



Bereaved Parents of the USA Anne Arundel County Chapter

April 2008

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

A Bereaved Parent's Spring

Regardless of the calendar or the meteorologists, April marks the beginning of spring for many of us. The world outside begins to awaken from its winter slumber, and the sights and sounds and smells of spring abound, from the flowers peeking out of the ground to the birds chirping merrily outside our windows to the smell of the blooming trees as we venture out for our first walk of the season.

This is what spring is all about unless, of course, you are a “newly” bereaved parent, and then you might just be oblivious to it all. In fact, you may even resent the reappearance of spring and its symbolic rebirth. The message to you from an “old timer” on this grief journey is to be easy on yourself...it won't always be this hard, and just feel whatever you feel. Don't let anyone tell you how you “should” feel this spring (or next).

Like all seasons, spring will have its share of emotional triggers for the newly bereaved – graduations, Mother’s Day, planning for summer vacations, favorite flowers, and just waking up. But just as April showers bring May flowers...the tears of grief will ultimately sow the seeds of hope, and someday you, too, will see the beauty of spring again.

For those of us who have been on our grief journey for awhile, not only do we recognize (and welcome) the beauty of spring again, but we also see our children in everything that is beautiful in spring. It's our way of carrying them with us through spring and through all of the seasons. So, as spring unfolds, here's wishing each of you peace and whatever joy you are able to find.

Terre Belt
Anne Arundel County Chapter/BPUSA

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Jennifer and Roy Gilmour
in memory of their dear grandson
Christopher George Gilmour



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Bereaved Parents of the USA**

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**Submissions for May
newsletter due April 6**

We are a non-denominational, self-help support organization that is dedicated to assisting parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child. We also aim to provide information and education to extended family, friends and coworkers desirous of being supportive to our Chapter members. We gather to listen, to care, and to understand the process of grieving as we start our recovery process and attempt to heal. Our greatest strength as bereaved families is the unity we find in shared experiences which can lead us out of isolation, give us a place to "belong", and offer us hope that together -- we can make it.



Telephone Friends: Sometimes we may have the need to talk to someone who can understand our pain. If you feel the need to talk, have questions to ask, or just had a difficult day, these people will welcome your call and are willing to listen to you.

Bob Bramhall 410.867.4956 Daughter (19), drunk driver; men's grief.

Marie Dyke Daughter (17), single parent, only child; car accident.

Sandy Platts 410.721.6457 Infant death.

Tia Stinnett 410.360.1341 Miscarriages and infant death.

Janet Tyler 410.969.7597 Daughter (5) and brother (33); car accident.

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MEETING INFORMATION

Next Meeting: April 3, 2008

**Doors open at 7:15 P.M.
Meeting begins at 7:30 P.M.**

Calvary United Methodist Church*
301 Rowe Boulevard
Annapolis, MD 21401

***Please park in lower lot behind church**



Meetings are usually held on the **first Thursday of every month**. We meet on the lower level of the building in the assembly room which is accessible from the rear entrance. There is no cost to attend our monthly meetings.

Refreshments at our monthly meetings are donated by Chapter members. To make a contribution, please see the sign-up sheet on the refreshment table (drinks, ice, and paper products are provided).



For information please contact Carol Tomaszewski at 410.519.8448.



At every monthly meeting we display materials from our **lending library** that are offered to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. You are welcome to borrow them and when you are finished, please return them at our next **monthly meeting** or mail them to our **post office box** listed above.

Inclement weather on a meeting night? Please check our Chapter's website or call our Message Line for information on possible cancellations.



By any chance, do you have one of our Chapter library's lost treasures? Please look around your home, office or car, and if you find you're finished with an item you can return it by either bringing it with you to our next **monthly meeting** or by mailing it to our **post office box** listed above.

Dale Evans Shares (Her) Story of Her Children Who Died

By Wayne Loder

From TCF newsletter, *We Need Not Walk Alone*

He was “King of the Cowboys”. She was “Queen of the West.”

Throughout the world, millions of young fans followed *The Adventures of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans*. But most were never aware of the tremendous heartache suffered by the popular couple as, over the years, they were faced with the deaths of three children. Dale Evans reminisced with us about the children who died and how their deaths had affected the Rogers household.

“First, we lost the only child Roy and I had together, our little Robin, our little angel unaware. Then we lost our little Debbie Lee, our Korean girl, who just turned 12. And then just a year later our adopted boy, Sandy. Losing two children in two years was really rough.”

