



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

February, 2004

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

We speak of holidays and the difficulty of seeing the world go on with its busyness. Other people's celebrations are an affront to our grief. Yet, we have learned from our compassionate friends how to prepare ourselves, how to shield ourselves, and how to eventually find some semblance of happiness in holidays once again. But how do we find our way in the mundane - the non-holidays, the cold and bare days of midwinter? February brings wind chills that keep us locked up inside. When we go outside, we feel the insult of frigid temperatures even more keenly than before. The cold, the dark, the bare trees - they combine to make February feel like the most dismal of months.

What can we do to respond to the mundane so that we are the better for it? If we take charge of our grief, we can begin to see ourselves as navigating our own way through what must ultimately be a very personal and individual process. What will work for me may not help you at all.

The important thing is to realize that you can, and must, decide how to help yourself through the mundane.

— I like to look at the bare trees and examine the connection of one branch to another as they reach for the sun. I choose to find beauty in the form and patterns of the trees.

— The frozen ground crunches as I step on it - I enjoy its sound and the way it feels under my feet.

— Some of the most beautiful skies can be seen when a cold front moves in from the north and west. From the warmth of my house, I can sit and watch the moving clouds, and I feel content.

There is nothing inherently ugly about February. What we see is what we choose to see. Let yourself see something beautiful; something new and different; something comforting.

GOALS OF BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

- to educate families about the grief process and all its complexities as it applies to the death of a child at any age and from any cause.
- to aid and support those who are suffering such a loss, regardless of race, creed or financial situation.
- to provide a library at each meeting place where members may borrow books with up-to-date information about the grief process.
- to supply the telephone numbers of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
- to inform and educate members of the helping professions who interact with bereaved parents as to the nature and duration of parent/sibling/grandparent bereavement.
- to provide monthly meetings with sharing groups and occasional informative programs.

*The printing and mailing of this newsletter has been donated by
Carol Fritz*

*In memory of the life of
Katie Fritz*



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Anne Arundel County Chapter
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Programs: OPEN

It is our sincere hope that you will find comfort somewhere in this newsletter. It is our intention to offer you hope in knowing that you are not alone. We encourage you to write about your feelings and to share your feelings with others who understand...your compassionate friends.

Material to be printed "in memory of" must be sent to the editors 6-8 weeks in advance of the newsletter in which you wish the item to be printed. **April submissions are due by February 20th).**

Our **lending library** is available to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. When you have finished with them, please return them at our monthly meeting or mail them to the post office box listed above. Thank you.



The Bereaved Parents of the USA is a non-profit self-help organization. We operate on donations from the community we support and concerned professionals in order to produce our newsletter, Service of Remembrance, library, and other needed services. Donations are tax deductible.

Refreshments at our monthly meetings: A sign-up sheet is on the refreshment table at the meeting or you may call Rebecca Fitzmorris (410-987-9175) to sign up. Drinks, ice, and paper products are provided by the chapter.

Inclement weather on a meeting night - meeting canceled if Phase 1 of the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect at 5:00 p.m. You can also check our website on the day of the meeting for an announcement about cancellations.



MEETING INFORMATION

February 5, 2004; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.
Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.
Calvary United Methodist Church
301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis
Park in the back of the church

PROGRAM: USING MUSIC IN DEALING WITH GRIEF

NEXT MONTH:

March 4, 2004

PROGRAM: I NEED HELP...WHERE ARE YOU?

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Sometimes we feel the need to talk to someone who understands the pain we feel and will listen to us. When you have questions to ask, a need to talk, or have a difficult day, these people welcome your call.

Marie Dyke, single parent, daughter, 17, only child, car accident

410-969-7597 Janet Tyler, daughter, 5 and brother, 33, car accident

410-360-1341 Tia Stinnett, miscarriages and infant death

410-721-6457 Sandy Platts, infant death

OTHER RESOURCES:

* **Baltimore-metro area of The Compassionate Friends** of Maryland and Bereaved Parents of the USA, (410-321-7053).

* Stephanie Roper Committee, **for victims of violent crime**, Anne Arundel County chapter representative is James Donnelly (410-544-1473).

* The Compassionate Friends, **Reston Satellite Group (support group for parents who are now childless)**, second Saturday of the month, 1:00 p.m. at North County Government Center, Reston District Police Station, 12000 Bowman Town Drive, Reston, VA. For info., contact Linda Nielsen (703-435-0608, InLvMemory@aol.com); Harriet Evenson (703-525-9311); Sharon Skarzynski in MD (410-757-5049).

