



Bereaved Parents of the USA

Anne Arundel County Chapter

April, 2004

www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org

Labor of Love.... We've heard that term many times. As I make my first attempt at editing our monthly Newsletter, I understand those words a bit better. Lisa Beall has spent years taking the time to make sure that every month, we readers have the opportunity to share articles, poems, information, ideas, and suggestions that make our personal grieving a little easier to deal with.

Now that I now what it takes to do this task, I can truly appreciate the level of effort that Lisa has provided in her overwhelmingly busy schedule. She has walked me through this process and as she endured my numerous phone calls asking questions...without ever making me feel that I am intruding on her time. When I wonder how and why she has done this month after month, in spite of the impact it has on her work and home life, my conclusion is that it is her Labor of Love.

Although this space is usually filled with a well written, and very well thought out expression of Lisa's thoughts, I would like to use it to express our thanks to her wonderful contribution.

There are many other contributors... a whole team of individuals that provide their time and devotion to produce something we look forward to every month, and often take for granted. I think the best part for me as the editor of this issue is that I can say thank you to all of them and know that you, as readers feel the same.

With a circulation of over 300 copies and growing, this newsletter is great way to share our thoughts and emotions with not only our regular meeting attendees, but with those unable to attend. Please enjoy this month's Labor of Love.

Rick Tomaszewski

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 Paul and Claudia Balasic
in memory of the life of*

Bethany Anne Balasic

*and by Gloria McDonald, Jennifer and Roy Gilmour, and Linda McDonald-Nibert
in loving memory of their grandson and nephew,*

Christopher George Gilmour



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Anne Arundel County Chapter
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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.

May submissions are due by April 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**

April 1, 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: Helping Our Surviving Children

NEXT MONTH: May 6, 2004

PROGRAM: How Different Are We

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@Comcast.net); Harriet Evenson (703-525-9311); Sharon Skarzynski in MD (410-757-5049); website - www.inlovingmemoryonline.org

* **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: Where Was God When I Needed Him, Loss of a child through drug abuse, I can handle this...but how (sibling grief discussion), Using the Written Word to Remember your Child, Early years of bereavement, Rebuilding your lives after the loss of a child, Loss of a child through Suicide, Angels by our side, Art Therapy for grief, Now Childless, Writing 4 Relief, Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant loss. **Please make plans to attend!**

To help out with the conference, please call or email Pat Schultz (410-255-7760; jim.n.pat@juno.com)

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.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

April 1: Helping Our Surviving Children

The surviving children in our families often have issues of their own. These issues can be vastly different depending on the age of the surviving child, his/her location in the order of the family, etc. Karen Frank, Hospice of the Chesapeake will discuss the issues faced by the siblings of deceased children, and offer ideas on how we might help them

May 6: How Different Are We?

We all grieve differently. These differences can introduce new stresses into a couple's relationships. As we anticipate Mother's Day and Father's Day in the coming months, understanding these differences (and the similarities) can be helpful. There will be separate sharing groups for men and women.

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.

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.

BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP FORMING ON EASTERN SHORE

Our Chapter is assisting some bereaved parents who live on the Eastern Shore to form a group there which would meet monthly. The group held its first meeting in March. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 20th, at 7:30 pm, at Queen Anne's Hospice, 300 Del Rhodes Avenue, in Queenstown. All are welcome to come!

Call 410-544-3634 for more information.

Good Grief

That was what Charlie Brown said – “good grief.” And my son loved him! But is there really such a thing as good grief? I wonder...

I used to think grief was a thing to get over and done with. Something you shouldn't do for too long. But now, after three suicides in the past twelve years (my son, my brother, and my mother), I'm beginning to realize that my grief will probably always be with me. It's become a part of me, of who I am.

That's not to say that I wallow in self-pity constantly. NO. I go on with my life as best I can. And as anyone who's lost a loved one knows, some days are good, some are bad. You have your terrible times, but you also have your better ones.

What I'm learning about my grief is that sometimes I feel as if it's not there at all. And at those times I feel sort of empty, like I've lost something that I've become accustomed to holding onto.

So I guess I'd have to say that yes, grief can be good. It just happens to be one of those emotions we'd be happy to not have to experience.

Margie O'Malley
Ellicott City, MD



Losing More Than One

For many years after my children were killed in a horrific road accident, I was obsessed with the fear that they had suffered and had called out to me in the pain. My fertile imagination created scenes of horror that would make violent movies look like a Sunday picnic. These fears were only assuaged when I spoke to people who had survived a car crash, in which passengers had died, and who described nature's anesthetic – a total lack of recall of the incident. I believed every word. I had to in order to stay sane.