Dale recalls that her first realization that a child could die happened many years before she had even heard of Roy. Her first marriage, a teenage elopement, had ended shortly after the birth of her son, Tom. Because of the pressures of show business, Dale’s mother ended up raising Tom, while Dale worked in Kentucky.

“I went back to Texas without a job ... a friend of mine had a beautiful little girl who at Halloween had worn a little crepe paper dress with flower petals on it. She had gone down to watch a man burn leaves and she got too close to the fire and burned to death. She was just four years old, a beautiful child and their only child. I decided then and there that I was going to be as close as I could to my child to see him every week. I resigned my job, went back to Texas and went on the radio there. That was my first brush with the death of a child. I couldn’t understand then how they could take it because I couldn’t fathom losing a child.”

Roy and Dale, who ended up working together, were married in 1947 and Robin was born to them three years later. “I learned that she was a Downs Syndrome baby and would probably have a defective heart, which she did. We were told she would not live very long and she lived just two years. But those were wonderful years of learning . . . and enjoying her even in her handicap.”

While Dale grieved over Robin’s death, the responsibility fell on Roy to handle the arrangements, selecting her white christening dress for her to be buried in, and a small gold cross which was to have been her birthday present.

Being public figures made the funeral, which was held on Robin’s birthday, even harder, says Dale, who made the difficult decision to keep the casket closed until she had left the church.

“I couldn’t understand then how they could take it, because I couldn’t fathom losing a child.”

— Dale Evans

“At the funeral home I did not want to look at Robin because there was a huge crowd of people there and I was so afraid that I would do something wrong and in my grief try to pick her up or something. When you are in the public eye, it is not easy. You want to grieve but you don’t want to grieve before the public. You want to grieve with your family or in private. I’ve been sorry ever since that I didn’t see her because I was told she looked like an angel. When Debbie and Sandy died, I saw them at the funerals, and it helped me.”

Shortly after Robin’s death, Dale and Roy made the decision to add to their family, adopting Dodie and Sandy, then later Marion and finally Debbie. The thought that some might view subsequent children as “replacement children” is difficult for Dale to understand. “They are simply added. They are not replacing anyone. It is a need that you have, an emptiness that you have that you want to give that love to another child.” Dale says she did not allow Robin’s death to make her become overprotective of her other children, who included Cheryl, Linda, and Dusty from Roy’s first marriage, which had ended sadly when his wife Arlene died following childbirth. But, Dale admits, for some reason she had a nagging fear something would happen to Dodie. “One time she had the croup and couldn’t breathe and started to turn blue. I just almost had a fit. I had a wonderful woman who came into the house and grabbed Dodie and turned her upside down and slapped her on the back and reached in with her hand and pulled the phlegm out of her throat and the color came back in her face—she had really been strangling.”

Fun times did return to the large family, but tragedy struck again 12 years after Robin’s death.

Debbie Lee had been adopted by Roy and Dale when she was 3 1/2 years old, coming from Seoul, Korea. “She was a darling little girl and a very bright little girl. Outgoing—she seemed to say ‘hello world.’ Everybody loved her and she had a host of friends.”

As a way of celebrating her twelfth birthday, Debbie wanted to travel with others from her church to deliver presents to an orphanage in Mexico. On the way back, a front tire blew out, causing the church bus to swerve from its lane, striking a station wagon head on. Debbie and a girlfriend, who were both standing at the front of the bus talking with other church members, were hurled forward and died from their injuries.

(Continued on page 9)

Passover

Counting the years,
blessings and tears,
counting the children
who are gone
from this earth.



Counting the memories
of times past and done.
Blessing the children
on earth in this day of life.

Sascha
Schuykill Chapter newsletter/TCF
March 2007

IT JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU...

Back in the '70's the late comedienne Gilda Radner played a character by the name of Roseanne Roseanna Danna on the television show, "Saturday Night Live." Roseanne Roseanna Danna would give a commentary that never ended with the same thought that it began with, but at the end she'd tie it all together with, "It just goes to show you....it's always something." That's so true where grief work is concerned.

