningful for you.

Include appropriate statuary and hardware. If memorializing someone who loved cats, why not include a small cat statue? For a bird lover, add a birdbath to attract backyard songbirds. If the person was known for a great sense of humor, buy or make a garden whimsy or two as a remembrance. Add a bench for visitors to sit and reflect or a water feature, such as a fountain or water garden, to create a soothing, comforting environment. Or put in an arbor or trellis, training honeysuckles, ivies, and their climbing vines to cover the structure to create a quiet, secluded spot for contemplation and remembering.

Where you locate your garden will depend on where you have adequate space and/or the type of plants--sun lovers or shade lovers--you want to include. Or you could choose a quiet, private spot or one with a favorite view or meaning to the deceased. When choosing a site, keep in mind that for a successful garden you need to select the right plants to fit the soil, sun, and other growing conditions. Full-sun plants such as peonies will not do well in a shady spot. Siberian irises don't mind wet feet while varieties that need a well-drained soil will struggle to survive in wet areas. If you live in an apartment, or don't have a backyard, you can still create a memorial. Tie a colorful ribbon around a pot of rosemary and keep it by your desk. For a deck or patio, fill a special container with a few choice perennials that you can move indoors over winter when the weather turns cold. Or check with your local town officials to see if you can have a tree planted at a park or near a town landmark or building in memory of your loved one.

It doesn't matter what you plant, where you locate the garden, or what form, size, and shape it takes, what's most important is that you create the garden that is most meaningful to you. Involve your family and friends, and let the planning, planting, and caring for the garden be part of the healing process not just for you, but also for others.

Vacations After Loss

Vacations bring to mind time spent together as a family. After losing a child or children, vacations-- especially the first ones after loss -- remind us of their absence.

Some bereaved parents place a higher expectation on the vacation than can be fulfilled. Maybe Mom may assume that getting away from home and the stress of work will enable dad and other family members to talk about their loss, reliving memories together and resolving issues of their grief. Dad might be thinking "If we can just get away from all these memories and stress, we can relax and forget our pain." Someone else in the family might think the vacation will give some relief from the grief work. Because each person has definite goals with high expectations, they may discover their spouse and/or children's goals to be painfully opposite their own. It's not uncommon to discover one spouse may not be ready to talk yet.

If vacations usually include trips to relatives or family camps, seeing everyone after your loss can be bittersweet. Memories as well as remembrances of what you'd planned for your child to do with others flood your mind. Some people will want to talk about your child. If your trip occurs shortly after the funeral, you may find that talking about your child is like dragging the funeral out for days. When several months have elapsed, others often feel uncomfortable and will not mention your child's name until you do. If you want to talk about your child, don't wait for others to bring up his/her name they're uncertain if you're comfortable talking about them so are waiting for you to make the first move.

Many find the enthusiasm to plan vacations and the concentration to make detailed arrangements are gone the first year, especially. Others feel too stressed out to go anywhere or fear coming home would be too painful. In that case, day outings might be more suited to your energy and enthusiasm levels. Try to choose a variety of things so that each member of the family can do something they enjoy

Some bereaved parents experience fear of getting too far from home or fear of being too far away from the mementos that remind them of their precious child. Various fears, some irrational may make thoughts of a vacation too painful to consider. In such a case, it would be good to try to define these fears. Just realizing what the fear pertains to helps you deal with it. If fear seems to be a problem with any member of the family, it would be good to make a list of what things they are fearful of happening, and then calmly discuss these fears with someone. If it's too stressful to discuss them within the immediate family, as a trusted friend or pastor to discuss them with you. Just getting them out in the open and identified will help immeasurably.

Many recently bereaved people find that too much free time allows more time for painful remembrances than they welcome, so it's important to be flexible and willing to change plans midway through the vacation if it's agreeable with the majority of the family.

Discuss the pros and cons of visiting a familiar place or new experience to decide what each family member feels most comfortable with.

Remember grief depletes your energy levels so you'll tire more quickly. Take this into consideration when planning reasonable distances to be driven daily. Bereaved people need exercise but if you're planning to hike or do other strenuous exercise, don't forget your energy levels are not the same as they were before your child's death. Exhaustion and disappointment with your capabilities (thus frustration) will come much sooner than it previously did.

Whether you leave town or stay home, remember working through grief is the hardest work you'll ever do. Be kind to yourself as it's physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting. Allow time to re-energize your own depleted reserves.

It would be good to sit down as individuals or as a family to jot down your expectations or goals for your vacation, your fears and other factors so that as parents you can have an idea of what others are expecting before you take off. If dad and the teenagers know Mom is expecting everyone to want to spend some time reminiscing and working through grief it will be less frustrating for everyone if they know the time will not ALL be devoted to one person's expectations. Knowing that some time may be set aside for grief work, but also some for total relaxation for dad and mom, and some for other individual family members' enjoyment will make it less stressful for everyone.

As in other family matters, communication is Very Important. No one else can read your mind and be able to fulfill your unexpressed expectations. For a vacation to be refreshing for everyone, good communication will be one of the most important factors.