* **Seasons, a suicide support group**, 3rd Tuesday, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Lutherville (Dorothy Schanberger, 410-803-2098).

* **Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS)** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park (410-987-2129).

CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

Hope and Healing Conference

Saturday, May 15, 2004

at

Calvary United Methodist Church

Keynote Speaker: Father Joe Breighner,
heard every Sunday morning on WPOC and WCAO

Workshops to include: early bereavement, journaling,
now childless, sibling group, art therapy for grief, and
others...

Please make plans to attend.

**Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your
child's name can be arranged through Lisa
Beall (bealls@erols.com).**

**Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing
is \$50 each month.**

Thank you!

CHAPTER WEBSITE

To place your child's name on our website, email Dave Alexander (dralex@sdalex.com), or send him a note (PO box 6280, Annapolis, MD 21401). Include your name, your child's name as you would like it to appear, and your child's date of birth and date of death.

To have a picture of your child on the website, email a digital file with the picture or send a printed picture to Dave. (Photos will be returned.) If you have any questions, please call Dave at 410-544-3634.

Many of you who receive our **newsletter** were referred by a friend, physician, or clergy. You may have never attended a meeting. In this case, it is likely that your child's name does not appear in our **monthly list of "Children Remembered"**. This is because we require your permission to do so. If you would like your child's name added, please send a note to our post office box. List your child's name, your name(s), and the dates of your child's birth and death. Please allow 6 weeks to be sure it arrives in time for the appropriate month.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

February 5: "Using Music in Dealing with Grief"

Some bereaved parents find music can be helpful in dealing with their grief. Paula Muehlhauser will relate her experiences with music in her grief journey and talk about the role she believes music can play in the grief process. Members are urged to bring CDs or cassette tapes with music they have found particularly meaningful and helpful as they deal with their grief. We will use these as part of the discussion in our non-newly bereaved sharing groups.

March 4: "I need help...where are you?!" Dealing with Family, Friends, and Colleagues"

Bereaved parents find that many friends, family and work colleagues are not very supportive in our grieving; in fact some can be harsh and hurtful. A panel of Chapter members will discuss their experiences and offer suggestions on dealing with friends, family and colleagues. The panel will explore such issues of how one might respond to those who are supportive and how one might respond to those who are not. The panel will try to offer insights as to how we can help our friends, family, and colleagues to help and support us.

AMAZON.COM BENEFITS OUR CHAPTER

We have a link on the home page of our website which pays a commission of 5% of any purchases made through that link. (This does not increase the purchase price.) Tell your friends, relatives, and colleagues!

To access the site: go to www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org, click on the butterflies on the welcome page, scroll down to the bottom. Find the Amazon.com graphic and click on it. This links our chapter to the site and if a purchase is made, it will be credited to our site. (Purchases made from Amazon.com without going through that link do not get credited.) Since our chapter is a not-for-profit organization and has no dues or fees, we are dependent on donations and fund raisers. We are hopeful these commissions will help fund some of our community outreach activities.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



The photographs of Abraham Lincoln taken before the burdens of the presidency, when he suffered the loss of another son to premature death, seem to reflect the ravages of grief more than any words could.

Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln first became bereaved parents in 1850 when 4-year-old Edward died. Amidst all the tragedies of the Civil War, they lost their 11-year-old son, William (Willie). During his White House tenure, Lincoln could do little to prevent the additional family tragedy as Mary's three half-brothers fought for the Confederacy. President Harry Truman has described Mary as "the most tragic woman character in American history, the most maligned and pilloried." We can understand why, after Lincoln was assassinated in 1865 and after she lost her third son Thomas (Tad) in 1871 at 18 years of age, she wrote: "And now in this world, there is nothing left me but the deepest anguish and desolation."

Each of us had periods when we were absorbed and overcome by our personal tragedies, and were in danger of losing sight of our potential for recovery, as Mary Todd Lincoln did. At times, it is difficult to remember that "death, too, is a part of life," as Marcus Aurelius stated

long ago.

When tragedy strikes, we feel victimized and helpless. We lose all sense of control of life as we are forced to face the fact that we do not control life - or death. As much as we might wish to, we cannot revise the past. Our choice is limited to how we deal with the present and the future, and how we can achieve the point described by Trevonian: "These things have been well-grieved...Let them go."