I've been at this since March 5, 1991 when my son Johnny was killed. I've written a lot of poems and articles about grief work and surviving the loss of a child. I've counseled quite a few folks and lent my shoulder to a lot more. I know the ins and outs, the ups and downs (how's that for stringing a couple of clichés?) and I know just how tough it is to pick up and keep going on. But we do it and if we keep at it we make positive progress. But my grief is unpredictable and shows no mercy when it steps out of the shadows and announces that it's come for a visit.

I've moved way down the road since that March afternoon fourteen years ago. Not every step has been forward but even when I would regress, I'd catch myself and move forward again. I'm a happy guy, for the most part, with the only caveat being the obvious one. Somewhere along the line I quit thinking in terms of, "I'm having a great time but it would be better if Johnny were here." Heck, that's a given. Along the way there were the usual bumps and u-turns and some of them were the "*firsts*" as I call them. The first (pick a holiday), the first birthday, the first family vacation and so on were bad but, to be honest, I found the seconds a lot worse because they drove home the permanence of his being dead. Some one who isn't in our position might be confused by that statement because they don't get it at first, and thank God that they don't.

When I went to my wife's school's open house in 1992 I watched the kindergarteners because that's the class that Johnny would have been in. I could see him in my mind's eye. I looked at each kid and thought about who would have been *that* friend that he went all the way through school with? Would one of the little girls be his first crush? It was hard. When my son Blake was a senior back in '02-03 we had a

great time at his high school. My wife, Ruth, has taught in this district for 25 years and we are very active parents. There's a huge sense of pride to be a part of this district. Blake was very popular with everyone in his class. At the football games he led the senior cheers and was voted "most spirited." Heck, we watched him having fun more than we watched the football games. He was a varsity wrestler and I loved to sit there in the stands and cheer him on. I felt such joy as he walked across that stage and received his diploma. It was a great year.

The past year would have been Johnny's senior year. It really wasn't a conscious effort on my part but I didn't go to one football game, wrestling meet or any other high school function. It just always seemed that there was something else to do, but when the graduation announcement from a friend's son came in the mail, it hit me like an Ali right to the chin and I crumbled. I felt so damn cheated. The anger that I thought that I'd dealt with came rushing back in spades. I was lost and I wasn't prepared for it. If this were 13 years ago I'd really be in trouble because this is definitely a case of "Thank God I know now what I didn't know then." I know that if I don't try and control this grief by shoving it down inside of myself that I'll be okay. I know that if I let it out in constructive ways and stop being destructive, I'll be okay. I'll try to not sit down with a half of a gallon of Blue Bunny. I'll cry when I need to and I'll find a way to let the anger out that doesn't make it tough on the ones around me. I'll let it all go and I know that I will survive this if I want to. Hopefully besides just surviving I'll learn something from this too. Because after 14 years, even though I know that the pain can resurface at any time, I had let myself be lulled into a false sense of security. I'd like to say with great conviction in my voice that I'll never let this happen to me again, but as Roseanne Roseanna Danna was fond of saying, "It just goes to show you...it's always something."

May we all find peace. Shalom.

Tom Wyatt
Bereaved Father
St. Louis, MO/BPUSA

SIBLING PAGE

From the Best of Ask Dr. Paulson

Q. My parents are always pressuring me to go to the cemetery, but I don't want to go. What can I do?



A. It sounds like going to the cemetery brings comfort to your parents. They may believe that this would bring comfort to you too. It's very difficult when those we love grieve differently than we do. Family members go through many things together and are similar in many ways. When family members differ on fundamental issues or approach emotionally laden situations differently, this can cause distress or conflict. It may be helpful for you to explain to your parents why you don't want to go to the gravesite: "It's too difficult for me when you start crying," "It's not comforting to me," "I remember my [brother/sister] and visit them in other places," "I want to remember them the way they were." But most important, let your parents know that just because you don't go to the cemetery does not mean that you don't love your brother or sister, or that you've forgotten them or want to forget them, but that you will always love them and they will always be a part of you. Just gently remind your mom and dad that everyone grieves differently. Tell them that you will continue to show your love and respect for your brother or sister in ways other than visiting the cemetery.

Dr. Mary Paulson

From the TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

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Mary A. Paulson, PhD, is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family that loves them, appears in the quarterly TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

After tragedy, TV Funny man Stephen Colbert says, "If you are laughing, you can't be afraid"

"I like damaged people," says Stephen Colbert. "And I am certainly damaged."