My irrational guilt of not having been there haunted me. Every night before falling asleep, I played out my ritual of saying goodnight to each of them in turn. Sometimes I would fall asleep before completing my ceremony. The next day I would feel guilt ridden and beg forgiveness from anyone who was left out. Eventually I learned a magic formula – to devote a full night to only one at a time. I wallowed in the luxury of having any of them to myself for as long as I cared. I learned to rotate the order of speaking to them. It was an important lesson that I had learned. Working with my grief for all four at a time was overwhelming. I had to separate them.

They were unique individuals; I had a different relationship with each one when they were alive, so why should it change because they are dead? I felt so much better, and wanted to stand on the rooftops and shout out loud to all parents who have suffered the loss of more than one child, to relate to each one separately and differently, as you had always done. Hard as it may be at first it is far more satisfying than trying to handle the family as one unit.

I am now able to invite any one, or all four members of that precious family, to spend time with me. I sleep more peacefully these nights.

Miriam Biderman/TCF Cape Town, South Africa

SIBLING PAGE

Now I Know

My sister died. She lived only 10 days. Her name is Gloria and I knew her only through my mother. She spoke of her lovingly and sadly until she died, of her beauty and sweetness, of her illness. Gloria was the third child born to the family, the first girl. Two years later Donald was born and

two years after that, I arrived. Donald and I were on occasion told that if Gloria had lived we would not have been here. I never knew whether to be happy or sad that my sister had died. Whenever the song "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" played on the radio, my mother would cry. She told me that the song was very popular when

Gloria was born and died. I used to think, "Why is she so sad? Why is she crying for a baby she hardly knew? Aren't we remaining children enough for her?"

' I never understood - until my daughter died. *Now I know.*

Carol Silverman
TCF Abington Chapter

For David

He was a spark of spirit and heart.
He was the looking glass for nature's laughter.
He was a great adventurer on earth,
And now he journeys in the universe.

He was not flawless, but he was complete:
A human being in the finest sense.
He was the one I loved more dearly than he knew.
He was my own, my friend, my brother, David.

Anne Gherke From "Wintersun"





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, 19981 - April 5, 1996

Hope Barber
daughter of Doug and Vonda Barber
March 11, 2003 - April 25, 2003

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

Paul Shane Brough
son of Theresa and Steve Bleemke
Friend of Helen Connors
May 18, 1982 - April 4, 2003

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

William F. Carter, Jr.
son of Dorothy Carter
brother of Lisa Beall and Janet Tyler
April 24, 1959 - August 16, 1992

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

Isaac Paul Elliot
son of Dr. Paul and Deborah Elliot
August 24, 1979 - April 27, 2003

Sherri Leigh Fant
daughter of Vern Pierce
January 24, 1958 - April 1, 2003

Christopher G. Gilmour
son of Paul and Carole Gilmour
October 17, 1997 - April 2, 2003

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

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

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

Amelia Evans Mufson
daughter of Beth and Neil Mufson
April 6, 1995- September 28, 2002

Craig Nelson
son of Karen Nelson
April 2, 1974 - January 31, 1995

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

Daniel R. Shockey
son of Sandra Shockey
October 30, 1971 - April 1, 1998

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





A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Helen Steiner Rice

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 & 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:

Dorothy & Norm Heincelman, in memory of Cortney Belt and Traci Heincelman



The Storms of Grief

I've often thought about how differently grief affects those left behind when someone has died. To me there are three groups of bereaved. There are those that lose someone they loved very much and are most affected. The middle group are those that cared about the person and will miss them, but their death doesn't change their lives. The third group are sorry that the person has died, but are largely unaffected by their death.

Now envision those groups on a mountain. When my son died, I felt like I was on a mountaintop, alone with a storm raging around me. Thunder and lightning filled the sky, thick clouds enveloped me, and a cold hard rain fell upon me. Winds buffeted my body from every side. There was no shelter, no place to sit or lie down. Others who were suffering as much as I (my husband and daughters) were on their own Mountaintop, and we could derive no comfort from each other. I stood there, sometimes railing against God, sometimes feeling as if my heart had been ripped out, sometimes just feeling an emptiness so deep, I feared I would drown in it. Days, weeks, months passed.