Lincoln stated one of the best precepts for recovery from grief in the compassion he expressed for another's loss:

"In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all...

It comes with bitterest agony...

Perfect relief is not possible, except with time.

You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better...

And yet this is a mistake.

You are sure to be happy again.

To know this, which is certainly true,

Will make you some

less miserable now.

I have experienced enough to know what I say."

Dayton Robinson
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

A NAME FOR MY PAIN

I have given a name to my pain -
it's called "LONGING".

I long for what was,
and what might have been.

I long for his touch and smell of sweat;

I long to hold him one more time.

I long to look on his beautiful face
and impress it upon my memories and heart.

I long to return to the day before
and protect him from his death.

I long to take his place,
so he may live and have sons, too.
I long for time to pass much faster,
so my longing and pain will lessen.

Will they?

June Williams-Muecke, Houston, TX

THE ORDEAL

Children are the great gamble.

From the moment they are born, our helplessness increases.

Instead of being ours to mould and shape
after our best knowledge and endeavour,
they are themselves.

From their birth they are the centre of our lives,
and the dangerous edge of existence.

Their health, a random good fortune at best,
is often regarded by us as the result of breeding and care.

Their illnesses, when serious, destroy happiness.
When they recover, we live for years with the knowledge
of what their death could mean to us.

The arbitrary nature of our passion for children,
who reveal so little of themselves during their short stay with us,
is, for many,
life's great romance

Josephine Hart
Damage

from *Only Spring*, by Gordon Livingston, M.D.

SIBLING PAGE

WHITHER FROM HERE

At a sad time that has become a healing time, everywhere I look there are offerings that answer my question: "Whither from here?"

Offerings of home - yesterday, for instance, I saw a fieldful of ewes and new lambs - a proverbial and renewing sight, before my very eyes.

Of secret, beloved enterprise - today I saw a rock garden of grey-green dusty miller and sunny daffodils tucked down in the very end of an outdoor rapid transit track. I will never learn who created the garden, but its loveliness will stay with me.

Of insight - a reference in David Guterson's book *Snow Falling on Cedars*: a prayer for "deliverance from grief in the course of time."

Of bright flowers - for many months after my sister's death, coming home, I found small bouquets or cheery pots of streptocarpus or cyclamen on my doorstep, each with a note bringing love.

Of connections between ordinary mind today (my own) and brilliant mind a century ago (Tennyson's, in his poem "Ulysses," given to me by a friend) -

I am part of all I have met...

How dull it is to pause, to make an end

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!...

Death closes all; but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done...

The light begins to twinkle from the rocks;

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,

'Tis not too late to seek a newer world...

Tho' much is taken, much abides...

from *Kindnesses*, by Terry Walton

Information for parents

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF GRIEF

Forgetfulness - School assignments, book reports, backpacks are left at home. Make sure the child writes down important things to remember. Help them get into a routine or develop a schedule before coming to school.

Disorganization - Things that used to take 15 minutes now may take an hour.

Inability to Concentrate - Don't be surprised to see the child "day dreaming". It is hard for them to stay focused. School grades may go down for a while.

Inability to Retain Information - Study habits may need to change. Suggest some of the following:

*Outline material needed to be read.

*Highlight important facts if you own the book.

*Read "out loud" instead of to oneself.

*Homework must be done. It can carry them through this period. Homework can be done in segments. Work 20 minutes and then take a five-minute break. Or have a "weekend party" with friends with the sole purpose of them helping the child understand the assignment and catch up.

Preoccupation - The child can even be doing something

he/she loves, and still find his/her mind wandering back to what has happened to them.

Lack of Interest or Motivation - Caution the child to be careful not to get a "why bother" attitude. Instead, try to think of a way the child can take this experience and reach out to help someone.

Lowered Tolerance Level (Impatient) - You might see the child very short of patience, especially if someone is complaining of a bad hair day. Warn about not taking grief out on other people.

Fatigue - Grief is tiring. People just want it to go away but it has a mind of its own. In addition to that, the child may not be sleeping very well, eating properly, and not continuing with his/her exercise program.

Helen Fitzgerald, CDE
author of [The Grieving Child](#)



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Love shared can bring comfort to a broken heart.
Please remember the following families this month.