If the comment seems like a joke at first, it's because on his popular—and influential—Comedy Central show, *The Colbert Report*, the 43-year-old comedian plays the kind of blustering pundit that's all over television these days.... But when Colbert tells me he's "damaged," he's being painfully honest. He grew up as the youngest of 11 children—eight sons, three daughters—of James and Lorna Colbert, a research physician and a homemaker on James Island in Charleston, S.C. It was a big, bustling, Irish-Catholic family..." Colbert recalls....

Then, on a single terrible day—Sept. 11, 1974—everything changed. Dr. Colbert was flying with sons Peter and Paul...when their commercial flight crashed in Charlotte, N.C. All three were killed....With his other older brothers and sisters either working or heading back to college that fall, the big household was suddenly diminished to just two: 10-year-old Stephen and his mom. "The shades were down, and she wore a lot of black, and it was very quiet," he remembers. "She was a daily communicant, and many times I was too. It was a constant search for healing. My mother gave that gift to all

of us. I am so blessed to have been the child at home with her."

In sixth grade, he switched to a new school. The nerdy newcomer, who had just lost his father and two brothers, had a rough time of it for a while. "I was beaten up on a regular basis," he recalls. Eventually, he started making jokes. "The beginning of my junior year, nobody knew me at school. A year later, I was voted Wittiest, and people were happy when I showed up at parties." ...

Having paid some serious dues, Colbert says... "I desire to have what I would consider a normal life. To have a wife and kids, and live in a suburban house, and wear khaki pants, and pick them up from the dry cleaner—I don't see anything wrong with that. I think a lot of people who perform have a fear of being ordinary. They confuse ordinary with common....Not living in fear is a great gift, because certainly these days we do it so much. And do you know what I like about comedy? You can't laugh and be afraid at the same time—of anything. If you're laughing, I defy you to be afraid."

Excerpted from article by James Kaplan
Parade Magazine, published September 23, 2007
Entire article available on www.parade.com

Our Children Remembered

Please remember the following families this month.

Jalen H. Alleyne
Son of Jewel and Derrick Alleyne
April 21, 2007 - May 21, 2007

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

Jeff Baldwin
Son of Aurelia Ferraro
April 27, 1967 - April 26, 1991

Hope Barber
Daughter of Douglass and Vonda Barber
March 11, 2003 - April 25, 2003

Patrick John Bennett Jr.
Son of Patrick and Deborah Bennett
September 27, 1975 - April 15, 1999

Travis Brandon Beyerle
Son of Maren O. Sheidy
April 17, 1981 - June 23, 1995

Alexandra Elizabeth Bolander
Daughter of Tom and Susan Bolander
April 1, 1996 - April 1, 1996

Wendy Jean Bolly
Daughter of Judith and Louie Bolly
April 6, 1977 - October 11, 2002

Paul Shane Brough
Son of Theresa and Steve Bleemke
May 18, 1982 - April 4, 2003

Faith Campbell
Daughter of John and Cathi Campbell
April 5, 1994 - April 5, 1994

John Christopher Campbell
Son of Kathy and Jeff Campbell
April 18, 1981 - October 9, 2002

William Frederick Carter Jr.
Son of Dot Carter
April 24, 1959 - August 16, 1992

John Scott Droege
Son of Teri Droege
April 30, 1984 - April 5, 2002

Isaac Paul Elliott
Son of Debbie and Paul Elliott
August 24, 1979 - April 27, 2003

Joseph Fredrick Errichiello Jr.
Son of Susan and Joe Errichiello
April 6, 1979 - May 29, 2004

Joseph A. Esterling Jr.
Son of Joe and Michelle Esterling
June 7, 1967 - April 27, 1990

Sherrri Leigh Fant
Daughter of Vern Pierce
January 24, 1958 - April 1, 2003

Andrea Faith Fiscus
Daughter of Debby and Kenny Fiscus
April 27, 1982 - October 9, 1993

Donald Richard Forbes III
Son of Janet Lynn Hall
Brother of Carrie Forbes-Reitzel
August 3, 1975 - April 12, 2002

Zachary Jay Forman
Son of Marge Forman
February 11, 1977 - April 10, 2005

David Jonathan Frame
Son of Carol Brothers
April 12, 1967 - September 11, 2001

Christopher George Gilmour
Son of Carole and Paul Gilmour
Brother of Sean Gilmour
Grandson of Gloria P. McDonald
Grandson of Jennifer and Roy Gilmour
October 17, 1997 - April 2, 2003

Andrew Thomas Gwaltney
Son of Hope Dorman
October 1, 1987 - April 6, 2004

Galen Andrew Harig-Blaine
Son of Clare and Stephen Blaine
November 14, 1989 - April 22, 2007

Mallory Heffernan
Daughter of Dianne and Edmund Heffernan
December 19, 1985 - April 18, 2003

Our Children Remembered

Please remember the following families this month.