You may have been planning a very special vacation and are wondering if you should take it so soon after your loss. You might want to consider waiting another year so you can enjoy it more than with the excess "grief baggage" you'll be carrying along this year. Or you may feel that since you have been anticipating it for so long, to put it off would just be another loss added to your child's death. **Only you can decide.** If you can't decide peaceably, that's an indication you won't enjoy it as much now as you most likely would a year from now.

As with everything else after loss, the first vacation will be the most challenging. It's all new with that huge absence ever present. It would be nice if a vacation were an opportunity for you to escape your pain or leave it behind at home, but the fact is, everywhere that love goes, grief goes too! We grieve because we love. As time passes, vacations won't be edged with as much pain. Someday you'll find one enjoyable.

- by Carol Ruth Blackman

For Childless Parents on Mother's and Father's Day

I know there are many of you out there who have no surviving children. I feel almost apologetic for mentioning Mother's Day or Father's Day in the May or June newsletters, but those who have surviving children need to have the feelings that accompany their loss addressed. I do want those of you who are now childless to know we are aware of the pain these special days bring as you struggle to find reasons to go on. I hope you will use the friends you have to help you through these times. Though your child has died, the memories of him or her didn't die. Share them with someone who cares, who may not know exactly how you feel, but who cares about your pain. I'm one of them!

- Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA

A Stepparent's Story

My wife, Kathleen, knew George but not well. He had been living on the Mainland when we got together, and they never had much chance to get to know each other.

When George was killed in a motorcycle accident just before he turned 19, his mother and I came together immediately, in trying to cope with our tragic loss. In the still-dark morning hours following his death, we lay together wordlessly in George's bed with our younger son, Konti for a few hours of fitful sleep. Upon awakening, we began to make the painful phone calls to friends and relatives. Later that day, still numb, but with the support of friends who had rushed to George's and his mother's home, we began planning his memorial service. Kathleen remained at our home, abne.

The isolation she (much later) told me she had been feeling at the time is said to be not uncommon for a stepparent when the biological parents are brought together by the death of a child. "It was a terrible time for me, too," she told me. "The sense of isolation was so severe, and I had to be so patient and so tolerant for a very long time."

In the four years since George's death, there have been times she has felt excluded - shut out," as she puts it - when I'd withdraw in my grief, unable to talk to her. She has also worried about my relationship with Konti. Can I talk to him about George? Am I trying? When she feels the time is right, she lets me know what she is feeling. But patience and tolerance - again - are what have served her and our relationship so well.

Something else has happened in the past four years that I was not conscious of at first: She had formed her own relationship with George. Sometimes she plays the music she knows he liked. She cuts and places fresh flowers by his picture. She turns the light illuminating it on and off each day. "Maybe it's because I was an only child," she told me when I asked her about this recently. "When I was little, I had to be creative in making relationships."

The circumstances of stepparents can be vastly different from the relationship with the child to the relationship with the other biological parent.

-David Pellegrin,
TCF Honolulu

A Word About Closure

I don't use the word "closure" anymore. For years I thought it was a good way to express what happens to us at various times during our grief journey. I would often tell about the importance of viewing the loved one by saying viewing gives reality and closure.

I live in Oklahoma City. The general feeling here was that the survivors of the bombing would find closure when the trial was over. The ending of the trial was supposed to be some kind of magical day that would bring relief to the pain. The survivors walked out of the courtroom saying, "Don't mention the word closure to us. This does not close anything."

Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I no longer think there are any magic moments in grief. Grief is a process—a long slow process. There are events that are memorable, but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

Closure also sounds like getting well. We do not "get well." A chunk has been bitten out of our hearts and it is not going to grow back. We do not get well. We move toward turning the corner in the way we cope. We live again, but we live again because we learn to cope with the chunk of our hearts that is gone.

We don't have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of "real but not real." We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences.

It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping.

They are not some final step. They are not the closing of a door nor opening of a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

- Written by Doug Manning, reprinted from "We Need Not Walk Alone". Copyright 1999 (Doug will be a speaker at the TCF National Conference in Oklahoma City)

SOMETIMES...

"Sometimes, I still don't believe it," my husband said to me.
We had gone to bed, said our goodnights,
and were resting comfortably.
My reply was short and to the point.
I simply said, "I know."

Though it has been eight years since
you have died, Chip, we miss you so.

The memories of our life with you are treasures
that we share.
for 19 years, we loved you well,
while you were in our care.

So once again, we said goodnight, but before this we did
pray.

This was a very poignant night.
This night was Father's Day.

- Nancy McKeaney, in memory of son, Chip
TCF/North Pennsylvania Chapter, PA

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/ST PAUL CHAPTER
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PLEASE FORWARD

Please circle the appropriate relationship:					
Parent	Sibling	Grandparent	Relative	Friend	Professional
Parent (s) name: _____			Child/Children's Name(s) _____		
Address: _____			Birth Date(s) _____		
City: _____			Death Date(s): _____		
State: _____		Zip: _____		Home phone: _____	
				E-mail address: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Permission is given to include my child(ren), sibling or grandchild on the Remembrance page in the St. Paul Chapter newsletter and Chapter Website.			<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to enclose a donation to the St. Paul Chapter of The Compassionate Friends in memory of _____		

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