Bethany Anne Balasic
daughter of Claudia and Paul Balasic
February 13, 1981 - April 5, 1996

Michael Allen Barker
son of Diane and Seth Barker
January 18, 1990 - February 10, 1999

Elizabeth Carr
daughter of Bill and Sandy Carr
July 13, 1989 - February 24, 2003

Owen F. Carr IV
son of Peggy Carr
June 29, 1978—February 18, 2003

Chrystal Clifford
future daughter-in-law of Marilyn Mabe
July 17, 1978—February 17, 2001

Ashlea Marie Cranston
daughter of Mary and Thomas Cranston
July 4, 1984 - February 25, 1985

Katie Fritz
daughter of Carol Fritz
October 29, 1977 - February 27, 1993

Kimberly Judith Gardner
daughter of Joan Gardner
February 6, 1968 - August 16, 1992

Steven Joseph Garvey
son of Mark & Cheryl Sylce & Steven Garvey
January 21, 1985—February 1, 1985

Sandrine Ingulia
daughter of Michele Ingulia
January 17, 1965—February 14, 2003

Timothy J. Mabe
son of Marilyn Mabe
October 29, 1977 - February 18, 2001

Ethan Matthew MacPherson
son of Scott and Kim MacPherson
January 22, 1994 - February 13, 1995

Jolene Dawn McKenna
daughter of Charlene Kvech
February 8, 1967 - November 22, 1971

Graham Kendall Miller
son of Ken and Abby Miller
February 3, 1981 - May 4, 1999

Brian James Para
son of Joan and Carl Para
February 19, 1970 - March 19, 1991

Mackenzie Jean Payne
daughter of Karyn Payne
February 2, 2003 - February 2, 2003

Roderick William Stallings
son of Robin Stallings
February 7, 1967 - September 14, 1996

David Tomaszewski
son of Rick and Carol Tomaszewski
September 4, 1974 - February 6, 2001

Eryn Wygal
son of Pamala and William R. Wygal Jr.
February 15, 1991 - February 24, 1994





**Look on each day that comes as a challenge, as a test of courage.
The pain will come in waves, some days worse than others, for no apparent reason.
Accept the pain.
Little by little, you will find new strength, new vision,
born of the very pain and loneliness which seem, at first, impossible to master.**

SHAKEN UP

I am amazed at the things that shake me up...

Not telling people that you died or talking about you,
But buckling a seat belt and remembering the fights we
had to get you to buckle yours.

That shakes me up.

Not seeing nine year old boys,
But seeing boys the age you would be now.

Not handling your priceless belongings,
But trips to the library wondering what you would have
discovered there.

Not the nagging ache when I miss you - that I can bear,
It's the frightening thought that you might miss me as
much as I miss you - and I can't be there to comfort you.

Not the things I said and did that I wish I hadn't,
But the things I didn't do and say that I wish I had.

These shake me up.

But what shakes me up the most is knowing that the
Things that do me in
Are not all what I expect them to be...
And that leaves me vulnerable and unprepared.

Donations may be made to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, the memorial service, library books, and other literature. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

Contributions through United Way, Central Md.:

Deborah and Paul Michael, in memory of Paul Brian Michael

Peggy and Gordon Haines, in memory of Matthew Haines

Paul and Claudia Balasic, in memory of Bethany Balasic

Donna and Doug Rohrbaugh, in memory of James Ryan Rohrbaugh

JeanMarie O'Sullivan, in memory of Cortney Belt

Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

Contributions:

Joan and Dennis Rohrback, in memory of Dennis R. Rohrback

Dorothy E. Heincelman, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Kenneth A. Smith, in memory of Tracy Fotino

Catherine S. Wallace, in memory of John Kirkpatrick Wallace

THE VALENTINE By Darcie D. Sims

The lace has grown yellow with age. The edges are tattered and the glue that held the pieces together has long dried up, leaving only a slight stain on the faded red paper. It is much smaller than I remembered. Perhaps time has caused it to shrink. It seems so fragile, resting here in my palm. The words have nearly faded and even the heavy crayon marks have lost their luster over the years. There's a smudge of unknown origin on the back, near where the paper was rubbed dangerously thin by uncounted erasure marks. The name is barely legible, the pencil lines so weak that only the mind can read the letters.