Alison Marie Hylan
Daughter of Jan and Leo Hylan
April 24, 1986 - January 9, 2005

Chrystal Lynn Isaacs
Daughter of Tish and Darrel Isaacs
April 12, 1984 - February 1, 2003

Lilith "Lily" Sappho Kelm
Daughter of Kathy Kelm
April 4, 1973 - April 6, 1973

Steven J. Landis
Son of Edwin and Susan Landis
April 4, 1968 - October 10, 1991

Aaron Corban Lawson
Son of Loretta Lawson-Munsey and Matthew Munsey
July 8, 1978 - April 21, 2007

Zachary Laurence Luceti
Son of Linda East
April 20, 1978 - July 4, 2003

Walter H. Maynard IV
Son of Rose Marie Carnes and Walter Maynard III
January 2, 1965 - April 14, 2006

Ryan Andrew Mcanulty
Son of Bernadette Galvin
April 12, 2007 - April 12, 2007

Matthew David Miles
Son of David and Donna Miles
March 24, 2000 - April 7, 2000

Robert Antonio Morgan Jr.
Son of Paul and Kathy Waters
April 23, 1984 - June 21, 2003

Melanie Carol Murphy
Daughter of Fred and Phyl Murphy
April 21, 1966 - October 17, 1985

Craig Steven Nelson
Son of Karen Coulson
April 2, 1974 - January 31, 1995

Jonathan Michael Noon
Son of John Noon
February 3, 1982 - April 18, 2004

Glynn Allen Owens
Son of Michael Owens
October 21, 1973 - April 2, 2003

Lee Ann Platts
Daughter of Sandy and Jeff Platts
April 21, 1999 - April 21, 1999

Solymar Rodriguez Torres
Daughter of José Rodriguez and Vanya Torres
August 27, 1993 - April 13, 2007

Dennis Richard Rohrback
Son of Dennis and Joan Rohrback
April 8, 1964 - July 3, 1988

Anthony John Schaefer
Son of LuAnn Schaefer
July 13, 1979 - April 7, 2003

David Michael Schell Jr.
Son of Betty and Joseph Jones
April 7, 1981 - March 20, 2005

Matthew Jason Temple
Son of Jim and Karen Temple
October 6, 1987 - April 23, 1995

Heather Brooke Tepper
Daughter of Michelle Tepper
June 11, 1986 - April 3, 2005

Gregory Adam Thorowgood
Son of Margie Strong and Kenneth W. Wenk
July 24, 1975 - April 7, 2004

Albert Wallace "Wally" Whitby Jr.
Son of Rita and Albert Whitby Sr.
April 25, 1951 - June 2, 1981

Alisa Joy Withers
Daughter of Jan Withers
July 7, 1976 - April 16, 1992

Austin Wolfe
Son of Bonnie and James Wolfe
April 3, 1999 - April 6, 1999

Samuel Kingsley Wood
Son of Melanie Loughry
April 14, 2003 - July 26, 2005

Our Children Remembered

Please remember the following families this month.

Note: If your child's name appears in the printed version of our newsletter but does not appear in this online version, it is because we have not received explicit permission from you to list it online. If you would like your child's name to also appear in future online editions of the newsletter, please send an email to dralex@sdalex.com



That though the radiance which was once so bright be now forever taken from my sight. Though nothing can bring back the hour of splendor in the grass, glory in the flower. We will grieve not, rather find strength in what remains behind.

William Wordsworth

OTHER RESOURCES

Bereaved Parents of the USA (BPUSA)

National Headquarters
708.748.7866, www.bereavedparentsusa.org

M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)

Provides emotional support, professional referrals, publications, information about criminal justice system, drunk driving and victims' rights laws, etc. Contact Jan Withers at 301.627.1743.

S.O.S. (Survivors of Suicide)

Meets first Tuesday of each month at Severna Park Methodist Church located at 731 Benfield Road in Severna Park, Maryland 21146. For more information call 410.987.2129.

Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. (formerly known as The Stephanie Roper Committee for Victims of Violent Crime)

For more information please call 410.234.9885 or go to their website, www.mdcrimevictims.org. Located at 14750 Main Street, Suite 1B in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, 20772.

G.R.A.S.P. (Grief Recovery After A Substance Passing)

Provides help, compassion and understanding for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of drugs. Website: www.grasphelp.com or contact founders Pat or Russ Wittberger at (843) 705-2217. Their email is mom@jennysjourney.org

T.A.P.S. (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors)

Non-profit Veteran Service Organization offering hope, healing, comfort and care to American Armed Forces families facing the death of a loved one. Magazine; grief camps for kids; online forums and chats. Website: www.taps.org or call (800) 858-TAPS.

Hospice of the Chesapeake

Serving Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties. Provides help for adults, teenagers, children who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Counseling; support group sessions; weekend camps for children, teens (summer) and adults (fall). Website: www.hospicechesapeake.org or call 410.987.2003.

(Continued from page 3)

Debbie had been extremely close to her father and her death was especially hard on him. Roy had been in the hospital for a spinal fusion in his neck and had almost died from a staph infection. The day he was taken off the danger list at the hospital was the day Debbie died. The news left him, as well as Dale, devastated.

This time, though, Dale had to handle the arrangements for the funeral. Debbie was dressed in her pink sixth grade graduation dress, her hands clasping a tiny stuffed animal she had won at the amusement center on her birthday. Dale placed around her neck a gold cross and in her hands the prettiest rosebuds from her garden.

"I felt at that moment she was aware of the tributes being paid her," Dale wrote later, "and I could almost hear her say, 'Hey, Mom, what a blast! Is this all for me?'"

Time passed, but a year later, the unthinkable happened again. Sandy (John David Rogers) had been adopted by Roy and Dale at the age of five following a childhood of abandonment, physical abuse from drunken parents, and malnutrition that left him physically damaged. After meeting with him at an institution, Roy had said to Dale, "Mama, anybody can adopt a strong healthy kid who has everything going for him. *But what happens to a little guy like this?*"

As he grew, Sandy continually read about the military and dreamed of becoming a Private First Class. He begged Roy and Dale to allow him to go into the service, even though he had not yet completed high school. Figuring Sandy would never be able to pass the physical, they agreed. Although Sandy could only swim by dog paddling, had never been able to ride a bicycle, and was desperately afraid of heights, somehow he passed the physical and was sent to Germany.

"The day that he was made Private First Class, some of his buddies took him to the NCO club and said 'John, you've got to celebrate tonight—you don't deserve to wear that stripe unless you can wet it down.' That meant chug-a-lugging. He tried and he had a cold and during the night was taken to the dispensary. He apparently had so much that later that night he vomited and choked to death."

Dale says that "it was very, very hard for me because in the first place here I was doing a great deal of Christian work, concerts, witnessing with Billy Graham and I thought they would think that he learned to drink at home." She adds, it was very difficult on Roy, also. "It was all Roy could do to keep control of himself when we followed his casket out of the church at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale. There was a load of people and there were cameras there and the press was there. And I remember how hard I held onto Roy's arm to keep him from breaking down. The military school that Sandy went to here played taps and had a military service funeral. It was hard—very, very difficult."

"Some trails are happy ones, others are blue.
It's the way you ride the trail that counts . . ."

Dale Evans
from her song, Happy Trails

Roy wrote later, "As Dale proudly and courageously accepted the traditional flag, I felt the strength go out of my body. And I cried. That lonely-sad-happy-mischievous-beautiful little boy from Kentucky who, just a few short years earlier, had looked up at me for the first time, shaken my hand, and said, 'Howdy pad-nuh', a little guy I had loved the minute I saw him, was gone."

Following the deaths of each of the children, Dale wrote a book in tribute to them. The profits from Robin's book, *Angel Unaware* were donated to the National Association for Retarded Children, *Dearest Debbie* to World Vision, and *Salute to Sandy* to Campus Crusade for Christ. Dale says she recommends "pouring your heart down on paper and looking at it and dealing with it."