The middle group of people stood on the side of the mountain (close friends and relatives). They also were caught in the storm, but they had some shelter and each other. They wanted to comfort me but the path upward was winding and rocky and I could find no path down to them. The last group of people were at the bottom of the mountain in the valley. There, the sun was shining and the breeze was gentle. They could see the storm I was caught in, but could do nothing to help me. Sometimes the storm would subside and I could see something besides dismal gray and I had respite from the wind and rain. But this would be followed by another raging storm. Back and forth, I never knew what to expect. Eventually the sky would clear and I was able to find a path to those that cared and could offer me hugs and a shoulder to cry on. The storm was still there, but there was also shelter and I wasn't alone.

It has been 12 years since Todd died and I have been able to come completely down off that desolate mountaintop and live in the valley of sunshine. Sometimes I stay there quite a while. Sometimes I climb that mountain and experience that same emptiness and sadness. We all know that this kind of storm may brew on those special days - birthdays, holidays, family events. We are also blind-sided by those times that just take our breath away. . . being in a place they loved, hearing their music, smells, movies, ball-games, seeing their friends. We really have no control over these unexpected, sudden storms. I have learned to give into them and let the tears fall. I can live with these storms and accept them as part of my life because my child lived and I loved him with all my heart. I cannot change the fact that my child has died and I will not change my love.



Hands

Hands, hands, little hands:

...to hold safely crossing the street,
 ...to be busy playing during the day,
 ...to make casts for Mom and Dad to keep,
 ...to be folded in nighttime prayers.

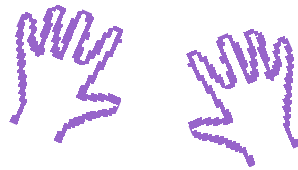
Hands, hands, larger hands:

...to hold another hand going to the dance,
 ...to hold the wheel learning to drive the car,
 ...to hold the certificate that made the school complete,
 ...to fill out that very first job application.

Hands, hands, motionless hands:

...that won't hold another at the altar,
 ...that won't sign that first mortgage plan,
 ...that won't hold a babe of your own.

Those hands, folded across your chest,
 Hold our hearts forever!



Linda M. Trimmer
 Bereavement Magazine

Who Speaks of Anger?

~lovingly lifted from Reflections, TCF
 Western Australia Newsletter

There is a scene in the movie "Terms of Endearment" when the mother totally loses it. Ranting and raving, she flies up and down the nurses station demanding another injection for her dying daughters pain.

I am not sure what I thought my son's death would do to me, to my husband or my children. The horror of it remained unfinished for sure.

Death sows a sense of loss: loss of identity, loss of Routine, loss of tenderness, loss of one thing we thought we would never lose— our children.

So once the school bus left in the morning, and our house became so very still, I was, as expected, to be, engulfed by loss. No high-tech equipment, no medicines to be carefully measured, or nursing schedules to be set up. Just tears and quiet— then the roaring unexpected anger.

It was the doctor's fault my son died. It had to be the doctor's fault. It was my fault. It was the cold, the spring winds that stole his breath away, the milkman's fault, the school's— or it was the faith I imagine I didn't have. It had to be the lack of faith.

It was my best friend's fault. Maybe even my husband's fault. Anger took over and it allowed me to become mesmerized by how it might have been. Everyone and everything around me stole my son. Children laughed. My son couldn't laugh.

I hate to shop, they sold Pampers. I cringe to see a young mother with a box of Pampers. In the distance, an ambulance could still be heard, not for my son.

Who then speaks of anger? Who tells us how hard it will be? Tell us that even those of us with the softest edges will rave like the woman in the movie. I stayed mad for what seemed like a very long time. God was often my primary target. I glared at the pulpit on Sundays, just as I glared at life during the week. So who spoke of anger? They spoke of it often. In all stages, at all levels, in so many different tones. I brought my anger to them, for they are my Compassionate Friends. Sue Whalen TCF, MA

Angels are Hard to Find

Just a little ray of Sunshine, sent to
 us from up above,
 To fill our lives with happiness, and
 our hearts so full of love.
 Each day I look into the bed in which
 you used to lay.
 I sadly ask myself, why did God
 call you away?
 But when my heart is mended, and
 this thought enters my mind,
 God must have really needed you,
 Cause Angels are hard to find.

Sharon Page

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Bereaved Parents of the USA CREDO

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our long and arduous grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew. As we accept, support, comfort, and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children's deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family. We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA.

We welcome you.