I found it the other day, while doing one of those winter chores: cleaning closets. It's nearly 25 degrees below zero outside and it seemed like a good idea to clear away some of the trappings of a thousand years. February is the middle-of-winter month and most of us have fewer choices in this month than in any other. For those of us here in the GREAT NORTH, it is either shovel the walk or clean the closets. It's warmer in the closet (although not by much!) So, armed with dust rag, trash bag and the radio, I opened the door and slipped in . . . not really thinking about what I might find. I thought I was just going to clean the closet.

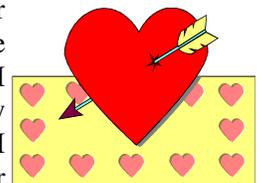
But, that first box sent me spinning. I found things I hadn't even remembered I'd lost! I finally found the holiday gift I bought for my sister last year and then so carefully hid away. I found snow boots and sand pails, a beach towel, three old paperbacks, a pile of magazines (all saved because I wanted to clip something "important"). I found shoelaces for shoes no longer "alive" and several other things that had once been alive. I found half a chocolate covered cherry and part of a deck of playing cards. It was quite a treasure box- filled with junk that once had had some meaning to someone, maybe even me. I sorted through the coats and clothes, painfully aware that

"someday" would probably not arrive in my lifetime. The too-short hemline and the too-small waist would not be mine again. I packed those things away, mindless of the hours and the drifting snow outside the windows. When I found the box of scrapbooks, I sat down -- now that the closet had some actual floor space. I touched the bindings, not quite sure I possessed the courage required to open the pages. The phone rang and forced me away from that decision. I left the closet and did not return until now.

That's when I found the old paper Valentine, tucked away between the pages of a life lived long ago. As I held that once sticky, but now only stained piece of construction paper, I felt a connection with other Valentines, in other lifetimes. I heard

a whisper of another voice: my own mother's exclamation over my offered gift. It blended then with my voice, speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love. OH! I had forgotten THAT . . . it had become lost in the pain of memories.

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of these scrapbooks. I heard my own laughter and that of my friends, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts. Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet . . . as if when I opened the door, the giver of this Valentine would still be waiting! Perhaps that is exactly what is happening. Perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting -- waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being.



There

(continued on page 9)

THE VALENTINE (continued from page 8)

were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what I was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have! The snow has drifted deep across the yard; only the tips of my flamingos' knit-capped covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace IS faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and through the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me.

I shall not waste another moment, living in the sadness that has permeated even my bones. I cannot remain in the closet forever. Just as the snow WILL melt someday, so too shall this pain. And then, it will be spring and this little paper heart will bloom again, because I will make room for love to grow once more. So, now this little paper message from both my past and my future sits on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones. I had "lost" that Valentine from so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones DIE, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your loved DID LIVE -- and what a sweet treat that will be!



FROM MY HEART TO YOURS...

The holidays are over and the rest of winter awaits us. It seems the days are long and the nights longer during the frosty season. The holidays may have been a time of dread, but at least they did take up some time.

Now it seems each day lingers and the cold temperatures make it seem more unbearable. We see less sunlight, which doesn't do much good for our already depressed moods. All of a sudden, we can understand why hibernation sounds like a good alternative to getting up each morning.

If this is your first winter without your child or other loved one, it may seem like it takes an extra effort just to lift one foot in front of the other. You may be depressed, your body may be tired and run down, and you probably have a bout or two of illness along the way.

Everyone else has gone back to their normal life activities following the holiday season, but for you nothing seems to fall back into place. Regardless of any New Year's resolutions, it's difficult to get over the grief you are experiencing.

Winter depression is normal for many people. Add the heavy burden of grief to that condition and it's no wonder you feel the way you do. Other people's expectations may be a hardship, as well, to add to your load. Are you wondering when the heaviness of winter will be lifted?

You don't have to wait for spring and the warmth of sunshine. Surround yourself with those things that make you feel safe and warm. Listen to soothing music, have a cup of your favorite hot drink, light some candles, and wrap a soft blanket around yourself. Close your eyes and breathe. Breathe deeply and slowly because you are alive. Think about your child or loved one and let your memories flood your mind. Cry if tears come. Let them heal you.

Your "spring" will come. Your aches will dissolve. Your tears will come less often. It is then you will be ready to open your arms to life again. Soon you'll be warmed with your precious memories.

Cathy Heider, TCF, Figona, IA



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