Dale, who has maintained her Christian faith throughout all the rough times, admits that "It's like someone has cut your heart out. If you don't have a faith in God . . . there is absolutely nothing at all to cling to at that time. No amount of advice from other people will cut it. You simply have to go through the grief process. Had we not been Christians with a lively faith, I am sure it would have destroyed me because when I was a little girl I used to say, 'God please don't ever take a child from me. Take me, but don't ever take one of my children.' But He showed me that the children didn't belong to me in the first place. They are loaned to us during this lifetime for us to nurture, train, and care for. But they really don't belong to us. We are simply channels through which they came. This is what often saved my sanity."

Bereaved parents shouldn't blame themselves for being unable to change the events that led up to the death of their child. Dale recalls that she really didn't want Debbie to go on the bus trip because her sister Dodie was sick and couldn't go. Debbie told her mom that wasn't fair because this was a way of celebrating her birthday, which had been put on hold because of her dad's illness. A close friend was also making plans to go, and Debbie wanted to help all the children at the orphanage because she had once been an orphan, too.

"I just couldn't say no because they had all those very responsible adults on the bus and in charge of so many children. I had no fear about it. So I have not castigated myself about it. You are constantly making decisions in children's lives and you hope they are all for the best. But when

(Continued on page 10)

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something happens, it is out of your control. You simply have to trust God to give you understanding later.” She adds that in the case of the bus accident, “the Lord had His hand in it because if Dodie would have been on the bus she probably would have been killed, too. She would have been right up front with Debbie.”

Dale suggests it is also important that bereaved parents remember their remaining children as they deal with their own grief.

“I think parents have to be careful that they are not overtly grieving for a lost child to the exclusion of the children who are left.

“When Debbie was killed on the bus, I was beside myself when I was told—I started pounding the French doors between the living room and dining room and saying ‘my baby, again!’—she was the youngest in the family. Dodie was standing right there and she was just six months older than Debbie and she said ‘but Mommy, you still have me!’ That told me right there what the danger was. I loved her devotedly. I never quit loving her. It was just I was in shock. She took it that I felt I had no one. Some people go into such deep grief for months and months and maybe a year and they are not the same at all to the other children and that is not right.”

Dale reminds newly bereaved parents to communicate with each other, as she and Roy had done, to keep their marriage strong.

“All I can say is ‘this, too, shall pass.’ You are the same people you were before the child died—I mean the love you have for each other. Remember what you had and don’t give that up.

“The grieving period is a somber time. But we can’t live with death forever. We have to start remembering the sweetness of the child and the things we loved about the child and the things we did for the child instead of saying I should have done this or that.

Roy was once asked, if he had to thank God for one thing, what would that be? His response was, ‘The mountains and the valleys. If there were no valley of sadness and death, we could never really appreciate the sunshine of happiness on the mountain top.’”

Explains Dale, “It takes storms, it takes sunshine, it takes wind, it takes all seasons of life and seasons of grief and seasons of joy and seasons of bewilderment where we have to search for God more diligently. All of that goes to make up a life and to develop you into the person God wants you to be.”

Editor's Note: From 1951 to 1957, Dale Evans and her husband Roy Rogers starred in the highly successful television series The Roy Rogers Show, in which they portrayed their famous cowboy/cowgirl roles. In addition to her successful TV shows, over 30 movies and 200 songs, Evans wrote their well known song, "Happy Trails". Roy died of congestive heart failure in 1998 at the age of 86. Dale died three years later, also of congestive heart failure, on February 7, 2001 at the age of 88.

(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>)

Do It Your Way

I think it’s only fair to tell you – there is no “Bereaved Parent of the Month” award, nor an award for the one with the stiffest upper lip. In fact, what (you) will find if you try to be the most stoic, brave and strong (one) -- the one doing too well -- is instead of reward, you suffer the consequences.

It is not possible to lose someone as vital as one’s child and not have the pain of deep grief. You will find a great many non-bereaved people will encourage you to play the old (game), “If you’ll pretend you’re okay and it’s not really so bad, we’ll let you come play with us. But, if you’re going to cry and talk about your dead child, then you can’t play”.

This is one time in your life you don’t have to meet anybody else’s standards. There is nothing more unique about you than the way you express your grief, and you have that right, however it is manifested. So, if someone tries to influence you to play the old game tell them you’re not doing well, that your child has died and you’re hurting. Let them know it doesn’t help you for them to pretend everything is okay. Do whatever it is you need to do to survive trauma and don’t worry about whether it pleases or displeases other people. Do it YOUR way.



Mary Cleckly
Atlanta, GA

Anne Arundel County Chapter
Bereaved Parents of the USA

- 10th Annual -

Hope and Healing Conference

Saturday, May 17, 2008

7:30 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.

Calvary United Methodist Church
Annapolis, Maryland 21401



Your invitation should arrive by mail during the month of April. Pre-registration is requested. For more general information, please call our message line at 443.572.8726 or go to our Chapter website: www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org. You may also contact Conference organizer Debi Wilson-Smith at 410.757.8280 if you have any questions.

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations:



Bob Bramhall in memory of his daughter Christine Elaine Bramhall
Denise and Russ Calo in memory of their son Russell Joseph Calo Jr.
Jennifer and Roy Gilmour in memory of their grandson Christopher George Gilmour
Ken Smith in memory of his niece Tracy Ann Fotino
Carol and Rick Tomaszewski in memory of their son David William Tomaszewski

Donations are gratefully accepted to offset the costs of our local Chapter's events and communications. Please contact Chapter leader Dave Alexander for more information. Please see page 2 for more contact information.

How You Can Sponsor Our Chapter Newsletter or Website

If you are looking for a way to honor the life of a child, please consider sponsoring a month of our newsletter or website in their memory. Currently our Chapter newsletter is mailed to over 400 homes locally and around the country. Your sponsorship helps to underwrite the costs associated with the printing, labeling and mailing of our newsletter and maintaining our space on the World-wide web.

For our website, sponsorship is \$25.00 for the month. Your child's name will appear at the bottom on the home page of our website. For our newsletter, full sponsorship of one issue is \$200. Two people or families can sponsor an issue and the cost will be divided equally.

*For more information please contact
Chapter leader Dave Alexander at 410.544.3634*



This is Your Newsletter...

...and it is our sincere hope that you will find comfort within these pages. You are not alone in your grief. We also encourage you to write and share your feelings with others through this outlet. All Chapter member poems, articles, comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send your submissions to newsletter editor [Carole Gilmour](#) via email or the Chapter post office box. Contact information can be found on page 2.

You can help us save on our Chapter expenses. If you are willing to receive your monthly copy of our newsletter via the internet, please email or call Chapter leader [Dave Alexander](#) or newsletter editor [Carole Gilmour](#) (see page 2 for contact information).

Bereaved Parents of the USA Anne Arundel County Chapter

P.O. Box 6280
Annapolis, MD 21401-0280
www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org



NEXT MEETING APRIL 3, 2008



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UPCOMING MEETING TOPICS for 2008:

How Men and Women Mourn the Death of a Child

Thursday, April 3, 7:30 P.M.

We all grieve differently. After the death of a child, men and women often experience new stresses on their relationships because of how they feel individually. Understanding this can be helpful as we anticipate Mother's Day and Father's Day in the coming months. We will try to offer some insights on the differences and similarities in these mourning styles during our evening's presentation. Then we will divide into smaller sharing groups: newly bereaved; one group for men; and one group for women.

Thursday, May 1, 7:30 P.M.

Program to be announced.

Annual Hope and Healing Conference

Saturday, May 17, 7:30 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

Please see page 11 for more information.

We appreciate feedback on our Chapter meetings. If you have suggestions for future topics of discussion, please contact one of our Program coordinators: Paul Balasic at pjbspmd@gmail.com or 443.566.0193; Jane Schindler at cwschind@cablespeed.com.



WHAT TO EXPECT AT OUR CHAPTER MEETINGS

Our Chapter gathers one evening a month to address topics and offer support to those who are mourning the death of a child. Our meetings last for approximately 2 hours. At the beginning of our meeting, we regularly schedule a 30 minute presentation to address a topic that we hope is of interest and value to many of our Chapter members. When the speaker or panel has concluded their presentation, you will be invited to introduce yourself and then say your child's name - but only if you are able to participate in this manner. We then take a short break before dividing into sharing groups.

These sharing groups are facilitated by fellow Chapter members and are completely confidential. During this time the issues that are discussed - particularly for the newly bereaved - do not necessarily have to focus on the evening's topic, unless it is relevant to the group.

Please see page 2 of this newsletter for more details including our meeting location and other helpful information. If you have questions please contact our Chapter leader Dave Alexander (410.544.3634 or dralex@sdalex.com).